

Picking the right horse feed for pregnant mares is not just adding extra calories. As pregnancy progresses, a mare's nutritional requirements evolve over time as the foal develops, and the feeding plan should maintain healthy pregnancy without unnecessary overfeeding. The best approach is usually a balanced ration built around high-quality forage, then modified with a suitable complete horse feed or compound feed if the mare needs more calories, protein, minerals and vitamins.

The right feed depends on body fat condition, pregnancy stage, forage condition, and how much digestible energy the mare already gets from hay or haylage. In many cases, the answer is not one single "best" product, but a practical feeding system that preserves condition, supports foal development, and prepares the mare for lactation later on.

How pregnancy changes a mare's nutritional needs

Expectant mares do not all need large changes to their diet from the beginning. In the initial stages of pregnancy, many mares maintain condition well on forage and a modest concentrate ration, if any. As pregnancy advances, foal development increases the demand for calorie intake, protein, minerals and vitamins, especially in the last trimester. That is when nutritional requirements become more detailed and ration planning matters most.

Energy requirements increase because the mare must support both her own maintenance and the growing foetus. Protein becomes more important for tissue growth, while minerals such as calcium and phosphorus help bone development. Vitamin E also has an important role in overall health and muscle function. If the mare is underweight, old, poor-doing, or fed poor-quality forage, she may need a more nutrient-dense horse feed to maintain her condition.

BCS is a very useful tool for determining whether the diet is effective. A mare should ideally keep a stable condition score rather than becoming underweight or too heavy. Gaining weight can be normal later in pregnancy, but unexpected changes usually suggest the diet needs reassessing. Equine nutrition during gestation is really about regularity, digestibility, and adjusting feeding rate to the mare's present stage.

Types of horse feed suitable for pregnant mares

There are several types of horse feed that can work for pregnant mares, but not all are just as effective. The best feed usually depends on forage quality, the mare's appetite, and whether the feed needs to deliver extra digestible energy or serve primarily as a nutrient balancer.

Forage should always form the basis of **overweight horse feed** the diet. Good hay or haylage offers fibre, helps maintain gut function, and helps keep the digestive system stable. A mare that can maintain condition on forage alone may not need much else until late gestation. However, forage by itself may not provide enough protein levels, calcium, phosphorus or vitamin E if quality is variable.

Complete horse feed is often a practical choice for pregnant mares because it is designed to provide a more balanced ration in one product. It can be especially useful when the mare's forage quality is inconsistent or when a straightforward feeding plan is needed. Many complete feeds are formulated with appropriate starch content, fibre, and added minerals and vitamins to support healthy pregnancy.

Compound feed can also work well, particularly if you want to combine it with forage and tailor the ration more precisely. Some compound feeds are more concentrated, so they may suit mares that need extra condition

without large meal sizes. The key is to check digestibility and the feed label rather than assuming all compound feeds are suitable for breeding mares.

In practice, the best horse feed for a pregnant mare is usually a forage-led ration, plus a complete horse feed or compound feed if the mare needs extra support. The aim is not maximum feeding, but the right balance.

What ought to the diet of a pregnant mare cover?

A balanced ration for pregnant mares should begin with good-quality **hay** or **haylage**. They offer the fibre needed for gut health and a reliable energy supply. Hay is often easier to assess for consistency, while haylage can be especially helpful if it is well prepared and palatable. Both can be suitable, provided forage quality is high and the mare eats enough of it each day.

Alongside forage, the diet should cover key nutrients that support foal development and the mare's own reserves. **Vitamin E** is important in equine nutrition, especially if the forage is stored for a long time or if turnout is limited. **Calcium** is essential for bone development, while phosphorus must be present in the correct ratio so the mare receives a balanced intake. Protein is needed too, but it should come from a careful ration rather than excessive amounts of one ingredient.

It is also worth paying attention to digestible energy. A ration that is high in energy but poor in fibre may not be ideal. The mare needs a diet that supports condition without creating digestive upset. In many cases, the best result comes from combining good forage with a suitable complete horse feed or carefully selected supplements if there is a genuine gap in the diet.

Feeding should also change as the pregnancy stage changes. Early gestation is often about maintenance and consistency. Late gestation may require more nutrients, and after foaling the mare's needs rise again for lactation. Planning ahead makes it easier to avoid sudden feed changes when the foal is born.

When to choose a complete horse feed

A **complete horse feed** is a good option when forage alone is not enough to keep condition up or when you want a simple dependable way to cover nutritional requirements. It can be particularly useful if the mare has a low body condition score, lives on inconsistent forage, or is moving into late pregnancy and needs more support for foal development.

One of the main advantages of a complete feed is convenience. It can reduce the need to combine multiple ingredients, which supports with ration planning and makes it easier to monitor the feed rate. If the feed is well formulated, it may also improve digestibility and deliver a more consistent balance of protein, calcium, phosphorus and vitamin E.

Pregnancy stage matters here. A mare in early gestation may do well on forage plus a modest ration, while a mare in late gestation may need a denser option. If the mare is dropping condition, a complete horse feed can help increase digestible energy without relying on large amounts of cereal-based feed.

Look carefully at the feed label to check whether the product is suitable for breeding mares. Not every complete feed is alike, and the best choice will depend on the mare's bodyweight, current condition score, and how much forage she already receives.

How much horse feed should a pregnant mare get?

There is no single answer that suits every mare, which is why a **horse feeding chart** or **horse feed calculator uk** tool can be helpful as a starting point. These tools help estimate feed by weight, but they should always be fine-tuned based on body condition score, forage quality, pregnancy stage and overall health.

A useful rule is to build the ration around bodyweight and then adjust slowly. The mare should receive enough forage to support gut function and enough concentrate or complete feed to close any nutrient gap. A mare that holds condition well may need little more than good hay or haylage, while a poorer doer may need more concentrated feed and closer monitoring.

Feeding charts are only references. The actual ration should reflect the mare's appetite, digestibility of the feed, and how much energy she is using each day. Sudden changes in bodyweight or condition often mean the feed rate needs revisiting. The safest plan is steady adjustment, not dramatic increases.

As a general guide, use the horse feed calculator uk concept to estimate daily requirements, then shape the ration around:

- weight and condition score
- quality and quantity of forage
- pregnancy stage
- whether she needs help maintaining weight or gaining condition
- recommendations from a vet or feeding expert

The aim is a balanced ration, rather than just "more horse feed".

Ten horse feeding rules that matter during gestation

Good horse feeding rules become more important even more for pregnant mares because the wrong routine can cause digestive strain or leave nutritional gaps. These **10 rules of feeding horses** are especially important during gestation:

- Base the diet on forage first.
- Maintain a **consistent routine** for meal times.
- Provide **fresh water** at all times.
- Make feed changes gradually.
- Monitor body condition score regularly.
- Tailor feed to pregnancy stage.
- Select digestible, well-labelled products.
- Prevent sudden increases in starch content.
- Observe appetite and manure quality.
- Get veterinary guidance if the mare changes condition.

These horse feeding rules are straightforward, but they make a big difference. A mare fed on a consistent routine is less likely to experience digestive upset, and steady feeding helps maintain a healthy pregnancy. If water intake drops, feed intake and fibre use can be affected, so fresh water is non-negotiable.

For pregnant mares, the most important of the 10 rules is probably consistency. The gut thrives on predictable fibre intake, and the mare's nutrient supply should be built around that.

Are these feed mixes along with homemade recipes a good idea?

Many owners prefer a **horse feed mix recipe** or a homemade method. This can work, but only if the result is a truly **balanced ration**. The main risk is nutritional gaps, particularly in minerals and vitamins. A simple home mix may look sensible but still miss key nutrients such as calcium, phosphorus or vitamin E.

It does not mean homemade feeding is always wrong. It just means the recipe needs careful ration planning. If you are mixing your own feeds, you need to think about protein levels, fibre, digestible energy and supplementation. Too much cereal and not enough forage can raise starch content and reduce digestive safety. Too little balance can affect foal development and the mare's condition later in pregnancy.

Supplements can help, but they should not be used to patch up a poor diet without checking the basics first. A supplement may be useful if forage quality is limited or if a specific nutrient is short, but it should fit into the full feeding plan. In most cases, a properly formulated complete horse feed is easier and safer than making guesses with a horse feed mix recipe.

If you are unsure, compare the homemade approach with a commercial feed that already supports breeding mares. That often gives a clearer and more reliable result.

How to evaluate horse feed brands and feeds

There are numerous **horse feed companies**, and the top product is not always the one with the most eye-catching claims. Start with the ingredient list and the feed label. These tell you far more than branding alone. A clear feed label should help you understand the feed rate, digestibility, starch content, fibre levels and the added minerals and vitamins.

When comparing horse feed companies, look for products that clearly state whether they are suitable for pregnant mares and whether they are designed as a balanced horse feed or a compound feed. Some owners favour well-known ranges such as **spillers horse feed** because the products are widely recognised and the labelling is usually detailed. Still, the most suitable choice depends on the mare, not the brand name alone.

Pay attention to the ingredient list. If forage is a major part of the formula and the product includes a sensible mineral profile, that is usually a good sign. Look for clarity on protein, calcium, phosphorus and vitamin E. If the product is intended for breeding mares, it should also support healthy pregnancy and likely lactation after foaling.

Good comparison comes down to practical questions: Does it suit the mare's body condition score? Does it complement the forage? Is the feed label transparent? Does the product fit your ration planning and budget?

How much does horse feed cost for a pregnant mare?

Horse feed cost is an important factor for many owners, and it is sensible to ask **how much does horse feed cost** before settling on a plan. The answer varies widely depending on the type of feed, the brand, and how much of the daily ration needs to come from a concentrate rather than forage.

A forage-led ration can be more affordable if the hay or haylage is good quality and available in enough quantity. A complete horse feed may cost more per bag, but it can reduce the need for multiple supplements and may simplify feeding. On the other hand, a low-cost feed can become expensive if it needs extra supplementation to make the ration complete.

Focus on the entire daily allowance rather than the bag price alone. A economical product that requires a large feed rate may ultimately cost more than a denser feed used in smaller amounts. It is often best to compare cost per day, not just the price per bag. That gives a more accurate picture of the true horse feed cost for a pregnant mare.

When planning for a budget, consider forage, complete feed, possible supplements, and whether the mare's bodyweight or condition score means the ration may need to increase later in gestation. Investing a bit more on a nutritionally balanced feed can be worthwhile if it helps avoid problems later.

Signs the feeding plan needs adjusting

Even a carefully planned feeding plan should be reviewed regularly. Signs such as **weight loss**, **poor coat condition** or **reduced appetite** can indicate that the mare is not getting enough nutrition, that the forage quality has dropped, or that the feed itself is not a good fit. In some cases, these signs may also point to a health issue rather than a feed issue, so veterinary advice is important.

Weight loss during pregnancy is a clear warning sign. So is a dull coat or a mare that leaves feed behind. These symptoms may mean the current ration does not provide enough digestible energy, protein or minerals and vitamins. They can also appear if feed changes were made too quickly or if the mare is stressed.

Modify the ration gradually and keep a close eye on body condition score. If the mare's condition changes despite sensible feeding, seek veterinary advice. Good management is about responding early rather than waiting until the mare is obviously underweight or unwell.

Horse feeding advice for beginners: what to avoid

If you are new to **horse feed for beginners**, pregnancy is not the time to experiment. Avoid **overfeeding**, as too much energy can lead to excessive weight gain without improving foal development. Avoid **sudden diet changes** too, because they can upset the digestive system and increase the risk of **colic**.

Beginners often think that more concentrates automatically means better health. This is not true. Pregnant mares usually do better with a roughage-first approach and steady supplementation only when needed. Digestion is designed for fibre, so forage should remain central.

Another common mistake is ignoring forage quality. Poor hay can make a ration look adequate on paper while still leaving the mare short of key nutrients. Always think about the full diet, not just the bucket feed. If you are unsure, follow horse feed advice uk from a trusted source and ask for veterinary guidance where needed.

In summary, the safest beginner approach is simple: keep the feeding routine steady, avoid sudden changes, prioritise forage, and choose a well-labelled feed that suits the pregnancy stage.

FAQs about feeding pregnant mares

What is the best horse feed for pregnant mares?

The best horse feed for pregnant mares is usually a forage-based ration with a suitable complete horse feed or compound feed if extra energy, protein, calcium, phosphorus or vitamin E is needed. The right choice depends on body condition score, forage quality and pregnancy stage. A balanced ration is usually more important than any single product.

Should a pregnant mare eat complete horse feed or forage only?

Forage only can be enough for some mares, especially if the hay or haylage is excellent and the mare maintains a healthy condition score. However, many pregnant mares benefit from a complete horse feed later in gestation or when forage quality is variable. The best answer depends on the mare's nutritional requirements and overall bodyweight.

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How often should a pregnant mare be fed?

A pregnant mare should be fed in a steady routine, ideally with forage available for much of the day and concentrate meals split **reduced energy horse feed** as needed. Smaller, regular meals are usually better than large ones. Feeding frequency should support digestion and fit the mare's daily ration without sudden changes.

Should pregnant mares need supplements?

Some do, but not all. Supplements can be helpful if the ration has nutritional gaps, but they should not replace good forage or a balanced feed. Check the feed label first, then consider supplementation only if there is a clear need for extra minerals and vitamins, or on veterinary advice.

How do I know if my mare is getting the right amount of feed?

Monitor body condition score, coat quality, appetite and weight gain over time. A mare that keeps condition, eats well, and stays bright is often on the right ration. If you see weight loss, poor coat condition or reduced appetite, review the feeding plan and seek veterinary advice if needed.