



May 2009

Purchasing Hay for your Horses

Limited supplies, rising cost of fertilizer and diesel, and the cost of grain make it essential that quality horse hay be purchased for the winter months.

Horsemen are encouraged to buy early and buy adequate supplies of quality hay to avoid potential shortages and high winter cost. Drought in much of the country is reducing the hay available and costs are driving up the cost of hay. Since hay is essential to good horse health early purchases are necessary.

Horses need approximately 1% of their body weight in fiber to maintain a healthy gut and digestive system. Therefore, ten to fifteen pounds of hay per day is desirable. There are complete feeds that have 15% to 25% fiber in them. Although they have the fiber portion of a horse's requirement in the feed, most horses have a strong desire to chew and need something to occupy their time. Boredom often results in vices such as wood chewing and cribbing. Therefore, it is recommended that horsemen provide hay to horses at all times to meet their fiber requirements as well as provide something for the horse to chew.

Quality hay should be clean, free of all foreign materials, have a fresh green color, and smell fresh. Generally, in Louisiana we can produce grass hay that will test at 10 to 14% protein, have fiber levels below 30% and have adequate calcium and phosphorus

to meet the mineral demands of the horse. Quality hay can meet 80-90% of the average horse's energy and nutrient requirements and 60 or 70% of a performance horse's needs. Therefore, quality hay can greatly reduce feed grain cost.

The stage of maturity is one of the most critical factors in determining the quality of hay. It is important that hay be fertilized adequately but the stage of maturity is more important than fertilization.

Table 1: Stage of Maturity and Quality and Consumption of Bermuda Grass Hay

Table 1 shows that hay cut at 4 weeks of growth will have a protein level around 16%, TDN or energy value of 55%, Fiber less than 30% and the horses will consume up to 18 pounds. As the hay gets more mature (Table 1) the total protein goes down, the

Cutting Time	Total Protein	TDN (energy)	Fiber	Consumption
4-weeks	16.9	55	29.5	17.8
8-weeks	10.4	51	34.8	15.0
12-weeks	7.7	44	38.0	12.3
16-weeks	3.4	36	42.5	7.4

energy or TDN level goes down, fiber increases dramatically and the consumption by the horse decreases radically. Therefore, horsemen need to know the stage of maturity of the hay they purchase. So ask your supplier when was the grass cut last and how long had it grown prior to being

cut for hay. It is possible to purchase hay that looks good, smells good and is not stemmy and yet is not adequate to meet the horse's needs and reduce the amount of grain needed.

Additionally, it is always good to know what cutting you are purchasing. The first cutting in the spring or early summer tends to have more weeds. Therefore it is normally desirable to purchase from the second or third cutting. In Louisiana, cuttings may go all the way into September and October so a fourth or fifth cutting may be desirable also.

The moisture level in hay should normally be below 15% to avoid mold and dustiness. Unusually heavy bales tend to be higher in moisture and more susceptible to mold growth and need to be avoided. If bales seem heavy, put your hand down into the bale to detect heat and/or moisture.

In selecting hay for horses, the ultimate determination is the analysis of the hay. The LSU AgCenter and other laboratories will analyze hay for a minimum fee. Protein, energy, fiber, and mineral content can be determined. These values will help balance the ration and allow you to feed minimal levels of grain and achieve maximum performance from your horse.

Dr. Clint Depew
State Horse Specialist
LSU AgCenter

Blister Beetle Toxicity in Horses

Blister beetles are $\frac{3}{4}$ - to $1\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-long, narrow-bodied, broad-headed insects that may be found in alfalfa hay originating from certain parts of the United States.

As little as 25 ingested beetles may be toxic to an average-size horse. One beetle alone is not enough to cause toxicity in a horse.

Blister beetle larvae feed on grasshopper egg pods in the soil of alfalfa fields, usually in the western United States (Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, etc.) but can be found in many states from Florida to Arizona and as far north as South Dakota. The larvae overwinter, mature, then feed in groups on flowering alfalfa.

During the hay crimping process, the beetles are killed and remain in the hay as it is baled. The beetles remain toxic even after they are crushed and killed. Since the beetles gather in groups or swarms, large numbers can occur in concentrated clusters in a field. The beetles are usually found in focal areas of the hay (not spread out throughout all of the bales).

If your horse happens to eat that specific flake of hay, then the chances of that horse being adversely affected are high.

Toxicity

Cantharidin is the poisonous substance present in blister beetles. It is comparable to cyanide and strychnine in toxicity. Horses seem to be more sensitive to blister beetle toxicity compared to sheep or cattle, although comparable doses can cause problems.

Curing hay does not decrease the level of toxicity in blister beetles. Cantharidin is absorbed through the intestine and can cause symptoms such as inflammation, colic, straining, elevated temperature, depression, kidney failure, increased heart rate and respiration, dehydration, sweating and diarrhea. There is frequent urination

during the first 24 hours after ingestion, accompanied by inflammation of the urinary tract. This irritation may also result in secondary infection and bleeding. In addition, calcium levels in horses may be drastically lowered, and heart muscle tissues may be destroyed.

Animals that recover from the intestinal damage may develop complications such as laminitis (founder) or other systemic infections. Since animals can die within 72 hours, it is imperative to contact a veterinarian as soon as blister beetle poisoning is suspected.

The concentration of cantharidin does vary some from species to species of blister beetle. Striped blister beetles seem to be the most toxic.

If a horse is showing signs of blister beetle toxicity, a veterinarian should examine the horse, determine the risk of blister beetle ingestion and administer appropriate therapy. Confirmation of cantharidin toxicity requires stomach contents or urine levels of cantharadin.

Horse owners can reduce the risk of feeding blister beetles to their horses by implementing the following precautions:

- Set aside or buy hay from the first cutting, since it is much less likely to have beetles in it.
- Purchase certified blister-beetle-free hay.
- Check all hay prior to feeding for the presence of blister beetles.

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What's Happening with Horses?

Many people attended the 2009 Louisiana Equine Council Horse Expo, held March 13-15, and were impressed with the variety and quality of activities during the three-day educational and competitive event at the Ike Hamilton Expo Center in Monroe, La.

As vendors set up their booths, clinician Joe Wolter started off the activities with his horsemanship program, with a full complement of riders signed up to learn from the Bill Dorrance protégé. In his gentle but clear way, Wolter showed riders an easier way to achieve the results they were looking for with their horses. At the end of the day, horses were tired, but riders were excited about new approaches to solving common problems. Wolter's event took on a somber note with news of the death of revered horseman Ray Hunt, who passed away March 12 after a long illness. It was Hunt who learned from Tom Dorrance, and Hunt who began teaching others worldwide how to communicate better with their equine partners. This led to the revolution in horsemanship commonly referred to as natural horsemanship, using the horse's instincts and nature to help develop the relationship of trust and partnership with the human.

Other activities included the Peruvian Pasobilities, giving a flashy performance of their special gaited Paso Fino horses; the Greenwell Springs Drill team performing daredevil patterns on their horses; David Carter demonstrating and shooting from his Extreme Mustang Makeover top selling horse Silverado; and performances by most major breeds in the Parade of Breeds.

Joe Wolter took center stage again Saturday in the main arena to start a colt from the

Tom Foshee Ranch remuda. While the audience watched, he guided the barely touched youngster through his paces of first saddling and mounting without ever bucking. Wolter continued to progress with the colt over the weekend, explaining and demonstrating the methods that helped him become the natural horseman he is.

Mark Wilcher later did a reining demonstration, showing the western world's mirror image of dressage, with horses performing athletic maneuvers with almost imperceptible cues.

William Hetzel of Jennings brought out his working cowdogs to wow the crowd with the control and obedience of his canines while they moved cattle through a prescribed pattern.

Other Expo activities included educational programs on therapeutic riding, Wild Horse Ministries, feeds and feeding, saddle selection, trail riding across Louisiana, hoof care, vet care, bits and biting, chiropractic care for horses, knot-tying, and the LSU AgCenter Master Horseman program.

A final event was the drawing for a Corriente ranch saddle, which was won by Ray and Peni Armstrong of Ruston.

Expo Chair Ruby Collins is to be commended for doing an excellent job with a big project and making the entire event both educational and enjoyable for horse enthusiasts and the general public. Next year's LEC Expo is again planned for the Ike Hamilton Center in early March.

The weekend following the Expo, March 21, the Second Annual LEC Fun Ride was held in Cane Camp in Kisatchie National Forest.

More than 60 riders rode the winding forest trails to enjoy dogwoods, wild azalea, huckleberry and yellow jessamine blooming throughout the forest. Richard Hebert led the stock horse group, and Sibylle Waruszcak led the walking horses on the trail. The weather was perfect, and riders and family members enjoyed the cowboy stew after the ride, cooked by Ben D. Peterson. Chairman Peggy Bianchi was pleased with the tack sale and trail committee meeting and hopes to make next year's ride even better. The committee had a trails work day April 4 at their newest project at Hodges Gardens in Florien, which they are working to open to overnight equestrian use.

Howard Cormier
Southwest Region Equine Agent
LSU AgCenter

A Horseman's Responsibility

A lot of people do not realize the many responsibilities a person takes on when they become a horse owner. Besides the fact that the horse is totally dependent on the owner for its daily care (feeding, water and shelter), there are some other areas of responsibility for the owner.

I am talking about mainly two areas: 1) preparing your horse for the farrier; and 2) preparing your horse for treatment by your veterinarian. Contrary to some beliefs, it is not the responsibility of either of these people to train your horse to stand still for treatment or shoeing. That is the sole responsibility of you, the horse owner.

Preparing your horse for either of these activities is all a matter of de-sensitization. I am sure that most of you have heard of or have seen methods of de-sensitization

being used by people as a training method. Preparing your horse to be worked on by the vet or the horseshoer is the same. You need to gradually teach your horse not to be afraid of having his feet picked up and held. This needs to be done in small steps. Maybe by starting out using a rope or a walking cane to lift the hooves slightly and releasing when the horse relaxes. By doing this gradually, it will let you proceed to a point where you can lift and hold each foot. You should do this enough that you can lift each foot and tap on the bottom of the hoof.

It is too late to prepare your horse for veterinary treatment after he gets hurt. In preparing your horse for treatment, he must be de-sensitized in many different areas. He should be taught to accept objects in the mouth and muzzle area, so as to allow the veterinarian to work on teeth, grab the tongue, administer medicine (ex. Paste wormer). This can be accomplished by introducing the horse to a training stick or rope and letting him chew on them. This will get him used to objects entering his mouth. You should also rub the muzzle, the nostrils, and ears (both inside and out). This should be done gradually with the approach and retreat method. Doing so will allow the vet to examine the horse and administer medicine.

Another spot often forgotten is under the horse's tail. De-sensitization of this area will allow for the horse temperature to be taken.

Finally, the horse needs to be de-sensitized to injections. This can be done by pinching the horse's skin in the neck area and holding until the horse relaxes and then release the pressure. Be sure that you have control of the horse so that he will not be able to wheel around and kick you while administering the pressure.

Another responsibility of the horse owner is to be able to give the vet certain vital information when your horse is in trouble. When you call the vet, you should be able to supply the following information: 1) Pulse Rate (normal 36 to 40 beats per minute); 2) Respiration Rate (normal 10 to 20 breaths per minute); and 3) Temperature (normal 100 to 101 degrees Fahrenheit).

Remember, de-sensitizing your horse can be extremely dangerous. It should be done gradually and never by a small child.

Think how you would feel if you were a veterinarian or farrier and you had to deal with an untrained horse. Dealing with a horse that is willing to be worked on could make a difference in the attitude of the vet or farrier when they are making out your bill, if you know what I mean.

LA Stock Horse Association Starts Year with a Bang

The LA Stock Horse Assoc. began its 2009 year with two record breaking competitions. The first two competitions were held in conjunction with the LA Equine Council Expo. in West Monroe, LA at the Ike Hamilton Center on March 14th and 15th.

LaSh is beginning its third year of existence and the turnout for these two shows was the largest ever. There were 233 entries for the Saturday show and 186 on Sunday.

Mr. Joe Wolter conducted a working cow horse clinic and judged part of the Sunday show.

These competitions consist of ranch trail, ranch pleasure, reining, working cow horse, and ranch cutting.

At present, LaSH has 125 members and is growing every day.

For more information or clinic and/or competition dates, go to the website www.louisianastockhorse.com or call Judy Weisgerber at 1-877-335-3072.

Louisiana Stock Horse Association makes pre-entry mandatory

Due to the large number of entries and an interest in getting the competitions started on time, LaSH has implemented a mandatory pre entry procedure. Starting this next month for the May competition in Folsom, LA, members must either email their entries in or call in to enter. Call in entries for each show will be taken from 4:00 pm to 10:00 pm on the Monday and Tuesday prior to that month's competition (Example: May 11th or 12th from 4:00 pm to 10:00 pm). Calls are toll free at 877-335-3072. All emails should be in by the Tuesday prior to the competition. The email address is jweisger@bellsouth.net. There will be a thirty dollar fee assessed members that enter the day of the show. No penalty will be assessed for drawing out.

New members of LaSH joining the day of the show do not have to pre-enter for that show.

If you have any questions, contact Judy Weisgerber at the toll free number.

Budgets Cuts Slash LSU AgCenter Programs

Budget cuts from the 2009 fiscal year have already negatively impacted many AgCenter

programs in the areas of Beef Cattle, Row Crops, Sugarcane, Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries, Commercial and Consumer Horticulture, 4-H Youth Development, and Family and Consumer Sciences in both the areas of research and extension.

The projected fiscal year 2010 budget cuts will impact the AgCenter even more. Next year's reductions are currently estimated to be 15% to 26%, in addition to the 09 fiscal year budget reduction of 4.4%.

Reductions to Cooperative Extension Programs

- Reduced Funding of Approximately 30% for extension educational programs on significant agricultural commodities, along with 4-H programs that serve over 240,000 youth and 52,000 4-H club members.
- Eliminate 40 extension service programs, six field extension service units, and four on-campus extension service units would be eliminated.
- This is the equivalent of eliminating 76 faculty and 43 support staff.

Reductions to Research Programs

- Reduced funding of approximately 30% for research programs on significant agricultural commodities.
- Eliminate 60 on-campus research programs, 15 field research programs, six field units, and three on-campus research units.
- This is equivalent to eliminating 89 faculty and 50 support staff.

Reductions to Support Programs and Activities

- Eliminate 25 administrative and institutional support programs.

- Eliminate 16 faculty and 27 support staff.
- Will not be able to address critical environmental and regulatory issues and mediate agricultural/environmental conflicts.

All of these measures will directly impact most citizens in all parishes of the state. Unlike most institutions in higher education, the AgCenter has no students from which tuition is received. Without additional revenue to offset the lack of tuition, these budget cuts could require the AgCenter to eliminate long-standing research and extension programs in Louisiana and would severely affect the food and fiber industry of Louisiana.

Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act of 2009 Introduced in Senate

On March 26, 2009, Senator Mary Landrieu (D-LA) introduced the Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act of 2009 (S. 727). This bill is identical to a bill by the same name (H.R. 503) introduced by Representative John Conyers (D-MI) in the House of Representatives on January 14.

The bill would criminalize the possession, transport, sale, delivery, or receiving in interstate or foreign commerce of a horse or horse meat with the intent that it be used for human consumption. It would thus apply to the transport and sale of horses for slaughter in the U.S. or to a foreign country.

Penalties would include fines and/or one year imprisonment for a first offense or one involving five or fewer horses. Offenses involving more than five horses or repeat

offenders would face increased fines and/or up to three years imprisonment.

The bill amends Title 18 of the U.S. criminal code, which deals with animal cruelty prohibitions.

In the previous Congress (110th) Senator Landrieu introduced related legislation, “The Virgie S. Arden American Horse Slaughter Prevention Act,” (S. 311). That bill amended the Horse Protection Act (HPA), which was enacted in 1970 to prohibit the showing, transport or sale of horses that have been subjected to any painful process to accentuate their gate. The Animal & Plant Inspection Service (APHIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture enforces the HPA. S. 311 was referred to and approved by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

Because the Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act amends the criminal code rather than HPA it has been referred to the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. The Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), is a co-sponsor of this legislation. The Bill currently has 14 co-sponsors.

If you have any questions regarding this bill please call the AHC. 1616 H Street NW 7th Floor, Washington DC 20006 • 202-296-4031 • Fax 202-296-1970

Email: AHC@horsecouncil.org • Web Address: www.horsecouncil.org

Horse Tips

- **A true snaffle bit works on one-to-one pressure. However many pounds of pressure you apply to the rein is the same amount of pressure**

you apply to the horse's mouth. Think about that the next time you tear one's head off.

- **A true snaffle bit is designed to be worked one rein at a time. Until you get your horse very responsive to one rein pressure, you should try not to pull on both reins at the same time.**
- **Does your horse have a tendency to chew the bark of trees in the pasture? This happens from time to time. It can be an indication that your horse is lacking something in its diet. It could be a lack of roughage in the diet (even though your horse maybe on pasture, he may need roughage from hay because he has become use to having hay over the winter) or it could be from a lack of minerals or salt. Once they start and find something they like, they may continue to chew.**

Calendar of Events

May

16 LA Stock Horse Assoc. Competition
Folsom, LA

June

6 LA Stock Horse Assoc. Clinic and
Competition; LSU Alexandria
12 Northwest District 4-H Horse Show
Stonewall, LA

19 Bi Parish 4-H Horse Show
(Vernon & Beauregard)
DeRidder, LA

29-30 Southwest District 4-H Horse Show
Sulphur, LA

29-July 1 Southeast District 4-H Horse show
Baton Rouge, LA

July

1-2 Northeast District 4-H Horse Show
Monroe, LA

2-4 Acadiana District 4-H Horse Show
Lafayette, LA

6-11 LSU State 4-H Horse Show Monroe,
LA

11-12 LA Stock Horse Assoc. Clinic
and Competition
New Iberia, LA

**Cleve Weisgerber
Central Regional Equine Agent
LSU AgCenter**