

Choosing the right horse feed for pregnant mares is more than adding extra calories. During gestation, a mare's nutritional requirements evolve over time as the foal develops, and the feeding plan should support healthy pregnancy without unnecessary overfeeding. The best approach is typically a balanced ration built around high-quality forage, then adjusted with a suitable complete horse feed or compound feed if the mare needs more calories, amino acids, minerals and vitamins.

The right feed depends on body condition score, gestation stage, quality of forage, and how much digestible energy the mare already gets from hay or haylage. In many cases, the answer is not just one "best" product, but a practical feeding system that maintains condition, aids foal development, and gets ready the mare for lactation later on.

How pregnancy alters a mare's nutritional needs

Pregnant mares do not all need major modifications to their diet from the start. In early pregnancy, many mares keep condition well on roughage <http://news.morningrelease.com/story/507205/with-half-of-britains-horses-overweight-bifid-launches-grainfree-lowsugar-feed-for-the-nations-gooddoers.html> and a modest concentrate ration, if any. As pregnancy advances, foal development increases the demand for energy, protein, minerals and vitamins, especially in the final trimester. That is when nutritional requirements become more precise and ration planning matters most.

Caloric requirements increase because the mare must sustain both her own maintenance and the growing foetus. Proteins becomes more important for tissue growth, while minerals such as calcium and phosphorus help skeletal development. Vitamin E also supports health in overall health and muscle function. If the mare is too thin, old, poor-doing, or fed inferior forage, she may need a more nutrient-dense horse feed to keep her in good condition.

Body condition score is a very useful tool for assessing whether the feeding plan is effective. A mare should ideally keep a consistent body score rather than becoming too thin or too heavy. Increased body weight can be normal further along in pregnancy, but rapid shifts usually suggest the feed plan needs reviewing. Equine nutrition during gestation is really about consistency, digestibility, and matching amount of feed to the mare's current 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 choice usually depends on forage quality, the mare's appetite, and whether the feed needs to deliver extra digestible energy or act mainly as a nutrient balancer.

Forage should always form the basis of 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 supply 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 equilibrium.

What ought to the diet of a pregnant mare cover?

An effective feeding plan for pregnant mares should begin with high-quality **hay** or **haylage**. They supply the fibre needed for gut health and a steady energy supply. Hay is often easier to assess for consistency, while haylage can be particularly beneficial if it is properly produced and palatable. Either can work well, 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 [overweight horse feed](#) 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 sensible feeding plan 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 worth considering when forage alone is insufficient to support body condition or when you want a simple consistent way to cover nutritional requirements. It can be especially helpful if the mare has a low condition score, lives on changing forage, or is entering late pregnancy and needs more support for foal development.

One of the biggest 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 correctly balanced, it may also improve digestibility and deliver a steadier 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 valuable as a starting point. These tools help estimate feed by bodyweight, but they should always be tweaked based on body condition score, forage quality, pregnancy stage and overall health.

A practical approach is to base the ration on bodyweight and make gradual changes. 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 estimates. 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 slow adjustment, not dramatic increases.

As a starting point, 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
- any advice from a vet or nutrition professional

The goal is a balanced ration, not simply "more horse feed".

Ten horse feeding rules that count during gestation

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

- Center the diet on forage first.
- Keep 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.
- Choose digestible, well-labelled products.
- Avoid sudden increases in starch content.
- Monitor appetite and manure quality.
- Request veterinary guidance if the mare changes condition.

These horse feeding rules are easy to follow, 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 the feed mixes and homemade recipes really a good idea?

Some owners prefer a **horse feed mix recipe** or a homemade option. This can be effective, 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 seem sensible but still miss key nutrients such as calcium, phosphorus or vitamin E.

That 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 simpler and safer than guessing with a horse feed mix recipe.

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

How to evaluate horse feed companies and products

There are numerous **horse feed companies**, and the top product is not always the one with the most eye-catching claims. Begin by looking 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 complete horse feed or a compound feed. Some owners choose 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 a key factor for many owners, and it is sensible to ask **how much does horse feed cost** before settling on a plan. The answer varies considerably 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 whole daily intake rather than the bag price alone. A economical product that requires a large feed rate may turn out to cost more than a denser feed used in smaller amounts. It is often best to compare daily cost, not just the price per bag. That gives a better 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. Paying slightly more on a nutritionally balanced feed can be worthwhile if it helps avoid problems later.

Signs the feeding plan needs adjusting

Even a well-designed 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.

Adjust 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.

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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 necessarily means better nutrition. That is not true. Pregnant mares usually do better with a forage-led 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 straightforward: 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 proper 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.

How often should a pregnant mare be fed?

A pregnant mare should be fed in a consistent routine, ideally with forage available for much of the day and concentrate meals split 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?

Yes, some do, but not all. Supplements can be beneficial 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 can I find out if my mare is getting the right amount of feed?

Track body condition score, coat quality, appetite and weight gain over time. A mare that maintains 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.