

What Is a Poor Doer Horse?

A **poor doer horse** is one that has difficulty to maintain **condition** even when it has access to a balanced diet and adequate management. These horses may have a naturally rapid metabolism, poor **digestibility**, a heavy workload, or they may simply use energy quickly. Some are easy to spot because they look lean, lack muscle, or have a low **body condition score**. Others slowly lose condition over time, which can be missed until **weight loss** becomes obvious.

The first step is not to assume the answer is simply more **horse feed**. A poor doer often needs a more effective feeding plan, not just a bigger one. Start by assessing **forage intake**, teeth, worming status, workload, and whether the horse is getting enough calories from a **forage-based diet**. If a horse is eating plenty of hay or **haylage** but still losing weight, the issue may be the quality of the forage, the horse's ability to use it efficiently, or the need for extra energy from other sources.

Body condition should be checked consistently, ideally using a simple scoring system. This helps you spot small changes before they become serious. A poor doer may need a carefully planned ration that improves **energy** intake without overloading the **digestive system**. That is why the best feeding plans focus on fibre, digestibility, and steady intake rather than large hard-feed meals.

How to Pick the Best Horse Feed for Poor Doers

Selecting the best **horse feed** for a thin horse means tailoring the feed to the horse's overall condition, exercise level, age, appetite, and digestive sensitivity. The goal is usually **weight gain** or more stable maintenance, but the approach there matters. A sensible diet should provide enough **calories**, support **gut health**, and remain palatable enough that the horse eats reliably.

A **complete horse feed** can be useful if you want simplicity and a balanced ration in one product. These feeds are designed to supply energy, **protein**, **vitamins**, and **minerals** together, though the quality and composition vary between **horse feed companies**. Some complete feeds are higher in fibre and lower in starch, while others are [overweight horse feed](#) more cereal-based. For poor doers, lower-starch options are often more manageable to manage because they can support condition without excessive excitability or digestive upset.

When comparing **types of horse feed**, think about where the calories come from. Energy can come from fibre, starch, or **oil**. Fibre- and oil-based rations are often better tolerated for horses that need consistent condition improvement. A cereal-rich feed may suit some performance horses, but it is not always the best choice for a horse that struggles with weight, especially if it has a sensitive digestive system.

Good **horse feed advice uk** focuses on the horse in front of you rather than a one-size-fits-all product. Use labels to compare ingredient quality, starch content, fibre levels, and feeding rates. Also look at the practical side: how much you need to feed, how easy it is to source, and whether the feed works well with the rest of the ration.

Low-Starch Options and Bodybuilders

A **high-fibre feed** is often one of the best starting points for a poor doer because fibre supports steady energy release and usually fits well into a natural grazing pattern. Horses are built to eat fibre throughout the day, so this approach supports **digestible fibre** intake and helps keep the gut working properly. For many poor doers, more fibre means more feed intake, better comfort, and stronger chance of gradual condition improvement.

A **conditioning feed** is usually more elevated in fats than a maintenance feed and is formulated to help horses build condition. The best ones offer good **calorie density** without relying heavily on starch. That renders them helpful for horses that need more energy but cannot cope with a large cereal load. Conditioners can be especially helpful when forage alone is not enough, or when the horse needs extra support during colder months, hard work, or recovery.

Look for feeds that combine digestible fibre with a sensible amount of oil and balanced nutrients. This combination can improve palatability and help the horse eat enough to meet its requirements. If the horse is picky, the texture and smell of the feed matter too. Poor doers often need a ration they will happily finish every day.

When to Use a Balancer, Cube, or Mix

A **feed balancer** is a concentrated supplement designed to provide key nutrients in a small amount of feed. It is useful when you want to improve nutrition without adding much bulk or extra starch. For a horse that already has excellent forage intake but still needs a nutritional top-up, a balancer can be an effective option. It is not always a high-calorie solution on its own, but it can support condition when paired with good forage and the right base feed.

A cube may be a practical middle ground. Some cubes are designed as a complete or near-complete ration, while others are more of a conditioning feed. A **horse feed mix recipe** can sometimes be useful for owners who want to build a custom ration, but it should be approached carefully. Balancing energy, fibre, minerals, and starch takes planning. A homemade mix that looks generous may still miss key nutrients or create an unhelpful starch load.

Many **horse feed companies** offer feeds aimed at **horse feed for beginners**, which is often a good place to start if you are not confident adjusting rations. These feeds usually give clearer feeding instructions, making it easier to build a consistent plan. Simpler is often safer, especially when you are learning how to manage a poor doer.

10 Guidelines of Feeding Horses That Suit Lean Horses

Consistent **horse feeding rules** matter even more for hard keepers because these horses are often being managed near the limit of what their body can comfortably handle. Using the **10 rules of feeding horses** supports health while enhancing condition.

- Use forage as the main part of the ration.
- Use **ad lib forage** if suitable if the horse can maintain a healthy weight on it safely.
- Feed **small frequent meals** rather than heavy hard-feed servings.
- Steer clear of sudden changes in ration.
- Select feed with suitable digestibility for the horse's **digestive system**.
- Adjust calories to work, climate, and body condition.
- Check **starch** intake carefully if the horse is sensitive.
- Use oil and fibre to raise energy where appropriate.
- Check teeth, worm control, and health issues before increasing feed.
- Review condition regularly and adjust the ration gradually.

For lean horses, these rules are not extra options. They help prevent upset, support nutrient use, and promote healthy weight gain. Feeding little and often also helps avoid overloading the gut, especially when the ration includes more concentrated energy sources.

How Much Horse Feed Should a Poor Doer Have?

The correct quantity of feed depends on the horse's size, body condition, workload, forage quality, and metabolism. A useful starting point is a **horse feeding chart**, but this should always be adapted to the individual horse. A **horse feed calculator uk** can also help work out a starting ration based on **horse body weight**, though it should be treated as a reference point, not a final answer.

The **daily ration** should consider the amount of energy the <http://news.raleighnewsnow.com/story/787995/with-half-of-britains-horses-overweight-bifid-launches-grainfree-lowsugar-feed-for-the-nations-gooddoers.html> horse gets from forage before any hard feed is added. A few poor doers need only a limited quantity of concentrated feed if the forage is excellent and plentiful. Others may need a more calorie-dense ration, especially if they have lost condition, are in work, or cannot eat enough forage in one day.

As a useful rule of thumb, increase feed little by little and monitor the horse's condition, coat, droppings, energy, and appetite. If the horse's condition does not get better after a reasonable period, review again the entire plan rather than simply putting in more feed. At times the problem is not quantity but quality, or an imbalance in the diet.

How to Use a Feeding Chart Safely

A feeding guide should be used as an initial reference, not as an absolute instruction. The best **feeding guide** will help you calculate a secure reference point using your horse's weight and activity level, but it cannot know your horse's exact needs. When using a **forage-to-concentrate ratio**, make sure forage remains the main part of the ration. This keeps the diet more natural and usually supports better **digestive health**.

Watch closely the **starch levels**. Too much starch can lead to digestive issues, more excitability, and a greater risk of digestive problems in sensitive horses. For many poor doers, it is wiser to raise calories with fibre and oil before increasing starch. This method often builds condition more gradually and helps gut function.

When in doubt, use the feeding chart as a guide and check whether the horse is gaining condition in the right way. The goal is not just to feed more, but to feed more intelligently.

How Much Does Horse Feed Cost?

The **horse feed cost** for a thin horse depends on feed type, feeding rate, and how much forage you already provide. A denser feed may have a higher **cost per bag**, but it may also be better value if you feed less of it. That is why price alone is not a reliable measure of **value for money**.

When comparing **horse feed companies**, look at what each bag actually delivers. A lower-cost feed may require a significantly greater feeding rate, while a premium balancer or conditioning feed may last longer and provide a more complete nutritional profile. Consider whether the product is a true complete feed, a top-up, or a specialist conditioning feed.

For a hard keeper, the best value is often the feed that helps maintain condition consistently without causing waste, stress, or extra veterinary problems. The lowest-priced option is not always the most economical if the horse still fails to gain weight or needs multiple extra products to complete the ration.

Comparing Well-Known Horse Feed Brands

When comparing **horse feed companies**, focus on easy-to-follow feeding instructions, detailed ingredient lists, and a product range that includes both **complete horse feed** and **conditioning feed** options. Certain brands are

known for broad ranges that suit different workloads and body types, while others specialise in fibre-based or low-starch nutrition.

Spillers horse feed is one of the most recognised names in the market and offers products for a wide range of horses, including those needing more condition. Like any brand, the right choice depends on the specific feed rather than the logo on the bag. A good comparison should consider calorie source, fibre content, starch, palatability, and how well the product fits the rest of the ration.

For poor doers, the most useful comparison points are whether the feed supports a healthy digestive system, whether it can be fed alongside forage, and whether it helps achieve gradual improvement without overloading the horse. A complete feed may suit one horse, while another may do better on a balancer plus a high-fibre conditioning ration.

Common Ration Problems That Can Leave Thin Horses Stronger

A common error is **overfeeding** an unsuitable feed. More is not necessarily better, especially if the ration becomes starch-heavy or unbalanced in nutrients. Another common issue is a **sudden diet change**, which can upset the digestive system and lower appetite. Hard keepers need steady consistent adjustment.

Colic risk can get higher if feed changes are abrupt, forage is low quality, or meals are oversized. Similarly, some horses are at greater risk of **laminitis** if the ration contains excess starch or sugar content relative to their needs. This is why feed choice must be selected carefully to the individual horse, not just selected for maximum calories.

Another mistake is ignoring forage quality. If forage intake is low, the horse may never get enough calories no matter how much hard feed is offered. In many cases, boosting forage access is the most crucial move before adding a more concentrated ration.

Useful Horse Feed Guidance for Newcomers

For **horse feed for beginners**, the safest way is to begin with forage, then create a basic, carefully balanced ration around it. Use **horse feed advice uk** from respected nutrition sources, but always adjust it to the horse in front of you. A poor doer often benefits from a clear routine, regular monitoring, and a feed plan that is straightforward to keep consistent.

Focus on **forage** first. Fresh hay or haylage is the foundation of the ration, and the horse should have ample time and access to benefit from it. Then choose a suitable hard feed, such as a high-fibre conditioner, complete feed, or balancer depending on how much extra energy and nutrients are needed.

Stable management also plays a role. Comfortable, dry shelter, reduced stress, regular turnout where appropriate, and consistent mealtimes all support appetite and condition. A horse that is anxious, cold, or uncomfortable will often have difficulty to use feed efficiently. Good management helps make the feed work better.

Use a simple record of what the horse eats, how much is offered, and how the body condition score changes over time. That makes it much easier to notice what is working and what is not.

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Common Questions About Feeding and Care for Poor Doers

What's the best horse feed for poor doers?

The best **horse feed** for poor doers is usually a high-fibre, calorie-dense option that supports steady condition gain without too much starch. In many cases, a good quality **conditioning feed**, a complete feed, or a feed balancer paired with plenty of forage works well. The best choice depends on the horse's appetite, workload, and digestive tolerance.

How much horse feed should a poor doer get each day?

The amount depends on the horse's **horse body weight**, body condition, work level, and how much good forage it already receives. A **horse feeding chart** or **horse feed calculator uk** can give a starting point, but the final **daily ration** should be adjusted based on condition, appetite, and digestive response.

Is a complete horse feed enough for a poor doer?

A **complete horse feed** can be adequate for some hard keepers, especially if it is calorie-dense and combined with good forage. However, others may need additional forage, a balancer, or a more suitable conditioning feed. The key is whether the total ration supplies adequate calories, protein, vitamins, and minerals without too much starch.

How do I use a horse feeding chart safely?

Use a **horse feeding chart** as a starting point only, and make sure it fits the horse's actual condition and workload. Check the **forage-to-concentrate ratio**, keep an eye on **starch levels**, and build up feed gradually. Safe use of a chart means maintaining **digestive health**, not just following a number on the page.

How much does horse feed cost per month for a poor doer?

Horse feed cost depends depending on the feed chosen, the **cost per bag**, and how much is fed each day. A more concentrated product may seem more expensive but can offer better **value for money** if less is needed. The total monthly cost also depends on forage quality and whether extra supplements are required.