



## HOW DO I GET IT RIGHT?

Discover the basics and facts of feeding your horse



Fibregenix™



## THE DIET SOLUTIONS YOU ASK US ABOUT TO SOLVE YOUR HORSE'S FEEDING DILEMMAS

Welcome!

When your horse isn't looking or performing at his best or is feeling under the weather, every horse owner wants answers. This e-book is written for you, the dedicated horse owner, providing solutions to the most common dietary issues you contact us about. Equine nutrition is a vast subject with information and product overload causing many disagreements about what works and what doesn't.

However, it's not rocket science - if you keep it natural, keep it simple and feed your horse as he would want to be fed, the happier and healthier he'll be.

If you need more advice after reading this, please contact us and we'll be happy to guide you in the right direction.

At Fibregenix, we're totally committed to your horse's health.

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## 1. THE BASICS OF FEEDING HORSES

How many different feed products and supplements go into your horse's bucket? 2? 4? More than 4? Are these products working for him? Or are there still problems with how he looks, performs or behaves? Overloading your horse with stuff that's not doing the job it's supposed to do is self-defeating in the long term and too much can be just as harmful as too little.

### **The 6 simple facts about horses and their eating habits: -**

- 1:** Horses prefer and need to eat one thing – FIBRE, (usually as a variety of grasses and other forages).
- 2:** Not every horse in work needs grains/hard feed in his diet., especially good doers or those in light or moderate work.
- 3:** Horses easily develop a sweet tooth but denying your horse those sweet treats/feeds won't make him 'grumpy' or 'bored' with his natural fibre diet.
- 4:** Horses aren't very nutritionally wise, so they need you to make the right choices for them.
- 5:** Horses don't let their emotions dictate what they eat. They eat to live and they've evolved to live on fibre to keep their digestive system functioning properly. This is the foundation that provides them with the necessary protein, fats, carbs and other nutrients for their daily needs. It's in the pasture we provide them with and other fibre feeds. The good stuff!
- 6.** They DON'T do well on high starch/sugar feeds fed in large amounts, high levels of pro-inflammatory oils and fructan-loaded improved pasture.

So, if you're wanting to make a change for the better but aren't sure what to do, then speak to us. We have decades of experience of knowing what works and what doesn't.

## 2. HOW MUCH SHOULD MY HORSE EAT EVERY DAY TO STAY HEALTHY?

The average horse needs to eat approximately 2% of his bodyweight in total dry matter per day for general health and gut fill. However, every horse is an individual. Some may need more or less than this depending on whether your horse or pony is the type that puts on weight at the merest sniff of grass, or is a breeding or highly stressed competition horse in hard work with a compromised digestive system. There are many different scenarios.

### HOW DO I 'weigh' my horse to find out his bodyweight?

Use a weigh tape (rough guide) or a weighbridge (far more accurate). There are also some measurement formulas you can use - check out Google.





**INTERESTING FACT** – the most common thing we find that will prevent a horse from maintaining or putting on weight is stomach ulcers (EGUS). Stereotypical behaviour is another, eg windsucking

## WHAT OTHER USEFUL THING COULD I DO?

**Get in touch with our equine nutrition consultant or fill out our diet review form.** We'll ask you for weight, age, breed, workload, current diet and more. We'll calculate the digestible energy (calories) your horse needs every day for his level of activity and the ideal amount of protein he needs. Then we'll check over the nutrient component of the diet and make suggestions and/or tweaks to the current diet as required. Make sure the information you provide is accurate and up to date.

**QUESTION: What about a computer-based programme to assess the nutritional status of my horse?**

These types of programmes can leave many people stressed and trying to micro-manage their horse's diets. Be aware that these programmes work off averages (mean values) and rely on you to provide the correct information. The algorithms therefore provide a ballpark figure of what is going on in the diet and that's it! You will never get everything right to the last gram.

## TAKE A GOOD LOOK

The best indicator of how your horse's diet is working is to go and look at him. Horses can have surprisingly good tolerances when it comes to nutrient levels. So if your horse looks good, works well, has a great temperament, great hooves, coat etc, you can assume his diet is just fine.

### 3. KEEPING IT SIMPLE WITH A BALANCER SUPPLEMENT

Keeping your horse's diet simple and complementing his natural diet of forage/fibre is easy so long as essential nutrients/energy requirements are being met. This is why sticking to a simple fibre diet and then adding a balancer supplement can work so well for many healthy horses. Even for those with digestive or metabolic problems, there are still solutions that a good specialist balancer range like Fibregenix can provide with minimal fuss.

**Choosing the right one for your horse - will he benefit from one?** Yes! A balancer is one of the most versatile and long-term cost-effective feed additives you can ever give your horse.

#### **BUYER BEWARE!**

Not everything called a balancer, truly is. Many are just a 'one product suits all.' Some contain cereal grains. Some are vitamin/mineral supplements with an unspecified yeast product thrown in. Most won't cover absolutely everything so you end up buying additional supplements for coat, hooves, digestion etc which completely misses the point of what a proper balancer should do.

#### **WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT FIBREGENIX BALANCERS?**

As a specialist feed balancer company, we understand the value and importance of the ingredients needed to make a high-performing and functional balancer. We work in partnership with expert scientists and nutritionists who have decades of experience behind them in formulating technical equine balancers that are free from whole cereals and molasses and tailored to different categories of horses and ponies. Rather than a 'one product suits all' we have created a range to accommodate different types of horses' needs.

#### **WHAT DO THE DIGESTIVE AIDS IN FIBREGENIX DO FOR YOUR HORSE?**

They enable horses to extract and utilise far more nutrients from the forage in their diet. This means the amount of concentrate (hard feed) that needs to be fed can be reduced or even eliminated altogether. In turn, this benefits digestion and is a **more natural way of feeding** leading to a **more relaxed horse**. They also maintain an ideal gut environment promoting immune health.

## MORE BENEFITS

Fibregenix balancers are nutrient-dense with a small feeding rate, ie 100g/100kg of bodyweight. A small amount of balancer leaves more space in the digestive system for forage than a large hard feed. Low levels of sugar and starch and specialised digestive aids means the chance of excess sugars and starch overflowing from the foregut to the hindgut causing a microbial imbalance leading to 'acid guts' and poor behaviour, is virtually eliminated.

If you're buying multiple supplements and then taking forever making up your horse's feeds, try a Fibregenix feed balancer.



***Did you know*** that adding extra supplements on top of a feed balancer is a totally unnecessary expense and will unbalance the diet?



## 4. FEEDING TO PROMOTE A HEALTHY DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

The horse's digestive system is extremely sensitive and any compromises to that delicate environment will have significant effects on performance, appearance, immune health and even temperament. Therefore, feeding a horse correctly is a major contributing factor in digestive, immune and overall health.

### HINDGUT FERMENTERS

Horses have evolved as monogastric hindgut fermenters. They ferment the fibre they eat at the end of the digestive system – the caecum and colon, and have evolved to consume small, fibre-rich meals on a continual basis. This is in direct contrast to the high starch diet of today's modern horse, which is difficult for them to digest.

### THE CONSEQUENCES OF FEEDING A LARGE STARCH MEAL

If a horse is fed small starch-rich meals, it's unlikely that there will be any consequences. But if large quantities of starch are fed in any one meal, this gets pushed through the gut with increasing speed. Without having been broken down sufficiently by saliva or gastric juices, starch then reaches the caecum and is fermented by bacteria producing lactic acid rather than beneficial volatile fatty acids produced from fibre fermentation.

When lactic acid is produced, the PH levels in the hindgut drop. This is hindgut acidosis and results in many potential health issues. The low PH effectively kills off good bacteria that would normally digest fibre. This can lead to complications such as colic, caecal and colonic ulcers and laminitis.

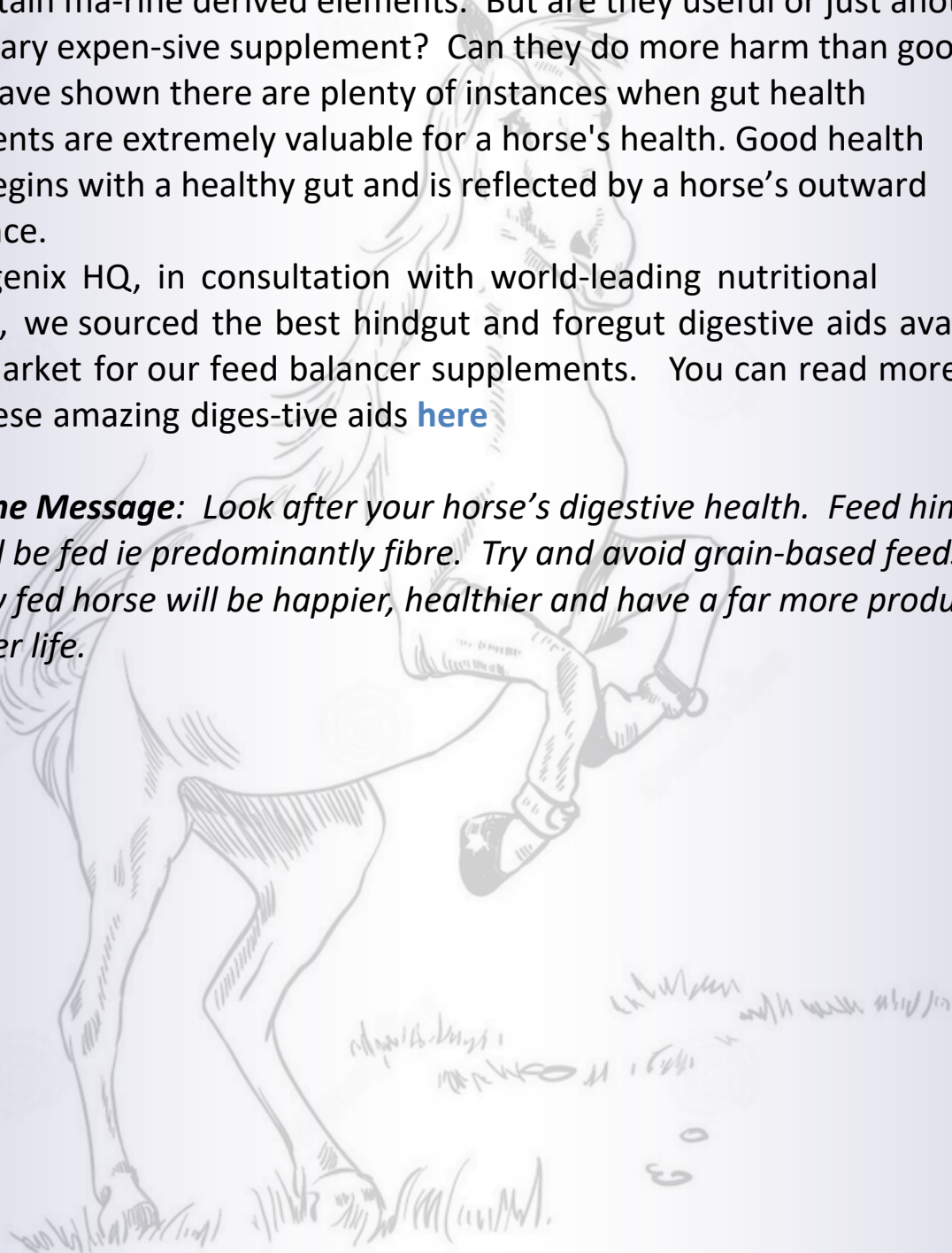


## RE-ESTABLISHING A HORSE'S GUT HEALTH

Gut health is currently one of the hottest topics around with a plethora of horse gut health supplements on the market. Most of these come in the form of yeast probiotics and prebiotics. Some are live bacterial probiotics or even contain ma-rine derived elements. But are they useful or just another unnecessary expen-sive supplement? Can they do more harm than good? Studies have shown there are plenty of instances when gut health supplements are extremely valuable for a horse's health. Good health always begins with a healthy gut and is reflected by a horse's outward appearance.

At Fibregenix HQ, in consultation with world-leading nutritional scientists, we sourced the best hindgut and foregut digestive aids available on the market for our feed balancer supplements. You can read more about these amazing diges-tive aids [here](#)

***Take home Message:*** Look after your horse's digestive health. Feed him as he should be fed ie predominantly fibre. Try and avoid grain-based feeds. A natural-ly fed horse will be happier, healthier and have a far more productive and longer life.



## 5. STOMACH ULCERS

Also known as EGUS (Equine Gastric Ulceration syndrome). Although more often associated with the racing industry, more and more horses are being diagnosed with EGUS. The stress of competing, training and incorrect feeding all predispose horses (and ponies) to this debilitating problem. Treatment and then ongoing management strategies are vital to prevent this from overwhelming your horse. Horses with EGUS will have poor coats, poor condition, general ill-thrift and poor behaviour.

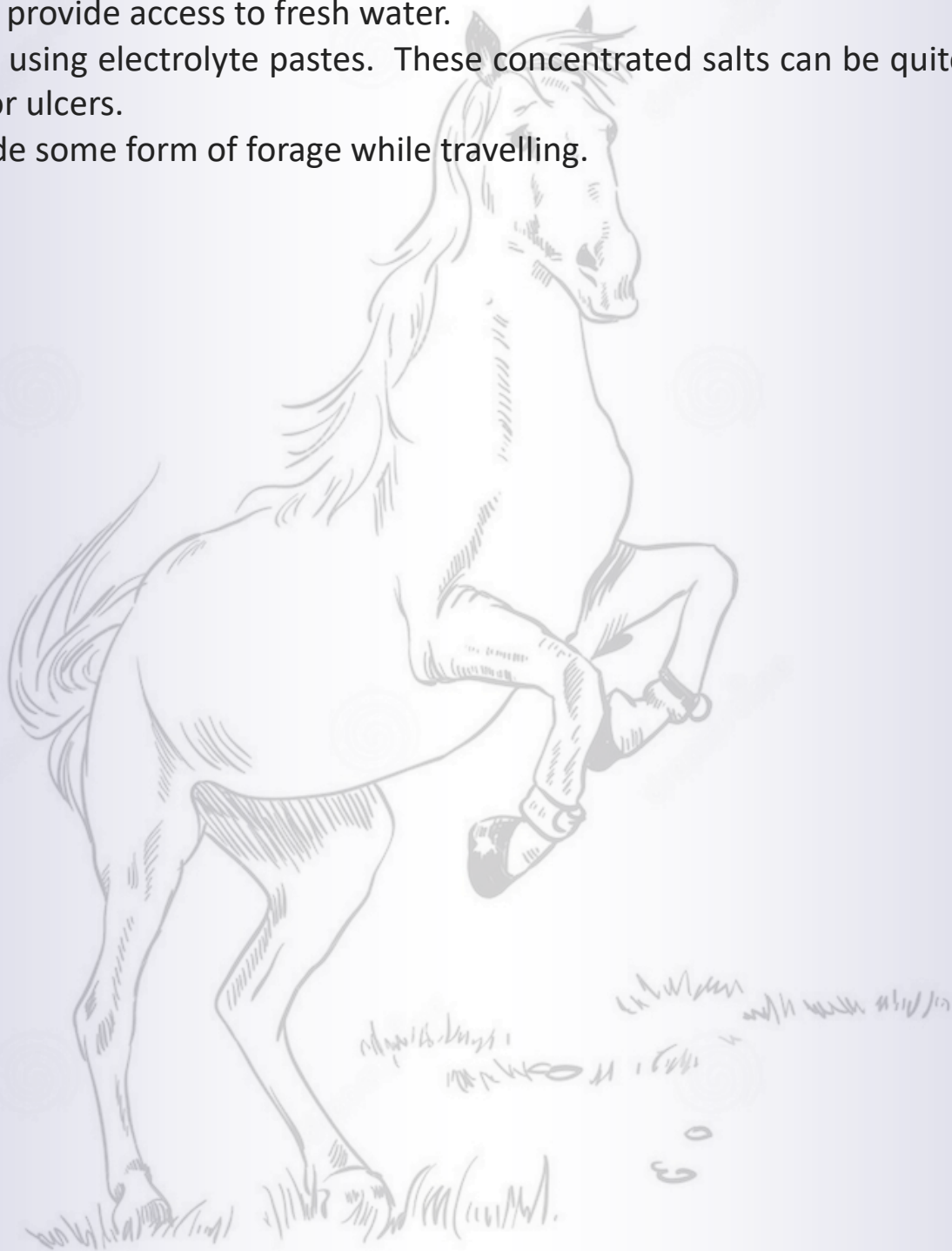


### WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR HORSE HAS ULCERS

1. Consult with your vet for a proper diagnosis, scoping and treatment.
2. On finishing the course of prescribed medication ALWAYS continue with a third of the original dosage for at least 2-3 months as these pesky things can have an 80% chance of reoccurrence if you don't. (Especially the squamous ulcers that TBs are most prone to)
3. Manage the diet. Avoid grains. Stick to low starch/sugar feeds. Feed a high fibre diet at a minimum of 1.5% of bodyweight (dry matter) per day. Consider feeding oil, legumes eg lupins and beet pulp alongside a Fibregenix Feed balancer.
4. Avoid prolonged periods without forage. Gastric juices are secreted 24/7. Up to 32 litres in a 24-hour period buffered by saliva, produced when the horse is chewing. Horses are so genetically programmed to chew that if there's no fibre/ other feed available they'll chew fences, tree bark, their own poo... pretty much anything that might have a fibre source in it.
5. Avoid stalky forage being the sole or predominant forage source which can increase the risk of damage to the stomach wall.
6. Add chopped fibre, such as lucerne, to every meal and before exercise as a buffer and to reduce gastric acid splashing up onto the sensitive, unprotected upper non-glandular part of the stomach.



7. Aim to feed < 1g/kg bodyweight of non-structural carbohydrate (NSC: starch plus water soluble carbohydrate) per meal. This means spreading meals across the day - multiple small meals are better than one or two large ones. For energy, substitute grains with oil/fat products or legumes such as lupins.
8. Turn out to pasture as much as possible, **particularly** competition horses.
9. Always provide access to fresh water.
10. Avoid using electrolyte pastes. These concentrated salts can be quite inflammatory for ulcers.
11. Provide some form of forage while travelling.



## 6. METABOLIC PROBLEMS

Metabolically challenged horses and ponies need careful dietary management together with veterinary consultation. Starvation is never an option for any laminitic horse or pony. Maintaining fibre levels is key, managing pastures and then providing the nutrients needed to assist recovery and ongoing prevention management. Even mild cases of laminitis can have a detrimental and long-term effect. Once the sensitive hoof structures have been damaged by laminitis, it can be a long drawn out process to recover the health of the hoof.

### A DIET SOLUTION

Fibregenix Lami Low-Cal, as its name implies, is a low-calorie diet feed balancer that is high in fibre, free from whole cereal and molasses and exceptionally low in sugar and starch. It supports restricted diets and provides every essential nutrient required daily for horse and ponies. Specifically, those prone to laminitis, insulin resistance, EMS, PSSM, Cushings or obesity.

### HOW DOES LAMI LOW-CAL HELP WITH HOOF CARE?

#### It contains

A comprehensive hoof improvement supplement which includes biotin, methionine, lysine, and glycinated chelates of zinc and copper. These nutrients are incredibly important in the formation of pliable, good quality hooves.

Organic MSM provides a source of sulphur which is essential for the development of hoof wall material.

Omega 3 and 6 fatty acids. Omega 3 is particularly important in the role of hoof care as it has healing properties and is a natural anti-inflammatory essential fatty acid. Omega 3 deficiencies can exacerbate hoof wall problems so ensuring the diet is not deficient in this essential fatty acid is paramount.

## 7. PUTTING IT ON - HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR HORSE'S CONDITION

It's the most common problem on our Diet Review enquiries...We know that some only need look at a blade of grass or hay to put on weight, but others are the complete opposite. This often leads to a 'Knee-Jerk' reaction of feeding every conditioning feed under the sun. However, trying to get the weight back on as quickly as possible can often do more harm than good.

### A NATURAL SURVIVAL TOOL

Feral horses use Winter to lose some weight in preparation for the inevitable weight gain which occurs in the warmer months when pasture is more available. This is a survival tool which domestic horses still possess, and which we SHOULD, (but mostly don't), let our horses utilise. Most horses will regain weight lost over winter naturally, with increased time in the paddock and access to Spring grass but some hard doers may still need a helping hand. Remember - weight gain should be a gradual process. Feeding huge amounts of 'weight gain' feed may speed up the process but won't be healthy long term. Horses are routine animals and their digestive system isn't suited to rapid changes so any increases or changes to your horse's diet should occur over a 7 -14-day period respectively. One way to increase your horse's condition is by increasing the number of calories he consumes, not necessarily the AMOUNT he is eating. How?

### FATS AND OILS

These slow release energy sources won't rapidly increase your horse's blood sugar levels which can lead to fizzy behaviour. Oils contain 2.25 times the amount of energy (calories) than carbohydrates. This makes them a great way to increase your horse's calorie intake without increasing his feed intake.



## ANOTHER CONDITION HELPER

Fibregenix Original conditioning balancer contains a highly efficient yeast probiotic (Actisaf) which can increase the digestibility of your horse's fibre. By enabling him to get twice as many calories out of the same amount of feed this increases calorie intake without increasing the amount being fed. Actisaf also helps support gut health, so your horse maximizes nutrient yield and efficiently absorbs his nutrients. Many people find that feeding a Fibregenix balancer supplement reduces their overall feed bill in the long run.

**Take Home Message:** *Be patient when it comes to increasing your horse's condition. When feeding a Fibregenix balancer supplement you can expect to see a change within 3 weeks. In fact, many of our customers notice an improvement in as little as a week to 10 days, but certainly before you finish your first bag.*



Ashlee Medica's horse "Midwave Boston" photo taken 9 weeks apart

## 8. GETTING IT OFF - HOW DO YOU HELP YOUR HORSE TO LOSE WEIGHT?

**FACT** - The Australian horse and pony population is getting fatter. Some owners are simply unaware of how to feed their horse correctly, or they just want to show how much they love them by spoiling them with food. Overweight horses have a much higher risk of developing health problems such as metabolic and hormonal diseases, so make weight management a priority.

Weight loss is something that should not be rushed if it's to be healthy. Crash diets for horses don't work anymore than they do for humans. Even overweight horses generally need approx. 1.5 -2% of their bodyweight in total dry matter intake per day for gut fill and digestive health. Going below 1% can create a risk of colic, ulcers as well as mental stress which can lead to stereotypical behaviour.

### THE OPTIONS

Horses have evolved to trickle feed for long periods— up to 18 hours a day. So, what do you do when your horse or pony is overweight and needs restricted access to pasture or worst case scenario, yarded with just hay?

Provide something less nutritious, ie less rich in digestible energy (calories) but still maintain volume. This works for some but not where significant weight loss is required.

Limiting pasture access and feeding hay may be good for calorie control, but it can result in a deficiency of vitamin A and E and essential fatty acids as well as other nutrients such as protein, minerals, etc. These will need supplementing, particularly when the paddocks might be burnt from the summer sun/drought, over-grazed or during the winter.

Okay, so how do we supply these essential nutrients whilst he's on a diet? We've created a diet feed balancer supplement specially formulated for the job - Lami Low-Cal. This low-calorie balancer supplement is an ideal way to supply those missing essential nutrients. It will keep your horse or pony happy and healthy while supporting the gradual weight loss.

Not only that, Fibregenix Lami Low-Cal contains a quadruple action package of digestive supplements. This includes a MOS prebiotic which bad bacteria physically bind to and are then flushed out of the horse's gut. There's also a unique short chain FOS which acts as a feed source for the beneficial microbes in the gut. Nucleotides help aid optimal absorption of nutrients to ensure horses and ponies on a restricted diet get everything they need to stay healthy. Actisaf Yeast helps stabilise caecal gut PH and maximises fibre digestion. Sepiolite is another special extra in Lami Low-Cal which is also a great toxin binder.

**Take Home Message:** *if you are persistent and vigilant it should take just a few months to lose the weight. Remember, it took a few months to get to the obese stage in the first place, so don't expect it to come off in just a few weeks.*





## 9. NINE ESSENTIAL WAYS TO ASSIST WITH WEIGHT LOSS

Exercise! Whether a brisk walk in the bush, a lunge or work over poles etc, ALL exercise is important to help horses get in better body condition.

Restrict grazing - Limit access to pasture. Horses love turnout, especially in our cooler months when there are no flies, but grass can contain as much sugar as horse/pony pellets. Time at pasture and availability of grass needs to be reduced and if a horse is very overweight and/or prone to laminitis, pasture might need to be cut out completely. Grazing muzzles are also a good option to limit intake.

Keep feeding. Don't starve your horse. After the first week, the aim is to lose between 0.5% and 1% of bodyweight per week. Rates higher than this can become dangerous.

Feed little and often. Many horses are fed extra unlimited forage when pasture is less available. So, it's important to consider not only the quality of the forage but also the quantity being fed. Use small-mesh haynets to slow feeding rates, and split the daily ration into several, evenly spread portions. Horse owners often worry about gastric ulcers when reducing feed intake, but although if horses are starved for long periods ulcers may develop, fasting overnight or for short periods during the day is not a problem. (Unless there are ulcers of course, then it's a bad, bad idea!)

Low sugar - Make low sugar forage the bulk of the diet. Unless in a high level of work, most horses require minimal or no additional hard feeds, other than a balancer supplement. Soaking hay in cold water for about an hour is recommended to help reduce sugar levels. Consider submitting hay for forage analysis or ask your hay supplier or produce store if they have this information.

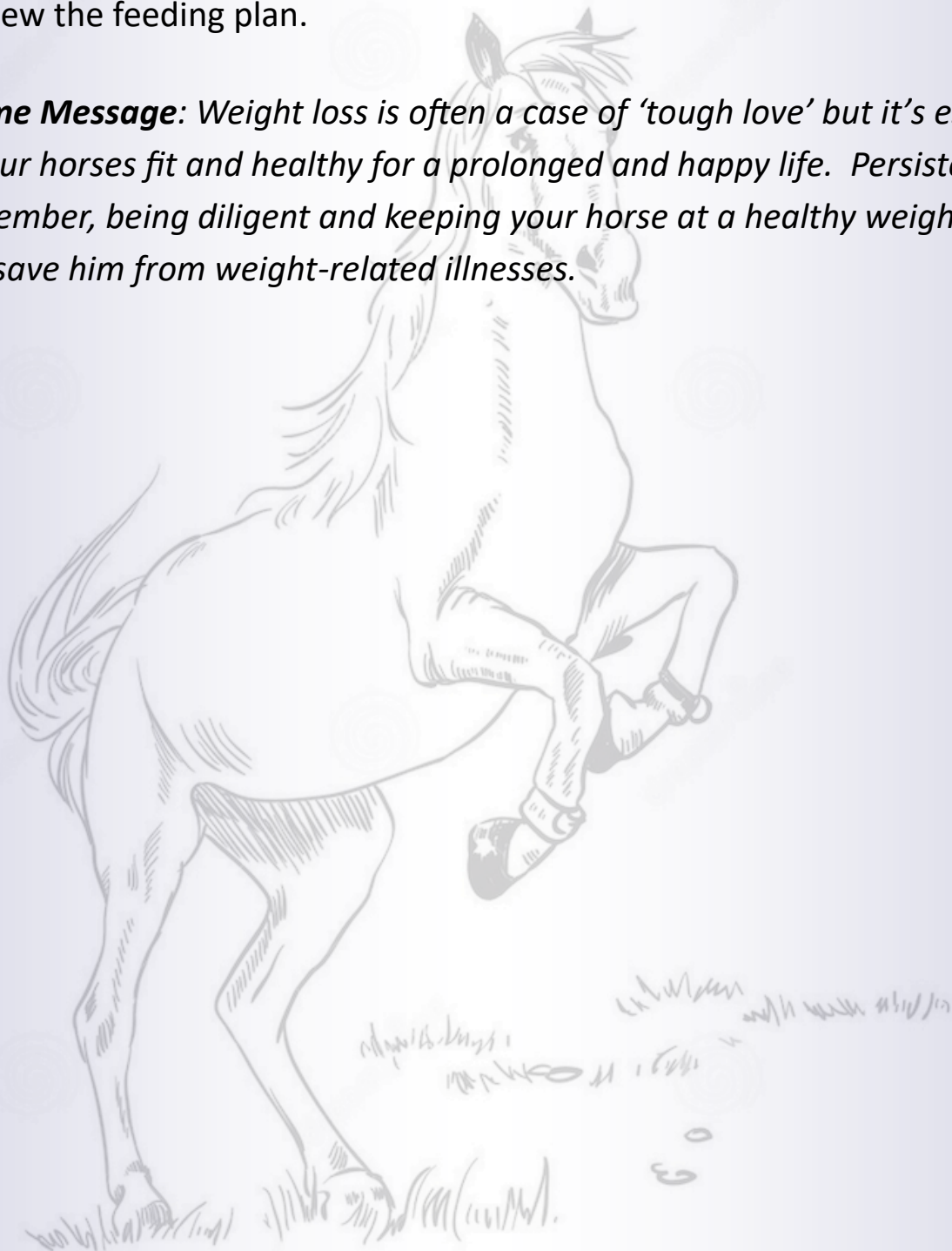
Trickle feeding - For an overweight horse with no access to pasture and at a low level of exercise, a reasonable starting point is to feed 1.5% of bodyweight of hay per day, divided into several smaller meals to encourage continuous trickle feeding.

Balancer - Feeding a low-calorie balancer is recommended for any horse on a forage-only diet. Try Fibregenix Lami Low-Cal, the diet feed balancer.

Treats - Avoid overloading treats such as carrots and apples and other soft fruit. Look for low-sugar fibre-based treats.

Keep notes - Monitor and record the results. Take weekly girth and belly circumference measurements, body condition scores, and if available weigh on a weighbridge. Consult your vet/nutritionist after four to six weeks and review the feeding plan.

**Take Home Message:** *Weight loss is often a case of 'tough love' but it's essential to keep our horses fit and healthy for a prolonged and happy life. Persistence is key. Remember, being diligent and keeping your horse at a healthy weight will potentially save him from weight-related illnesses.*



## 10. HOW TO PROTECT YOUR HORSE'S JOINTS AND BONES LONG TERM

Wear and tear on your horses' joints is inevitable with age. However, degenerative, and inflammatory joint issues such as arthritis are now seen far earlier with competing, riding out, training, early breaking in, all taking their toll on the joints. Changing ground conditions can also cause soft tissue injuries such as strains.

The best joint supplements will provide a complete range of scientifically proven ingredients for maximum benefit. Fibregenix Liquid Joint & Bone RLF targets the many varied causes of joint problems such as injury and arthritic issues. By helping delay the onset of joint problems, horses and ponies will have the best chance of staying comfortable, healthy and sound, prolonging an active life. It also contains a cutting-edge bone supplement that helps promote strong, dense bone in both young, developing horses and those in hard training.

The key active ingredients are:

**Joint Health - Rosehip (*Rosa canina*), Hyaluronic Acid (HLA), Glucosamine HCL, MSM (Methyl sulphonyl-methane)**



**Bone supplement - Vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol) & Calcium Chelate**

D3 Plays a key role in regulation of calcium and phosphorus homeostasis, especially in bone. Stimulating the intestinal absorption of calcium, it builds up the bone matrix promoting the mineralization of osteoblastic bone formation. It works synergistically with Calcium to benefit bone health and bone remodelling after exercise.

Providing calcium as chelate ensures it's a highly efficient and readily available nutrient which may also help prevent bone weaknesses.

You can read more [here](#)





## 11.THE GOLDEN YEARS

How to feed your veteran to keep him healthy, in good condition and pain free.



Tuis Moana (18) & Boomerang (20)

There are **three primary considerations** when feeding a veteran horse:

**Ease of chewing** - Dental problems are common in older horses and frequently result in loss of body condition. Signs that may indicate that your veteran is having problems chewing hay will include 'quidding'. This is when lumps of partially chewed hay or food will be spat out and left on the floor. If the length of the fibres in the horse's droppings is also getting longer, then this is another indication that he isn't digesting his fibre properly and the horse should have his teeth checked.

**Digestibility of nutrients** - Fibre is ESSENTIAL to maintaining a healthy digestive system in any horse, old or young. If your horse is unable to cope with chewing long-stem forage, you may need to offer a more easily chewed form of fibre eg beet pulp and soaked chaff as an alternative to a haynet. Fibregenix Platinum Pro feed balancer is also ideal for veterans as its nutri-ent dense formulation provides enhanced levels of essential key nutrients in a highly bioavailable form. Furthermore, it includes Actisaf Yeast probiotic which enables a horse to double his fibre digestibility thus promoting extra calories.

**Palatability** - Fibregenix balancers are fed in grams rather than the kilograms needed of a traditional 'pellet' or 'mix'. The small pellets are easier for horses and ponies with poor dentition to eat and can be fed by hand if necessary or made into a tempting mash by adding warm water.

**Forage** should form the basis of every horse's diet. Generally, long-stem forage eg hay should be fed at 1.5% – 2% of body weight per day and should NEVER fall below 1% of body weight per day. It's essential that all horses have their forage requirements met and this can easily be done using forage replacers if your horse struggles to consume enough long-stem forage.

### **Energy Dense Feeds.**

Fat contains up to 2.5 times more energy than carbohydrates. It's an excellent way of increasing the energy density of your horse's ration without dramatically increasing the amount you are feeding.

### **Manage Weight**

Investing in a weigh tape and use it fortnightly to monitor your horse or pony's body condition. Using a weight tape allows you to be able to pick up any changes in your veteran's condition much quicker than by the eye alone.

### **Warm in winter and cool in Summer**

Remember that horses can use up to 80% of their feed energy just keeping warm, so in the Winter months, ensure your veteran is adequately rugged. If living out, ensure he has shelter from wind and rain. Like humans, older horses don't manage heat stress very well either. Provide plenty of shade, keep them well hydrated, and if necessary, encourage them to drink by providing molasses water. Frozen blocks with carrots in them can help keep them cool. Give electrolytes to replenish lost salts in sweats. Horses do better with no rugs on over 30 degrees, but provide fly repellent, fly boots and a fly hood.

## Regular worming & Faecal Egg Counts

Some older horses are more difficult to keep condition on, not because of their age, but perhaps because of parasite damage over the years. Do a FEC every 3 months and worm appropriately to the results. Your vet can advise.

## Cushing's disease

Many horses go into their twilight years overweight which can lead to hormonal issues such as insulin resistance, which in later years can develop into Cushing's Disease. This is the most common equine hormonal disorder and whilst there's no cure for Cushing's, with careful management, appropriate nutrition and veter-inary treatment, horses can still have comfortable, active lives for several years. You can read more about Cushing's and its management in our blog article [here](#)

