

What Custom Horse Feed Formulations Are

Custom horse feed formulations are feeds designed to match a horse's individual needs rather than a one-size-fits-all product. They are built around **equine nutrition** principles, using the horse's forage intake, workload, body status, and health history to create a **balanced ration**. The aim is not simply to add more feed, but to produce a precise *nutrient profile* that supports health, performance, and day-to-day consistency.

A bespoke feed can be tailored for **weight maintenance**, **weight gain**, muscle development, digestive comfort, or more specific goals such as **metabolic support**. A good formulation considers how the horse uses energy, how well it digests nutrients, and whether the ration should be higher in **fibre** or lower in starch. For many horses, the foundation remains **forage**, with the compound feed designed to complement that roughage rather than replace it.

At the centre of the process is the idea of **dietary balance**. Too much **starch** or **sugar** can affect behaviour, gut health, and **laminitis risk**, while insufficient digestible nutrients can limit stamina, condition, or recovery. A well-designed formulation aims for steady **energy release**, good **digestibility**, and dependable **palatability**.

Why Horse Feed Companies Offer Bespoke Feeds

A **horse feed company UK** may offer bespoke feeds because horses vary widely in their nutritional requirements. Even two horses in the same stable can need very different ration designs if their workloads, ages, metabolisms, or forage sources differ. This is where **feed manufacturing** becomes more than a production process; it becomes a practical application of nutritional science.

Many feed companies now work with owners, yard managers, and an **equine nutritionist** to fine-tune formulations for specific situations. A bespoke feed can be useful when a horse struggles to hold condition, needs support for muscle development, or requires a carefully controlled starch level. It is also helpful when forage quality changes through the season, because the horse's base diet may no longer provide the same nutrient density.

Another reason horse feed companies create custom options is consistency. Commercial feeds often aim at broad groups of horses, but a custom solution can be adjusted for the exact amount of **crude protein**, fibre, oil, vitamins, and minerals required. This improves ration accuracy and can reduce the need for unnecessary supplementation. It also helps with **ingredient sourcing**, as the manufacturer can select components that suit the intended use and the desired **quality assurance** standard.

For the end user, the value lies in having a feed that reflects real conditions: the horse's body, the forage available, and the actual workload. In this way, a bespoke feed is not a luxury product; it is a practical response to individual nutritional needs.

Key Factors That Shape a Feed Recipe

The most effective **feed formulation** starts with data. A manufacturer or nutrition specialist will look at the horse's **body condition score**, current **workload**, and the quality of the existing **forage**. These three factors shape the core of the recipe and help determine whether the ration should prioritise energy, digestible fibre, or additional protein.

Body condition score shows whether the horse is underweight, ideal, or carrying too much condition. This matters because the same feed can have opposite effects depending on the horse's starting point. A horse

needing **weight gain** may benefit from a ration that is energy dense but not excessively high in starch, while a horse maintaining condition may need only modest top-up feeding.

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Workload is equally important. A horse in light hacking work has very different energy needs from a **performance horse** doing repeated schooling, jumping, or endurance exercise. The harder ***clinical EMS feed*** the work, the more the ration may need to support stamina, recovery, and muscle repair. A custom feed can be designed to support these demands without making the diet too rich or difficult to digest.

Forage analysis is one of the most useful tools in modern equine nutrition. It reveals the nutrient content of hay, haylage, or other roughage, helping identify gaps in **digestible energy**, protein, fibre quality, or mineral content. With that information, a manufacturer can build the concentrate portion of the diet more accurately. This is especially useful where forage varies in maturity, cut, storage, or feeding consistency.

A good recipe is rarely created from guesswork. It is usually built from condition scoring, workload assessment, and forage analysis, then refined to match the horse's response.

Core Ingredients Used in Custom Horse Feeds

Custom horse feeds can include a wide range of ingredients, but some core components appear again and again because they are effective, familiar, and easy to balance. **Oats, beet pulp, and oil** are three common building blocks in many bespoke feed systems.

Oats are valued for their palatability and useful energy contribution. They can suit horses needing quick but manageable energy, though the final inclusion level depends on the horse's sensitivity to starch and its overall diet. In a custom formulation, oats may be used more sparingly for horses that need controlled energy release, or more generously where the horse needs straightforward calorie support.

Beet pulp is often used to increase digestible fibre and support gut function. It is a popular ingredient in rations that need more condition support without excessive starch. Beet pulp can help improve weight maintenance or gain while keeping the diet more suitable for horses with digestive sensitivity. Because it is fibrous and fermentable, it also contributes to steadier energy release.

Oil is another valuable energy source. Unlike starch, oil provides concentrated calories with low sugar impact, which can be useful for endurance, coat condition, and sustained performance. It is often added where the diet needs more energy density but should remain moderate in starch. The choice of oil source and inclusion rate will depend on palatability, digestibility, and the ration's overall nutrient balance.

Other ingredients may also be used to shape texture, support roughage intake, or improve flavour. The best ingredient mix depends on the horse's purpose, the digestible value of the forage, and whether the feed should encourage **muscle development**, maintain condition, or support recovery after exercise.

How Nutrient Balance Is Calculated

Balancing a ration involves more than choosing ingredients with good reputations. A feed specialist calculates the relationship between **digestible energy**, **protein**, and **fibre** so the horse receives the right nutritional

support without excess. This calculation helps keep the ration efficient, practical, and aligned with the horse's workload and body goals.

Digestible energy indicates how much usable energy the horse can extract from the diet. It is one of the main drivers of condition, exercise support, and recovery. Too little digestible energy can lead to loss of weight or poor topline; too much can contribute to unwanted condition or excitability, depending on the horse.

Protein is essential for tissue repair, muscle maintenance, and growth. The amount of **crude protein** required will vary with age, stage of production, and training intensity. A performance horse may need more support for muscle repair, while a growing or lactating horse may need a different amino acid profile for tissue development and milk production.

Fibre is central to equine nutrition because it supports digestive function and helps maintain a stable hindgut environment. High-fibre diets are often easier on the gut and can contribute to better behaviour and steadier energy release. Fibre also helps a ration feel more satisfying, which can be useful for horses needing careful calorie control or improved feeding behaviour.

The process often uses a **ration calculator** or similar formulation software to compare the horse's needs with the nutrient values of forage and concentrates. This allows the nutrition team to adjust the diet for weight maintenance, weight gain, or specialised metabolic support while protecting dietary balance.

Common Additives and Functional Ingredients

Beyond the main feed ingredients, custom formulations often include additives and functional ingredients that support specific nutritional roles. **Vitamins, minerals, probiotics, and prebiotics** are among the most common additions in bespoke feed systems.

Vitamins help support normal body functions, including immunity, metabolism, and tissue maintenance. **Minerals** are equally important for bone strength, muscle function, nerve activity, and overall health. Because forage and pasture quality can vary, these nutrients are often supplemented to help fill gaps in the diet.

Probiotics are included to support gut health by contributing beneficial microorganisms, while **prebiotics** provide fermentable substrates that feed those beneficial populations. Together, they can be useful where digestive stability is a priority, especially in horses that are sensitive to feed changes or stress. Their value is often discussed in relation to **gut health**, fibre utilisation, and general digestive comfort.

Some formulations also include ingredients aimed at **metabolic support**, especially where starch and sugar need to be moderated. These additions do not replace good forage management or sensible feeding practice, but they can strengthen the overall feed design. The key is to ensure that **supplementation** is purposeful rather than excessive, and that every additive has a clear role in the final ration.

Formulations for Different Horse Types

Custom feeds are especially useful because different types of horses have different priorities. A **performance horse, broodmare, and senior horse** each require a distinct approach to energy, protein, fibre, and digestibility.

A **performance horse** needs a ration that supports stamina, recovery, and muscle development without creating unnecessary digestive stress. These feeds often focus on digestible energy, careful starch control, and sufficient protein for repair and conditioning. Oil and fibre are frequently used to improve energy density while maintaining good digestive stability and palatability.

A **broodmare** may need a different balance depending on stage of gestation or lactation. Her ration must support body condition, nutrient transfer, and milk production without placing too much pressure on the digestive system. This often means good-quality forage, adequate minerals, and carefully measured energy and protein.

A **senior horse** may have reduced digestive efficiency, dental challenges, or changing body condition. For these horses, feed design often prioritises palatable, easy-to-chew or soaked options with higher fibre digestibility and sensible energy density. Beet pulp, oil, and targeted vitamin and mineral support are commonly useful in these rations. The aim is to maintain condition, support comfort, and keep the diet practical for ageing horses.

Safety, Quality Control and Compliance

Any **horse feed company UK** producing bespoke diets must take safety and compliance seriously. **Feed hygiene, traceability**, and contaminant control are all essential parts of modern feed manufacturing. Without them, even a well-designed ration would be unsuitable in practice.

Feed hygiene covers the cleanliness of ingredients, equipment, storage areas, and packaging. This reduces the risk of spoilage, contamination, or nutrient degradation. Good hygiene is particularly important in feeds that contain sensitive ingredients such as oils, probiotics, or high-fibre components that must retain quality through production and storage.

Traceability allows the manufacturer to identify where each ingredient came from and which batch it was used in. This is critical for quality assurance, recall management, and confidence in ingredient sourcing. When a bespoke ration is made, traceability helps ensure that every component can be tracked through the supply chain.

AFLA controls are also part of responsible compliance. Managing the risk of aflatoxin contamination is important because mycotoxins can affect horse health and feed safety. A reputable manufacturer will use testing, supplier checks, and ingredient screening as part of the quality assurance process. Together, these steps help protect both the horse and the owner's confidence in the finished feed.

How to Work with a Feed Manufacturer

Working with a feed manufacturer is most effective when the process is structured and collaborative. It usually begins with a **nutrition consultation**, where the horse's details, current ration, workload, condition, and any health concerns are reviewed. This is the stage where the manufacturer or nutrition specialist gathers the information needed to design a practical feed plan.

Owners are often asked to complete a **specification sheet**. This document may include forage type, feeding rate, body condition score, training schedule, and the horse's main goals. It may also include details such as previous feed responses, feed intolerance, or the need for low-starch or higher-fibre support. The clearer the specification sheet, the more accurate the final formulation can be.

Once the draft ration is developed, **batch testing** may be used to confirm the final product matches the intended nutrient profile. This is an important part of quality assurance because it verifies that the feed being produced corresponds to the design. Batch testing can also help monitor consistency across production runs and support confidence in ingredient sourcing and manufacturing control.

For the best results, communication should continue after the feed is introduced. The horse's condition, coat, behaviour, droppings, and performance should all be monitored. If needed, the ration can be adjusted for better dietary balance, improved palatability, or a shift in workload. This iterative approach is what makes bespoke feed genuinely useful rather than merely personalised in name.

FAQs About Custom Horse Feed Formulations

What is a custom horse feed formulation?

A custom horse feed formulation is a feed designed specifically around an individual horse's needs, rather than a generic product. It takes account of forage intake, workload, body condition score, health priorities, and feeding goals to create a balanced ration with the right digestible energy, protein, fibre, vitamins, and minerals.

Why would a horse feed company UK create a bespoke ration?

A horse feed company UK may create a bespoke ration because horses do not all need the same nutrient balance. Some need weight gain, some need help with digestive comfort, and others need support for performance or ageing. Bespoke feed allows the manufacturer to match the horse's needs more precisely and support a better nutrient profile.

How do I know which ingredients are right for my horse?

The right ingredients depend on forage analysis, body condition score, workload, and the horse's response to starch, sugar, and fibre. An equine nutritionist or feed specialist will usually assess these factors before recommending ingredients such as oats, beet pulp, oil, vitamins, minerals, probiotics, and prebiotics.

Can custom horse feed help with weight gain or condition loss?

Yes, custom horse feed formulations can help with both weight gain and condition loss when the ration is properly balanced. By adjusting digestible energy, crude protein, fibre, and oil levels, the feed can support condition improvement without creating unnecessary starch load or digestive upset. The key is to base the formulation on the horse's actual needs rather than feeding more of the same product.

How is a custom feed formulation tested for safety and quality?

Safety and quality are checked through feed hygiene controls, ingredient traceability, and batch testing. A manufacturer may also use quality assurance checks for contamination risks such as AFLA, ensuring the final feed is consistent and safe. Good custom feed production relies on careful ingredient sourcing, documented standards, and testing that confirms the ration matches the intended specification.