

The ideal **horse feed** for **laminitic horses** is usually a **low sugar feed** that is also a **low starch feed**, rich in fibre, and suited to the horse's **body condition score**. In practice, that often means a **forage first** approach built around well-made **hay**, well-controlled grazing, and a **balanced diet** that keeps **digestible energy** under control without sacrificing **gut health** or **hoof support**.

If you want the simplest answer: choose feeds that are low in **non-structural carbohydrates**, often listed as **NSC**, avoid products with high **sugar content** or **starch content**, and base the ration on fibre rather than cereals. For many laminitis-prone horses, that means a **fibre-based ration** with **soaked hay**, a suitable balancer, and careful **weight management**.

What is laminitis and why does feed matter?

Laminitis is a severe condition affecting the sensitive tissues inside the hoof. It can lead to discomfort, movement problems, and permanent harm if not controlled well. Feed matters because diet has a strong influence on blood sugar regulation, insulin response, and the amount of **digestible energy** a horse gets each day.

For many horses, especially those likely to weight gain or metabolic issues, the greatest nutritional risk comes from excess **sugar and starch**. Diets rich in these can increase the chance of a laminitic episode. That is why the focus should be on maintaining **non-structural carbohydrates** low and choosing feed that promotes stable energy levels rather than rapid spikes.

Good feeding is not just about avoiding harm. It also covers the wider needs of the horse, including **hoof health**, the digestive system, and appropriate condition. A horse that is underfed in fibre or poorly balanced can develop other issues, so the aim is not simply "less feed", but the right feed in the right amount.

What ought to a laminitic horse eat?

A laminitic horse should usually eat a diet built around **low sugar feed** choices, plenty of **forage**, and tightly controlled grazing. The foundation should be a **high fibre diet**, because fibre provides slower-release energy and helps support **gut health**.

The best starting point is usually:

- Carefully controlled **forage**, mainly **hay** or **soaked hay**
- Carefully measured low-NSC compound feed or balancer if needed
- Restricted **grazing management**, especially when **grass sugar** is high
- Fresh water, salt, and any supplements recommended for the horse's condition

Forage first is the key principle. Most laminitic horses do best when forage makes up the bulk of the diet, because it helps maintain chewing time, supports digestive function, and provides steady energy without the risks of cereal-heavy feeding. If the horse needs to lose weight, forage may still be the main feed, but total intake often needs to be measured carefully.

Grazing must be managed with particular care. **Grass sugar** can rise in certain conditions, and that can increase the risk for susceptible horses. Restrict access when necessary, use a grazing muzzle if advised, and monitor the horse's **body condition score** regularly.

Top horse feed types for laminitic horses

There are several **types of horse feed** that may suit a laminitis-prone horse, but the best options tend to be those with a low **starch content** and limited **sugar content**. The goal is to support a steady, **balanced diet** rather than simply increasing calories.

Recommended feed types often include:

- Low-starch fibre mixes
- Unmolassed chop
- Ration balancers
- Compressed feeds designed for laminitis-prone horses
- Moistened fibre products with low starch and sugar

Unmolassed chop can be beneficial as part of a fibre-based ration, especially when you need to slow eating and improve **palatability** without adding molasses. However, it should still be checked carefully on the **feed label**, because not every chop product is necessarily suitable.

What matters most is not the marketing name, but the actual nutritional profile. A feed that looks “safe” may still be unsuitable if the **starch content** or total **NSC** is too high. A simple rule is to prioritise feeds designed for weight control, laminitis management, or low-calorie maintenance, then compare the label details.

Are complete horse feeds suitable for laminitic horses?

Complete horse feed can be suitable for some laminitic horses, but only if it offers the right **nutritional balance** and has low enough **starch levels**. The word “complete” means the feed is intended to provide a broad range of nutrients, but it does not automatically mean it is safe for every laminitic horse.

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Always check the **feed label** for sugar, starch, and recommended daily amounts. Some complete feeds are designed for sports horses or horses needing more condition, so they may contain more **digestible energy** than a laminitis-prone horse should have. Others are specifically made as low-calorie, low-NSC products and can work well as part of a controlled ration.

If a full feed is used, it should still be fed in measured amounts and ideally alongside forage, not instead of it. For horses that gain weight easily or need close **weight management**, a **ration balancer** plus forage may be a more suitable option than a full complete feed.

When are fiber-based feeds a better choice?

A **fibre feed** is often the more suitable choice when the horse has a history of laminitis, needs fewer calories, or is prone to insulin-related issues. Fibre-based products typically help maintain a more even release of energy and are easier to fit into a **high fibre diet**.

Beet pulp is a regular ingredient in fibre-based feeds. It can be a helpful source of fermentable fibre and may be suitable when prepared correctly. Many fibre feeds are also available as **soaked feeds**, which can improve softness, reduce eating speed, and help horses that need more hydration in their feed.

For some horses, soaked fibre products are especially helpful because they allow you to add volume without adding much starch. That can support satiety, help with **daily intake** control, and make a diet more practical for

horses that need reduced grazing or less concentrate feed.

Feeding rules for horses for horses with laminitis

Strong **horse feeding rules** are important when handling laminitis. The best guide is often the classic **10 rules of feeding horses**, modified for laminitis risk: maintain the diet forage-led, avoid sudden changes, feed small amounts regularly if concentrates are needed, and monitor body weight closely.

A helpful **feeding routine** should include:

- Recording forage and any concentrates consistently
- Making meal sizes small
- Leaving no long gaps without fibre
- Applying any feed change gradually
- Checking **portion control** every few weeks

Regularity matters. Horses do best on predictable feeding, and this is especially true for laminitic horses. Sudden changes in forage, turnout, or concentrate intake can affect the digestive system and overall metabolic stability. A regular routine helps promote **gut health** and supports better weight control.

One more important rule is to treat grass as feed. If a horse is turned out, **grazing management** becomes part of the feeding plan. The horse may need restricted grazing, shorter turnout periods, or access only when **grass sugar** is lower.

How to use a horse feeding chart and calculator

A **horse feeding chart** and a **horse feed calculator uk** can aid you work out the correct ration, but they should always be used alongside observation and professional advice. They are valuable tools for converting rough guesses into a more controlled plan.

To use them properly, you need two important pieces of information: **bodyweight** and **body condition score**. Bodyweight helps you estimate forage and feed quantities, while body condition score shows whether the horse is underweight, ideal, or carrying too much fat. For laminitic horses, this is crucial because excess condition can increase risk.

A calculator may suggest a daily intake based on weight and workload, but laminitis management often requires fine-tuning below a standard maintenance plan. That is why you should think in terms of target condition rather than simply filling a bucket to a recommended amount. The chart or calculator gives a reference point; the horse's response tells you whether the ration is working.

If you are unsure, measure the hay, measure the bucket feed, and review the horse's shape and behaviour over time. Changes in weight, foot comfort, and **energy levels** all tell you whether the plan is working well.

Should you choose a branded feed such as Spillers horse feed?

Spillers horse feed is just one of many brand-name choices on the market, and branded feeds can be useful because reputable **horse feed companies** often provide clear nutritional information, feeding guides, and specialist products. However, the brand name alone is not enough to decide suitability for a laminitic horse.

The key is to read **feed labels** carefully. Check the levels of sugar, starch, fibre, and recommended feeding rate. A branded product may be suitable if it is designed for laminitis-prone horses or for low-calorie maintenance, but a

different product from the same company may be intended for horses needing more condition or performance support.

When assessing a *low starch performance feed* branded feed, ask:

- Is it really low in NSC?
- Does it fit the horse's **weight management** needs?
- Is it able to be fed in small enough amounts to avoid excess **digestible energy**?
- Will it provide a **balanced diet** alongside forage?

Trusted brands can be a helpful place to start, but the label matters more than the logo. The best decision is based on the horse's health needs, not marketing.

How much does horse feed cost?

Horse feed cost differs significantly depending on product type, ingredient quality, and the horse's daily requirements. A bag from one of the main **horse feed companies** may seem costly at first glance, but the key issue is the **daily ration cost**, not just the bag price.

To estimate value, look at:

- **Bag size** and its duration
- Daily recommended amount
- Whether the horse needs complete feed or only a balancer
- The cost of extras such as supplements or soaked fibre products

A feed with a reduced **bag size** may seem cheaper, but if the horse uses a large amount each day, it can cost more over time. By contrast, a highly concentrated balancer or minimal feed may have a greater price per bag but a smaller daily ration cost.

For laminitic horses, the best-value approach is often the one that cuts waste, avoids unnecessary extras, and fits the horse's specific needs. Good **horse feed cost** budgeting should include forage, not just loads of compound feed.

Horse feed guidance UK: when to seek help

Dependable **horse feed advice uk** is important if you are managing laminitis, particularly when the horse has ongoing episodes, struggles with weight, or has other health conditions. A **veterinarian** should be consulted if laminitis is thought to be present or if the horse is currently painful. Prompt diagnosis and treatment are important.

An **equine diet specialist** can develop a diet that fits the horse's needs, especially if you are balancing reduced sugar, roughage, and weight control. This is especially helpful when the horse is tricky to maintain, when forage analysis is available, or when you need a more precise feeding plan.

Professional guidance is equally important for long-term **laminitis management**. A feeding plan that suits for one horse may be inappropriate for another, even if they both have a history of laminitis. Type, age, workload, turnout, weight, and foot condition all influence the best plan.

Typical mistakes to steer clear of

A number of common ration mistakes can make laminitis worse. One of the biggest is choosing feeds with hidden **molasses**. Molassed products are often more palatable, but they can raise the **sugar content** and make the feed not as suitable for a sensitive horse.

Another common mistake is relying on **grain** as a quick energy source. Grain-based feeds often carry higher starch levels, which may increase the risk of a laminitic reaction. Even small amounts can be unsuitable if the overall diet is already rich in **sugar and starch**.

More **laminitis triggers** related to feeding include:

- Excessively feeding concentrate rations
- Neglecting forage quality
- Causing sudden diet changes
- Allowing uncontrolled grazing when **grass sugar** is high
- Skipping checks of the **body condition score** regularly

Always remember that a feed advertised as “natural” or “conditioning” is not automatically suitable. Inspect the **feed label**, ask about NSC, and keep the focus on the horse’s actual nutritional needs.

Laminitis-friendly feeding FAQ

Which horse feed is best for laminitic horses?

The best **horse feed** for laminitic horses is usually a low **NSC**, **low starch feed** that supports a **high fibre diet**. Often, the safest plan is forage-led, with **hay** or **soaked hay** as the foundation and a balancer or fibre-based feed added only if needed.

Should laminitic horses have complete horse feed?

Indeed, some **complete horse feed** products can be suitable if they have low **starch levels** and fit the horse’s **nutritional balance** needs. Always make sure to check the **feed label** and compare the sugar and starch figures before deciding.

How much should I feed a laminitic horse?

The answer depends on **bodyweight**, **body condition score**, **overweight horse feed** and whether the horse needs weight loss, maintenance, or gentle conditioning. A **horse feeding chart** or **horse feed calculator uk** can help you start, but the ration should be adjusted to keep intake controlled and suitable for laminitis risk.

Are labelled feeds like Spillers horse feed appropriate for founder-prone horses?

Spillers horse feed and other named feeds can be suitable if the specific product is low in sugar and starch and fits the horse’s needs. Never judge by brand alone. Compare the product against other **horse feed companies** using the label information and feeding guide.

What should I avoid feeding a horse with laminitis?

Avoid feeds high in **molasses**, high-starch **grain** mixes, and anything with a high **sugar content** or unsuitable **sugar and starch** profile. Also be careful with unrestricted grazing, because **grass sugar** can help trigger **laminitis triggers**. If you are unsure, ask a **veterinarian** or **equine nutritionist** for help.

What should i feed my horse quiz

If you are using a “ **what should i feed my horse quiz**” style approach, the right answers for a laminitic horse usually point towards forage first, low sugar, low starch, and careful portion control. The quiz can support narrow choices, but it should not replace proper assessment of the horse’s condition and needs.

Horse feed for beginners

If you are looking for **horse feed for beginners**, the easiest safe approach is to start with the basics: good forage, clean water, salt, and a feed that fits the horse’s body condition and workload. For a laminitic horse, keep the ration simple and avoid overcomplicating it with unnecessary concentrates.

Horse feed mix recipe

A simple **horse feed mix recipe** for a laminitis-prone horse might include soaked fibre, unmolassed chop, and a suitable balancer, but the exact mix should be based on the horse’s forage, **body condition score**, and professional advice. Don’t make up a mix with grain or molasses-heavy ingredients.

If you want the safest route, think: **forage first**, low **starch content**, low **sugar content**, careful **grazing management**, and regular review of the horse’s weight and comfort. That is the foundation of effective laminitis feeding.