

Guide to feeding the veteran horse



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Are the years starting to catch up with your horse?

It is natural that throughout your horse's life they'll steadily be exposed to a greater number of stresses compared to when they were younger. From about age 15 and upwards your horse will almost certainly display noticeable physiological differences compared to younger horses.

The stresses and strains that have accumulated could be a result of exposure to worms, a bout of ulcers, dental problems, their level of physical activity, everyday life or even due to damage to the liver - for instance because of ragwort consumption. In addition, older horses are more likely to suffer with conditions like PPID (aka Cushing's) – these will need special dietary consideration.

The first signs of aging could become apparent through many different symptoms:

- Weight loss or inability to gain condition,
- Reduced digestive function,
- Muscle wastage,
- A compromised immune system,
- Eye weeping,
- Exercise intolerance,
- Scaly skin.

Any or all of these could contribute to an overall assessment that your horse's years are catching up with them.

Your horse's nutritional requirements will also change. But with a few adjustments to their diet you can still help them to stay fit, healthy and active for many years to come. This guide will explore just what you can do.

It also provides practical suggestions from the Pure range of feeds and supplements that will help you ensure your veteran horse gets the right nutrition to keep them healthy and happy. You can buy them online at www.purefeed.com or by calling us on the number below. Pure Feeds and supplements are also available to buy in many retailers across the country.

I hope you find this information useful. If it raises any further questions for you, please do not hesitate to call our nutritional team on 01458 333 333. They can give you advice or prepare a bespoke diet plan for your horse.

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From about age 15 and upwards your horse will almost certainly display noticeable physiological differences compared to younger horses.

How a well-considered diet can help your veteran horse

There are lots of things we can do on the nutrition front to compensate for some of the inevitable dreaded consequences of aging. That is why at The Pure Feed Company we ensure that our feeds contain the very best ingredients to produce optimum results for horses.

Let's take a look at the special considerations for older horses across the nutritional spectrum, to help understand what the issues are and how they can be addressed through diet.

Vitamins and minerals

For starters, if you can provide a good supply of the essential vitamins and minerals in the diet, then you can give your horse some of the building blocks they need in order to help support the sub-optimal immune system of the typical veteran. Essential nutrients including amino acids such as lysine and methionine, and micro-minerals like zinc, and copper need to be at a high specification in the diet, along with an optimal source of antioxidants to fight those ever-increasing age-related free radicals.

Pre and pro biotics

On the whole, elderly horses will have a decreased digestive function. So a higher concentration of nutrients is needed in the diet to compensate for this diminished absorbability. With this in mind, providing a supply of pre and pro biotics will aid the natural process of fibre digestion and support the digestive system to function at its optimum. All feeds in The Pure Feed range include Profeed pre-biotic, brewer's yeast and Actisaf yeast to support hind gut function and digestion.

Protein

Older horses tend not to absorb protein particularly well. So it is important to include a high quality protein supply. It is better to include a small amount of a high quality protein than a high amount of poor quality protein, as too much protein can cause a strain on the kidneys and liver. Muscle wastage is also common in older horses, so providing a good quality source of easily digestible protein in the diet can help reduce this.

Dentition

With regards to dentition, much of the original, hard wearing enamel will have worn off the teeth and the softer dentin is exposed by the time they are aged 15. This means that a veteran's teeth are worn away more easily. Therefore, it is important to use a soft chop or soak a fibre-based feed a little before serving. This will soften the fibres for chewing and allow your horse to retain more water in the gastrointestinal tract, while also reducing the risk of choking.

Low sugar and starch

Older horses are more commonly diagnosed with PPID (aka Cushing's Disease), an endocrine disorder. This can make them more prone to laminitis and requires them to be on a low sugar and starch diet. Sugary feeds that contain molasses and wholegrain cereals should be avoided. Ideally, the feed content should contain 10% or less sugar and starch. For more information on feeding a horse with Cushing's why not look at our guide on this topic? You'll find it on our website.

Calories

Older horses can be more susceptible to dropping condition. If this occurs in your horse and they need extra calories in their diet, oil is a safe way of providing this. As a slow-release energy source it will promote positive behaviour and be compatible with a low-starch diet.



Case study

Special care for your older horse with Pure Veteran Mix

Pure Feed customer Jackie Keene shares her experiences as her beloved Katie grew older.

Katie was a bold, capable and fantastic horse

"I have owned Katie since 2008 and she has been the most fantastic horse: very bold and capable. We have had so much fun together doing things I never thought I was brave enough to do.

I used to feed her on basic coarse mix, chaff and sugar beet. When she got older, I progressed her to a veteran mix as she struggled to maintain weight and condition during the winter. It was a routine vet check that diagnosed PPID (Cushing's Disease) and a complete change of diet was required. No sugar beet, no molasses and low in starch - basically the polar opposite of what I had been feeding her!"

Cushing's Disease and other conditions that older horses are prone to

Cushing's is a disease of the endocrine system where the pituitary gland stops working effectively. You may see weight loss and even a pot belly as the stomach muscles breakdown. Fatty deposits often appear behind the eyes, on the ridge of the neck and above the tail. Sadly, your horse may not respond to pain and the healing of wounds slows down. Even mouth ulcers can turn really nasty. You'll need to see a vet, but horses that suffer from Cushing's will benefit from a diet that is low in sugar and starch.

Laminitis is another disease that veteran horses can be particularly prone to. The inflammation to the soft tissue that connects the pedal bone to the hoof is painful to the horse. It can lead to lameness. In very serious cases your horse may need to be put down. As with Cushing's, a diet that is low in sugar and starch can be beneficial.

What was the answer for Katie?

Jackie said: *"There seemed to be an abundance of feeds catering for laminitis prone horses that are good doers but Katie isn't. She needs more calories especially through the winter. So I put her on a laminitis-friendly feed and added oil. But during this time she went onto Prascend medication to manage the Cushing's which can affect their appetite. She completely turned her nose up at this unappealing offering. I was literally throwing buckets of uneaten feed away on a daily basis.*

Cue a Google search for a low sugar/starch diet, and that is how I discovered Pure Feeds.

After requesting a diet plan I was advised to put Katie onto Pure Working as I was still doing a fair bit on her at this stage and this was pre Pure Veteran days!

Well, she LOVED it! No more wasted feed, she takes her time to eat it which is much better for her. And what you don't realise until you actually open a bag is how good it smells - really fresh and it looks like something a horse should be eating. Not all sticky and powdery like many of the grain-based feeds. Also, my shelf of additives has disappeared, it's all in one bag which is fabulous.

I'm so pleased there is now a Pure Veteran, as when my vet gave me a list of all the things Katie needed to maintain condition at her age (now 24) they are literally all in that one bag!"



Jackie concludes:

"I don't bother with Google searches for the best feed anymore. My younger horse is on Pure Condition and she looks utterly fabulous. I'm gradually converting all my horsey friends as well. Everyone who has tried it loves it - I can't thank Pure enough!"

How the Pure Feed range can help you feed your veteran horse

For horses requiring a new complete feed designed for older horses
Pure Veteran Mix

Our Pure Veteran range consists of both Pure Veteran Mix and Pure Veteran Pellets. They are designed specifically to meet the needs of the older horse.

Our balancer that is included provides a higher level of vitamins and minerals to ensure that your horse is getting all the important nutrients they need to keep them healthy and support their immune system. We also include pre and probiotics to help nourish the good bacteria in the hind gut and aid digestion. High quality amino acids and easily digestible protein are provided to help prevent muscle wastage and maintain condition, as well as oil to provide extra calories. Both the Veteran Mix and Veteran Pellets are fibre based and free from molasses and wholegrain cereals. This gives them a combined sugar and starch content of less than 10%, making them suitable to feed to horses that have been diagnosed with PPID.

Our Pure Veteran Mix contains a soft chop making it easier to chew. We suggest that you dampen it well with water prior to feeding.



For horses requiring a calorie top-up to their standard feed
Pure Veteran Pellets

Our Pure Veteran Pellets provide a solution for the older horses with poor dentition. They must be soaked with water prior to feeding to form a soft mash making them much easier to chew.



Our Pure Veteran Mix contains a soft chop making it easier to chew.



Our Pure Fibre Balance feed is suitable to feed to older horses that are good doers and don't need extra calories in their diet.



For horses requiring a calorie top-up to their standard feed
Pure Linseed

Pure Linseed is high in oil and protein so great for increasing the calorie content of the diet and helping to maintain condition. It is also low in starch.

The high oil content supports coat condition and helps to develop a good shine and is beneficial for older horses that may have dry or flaky skin. Linseed is also high in omega 3 which works as an anti-inflammatory within the body.



For good doers and other horses that do not need any extra calories in their diet
Pure Fibre Balance

Our Pure Fibre Balance feed is suitable to feed to older horses that are good doers and don't need extra calories in their diet. It is low in calories and energy, for those at rest or that don't need a lot extra to maintain condition.

In comparison to our other feeds it contains our balancer in a more concentrated form, so you only need to feed half the quantity - perfect for good doers! Our balancer will ensure that your older horse is getting all the important vitamins and minerals that they need to keep them healthy, as well as essential amino acids to help maintain muscle tone.

Our Pure Fibre Balance is free from molasses and wholegrain cereals and low in both sugar and starch, making it suitable to feed to horses with Cushing's.



Supplements

For older horses at risk, or already suffering, from joint problems Pure Joint

Our Pure Joint contains four key ingredients to help keep joints healthy; glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate which form proteoglycans and MSM which helps to reduce inflammation. It also contains a bioavailable source of vitamin C which is involved in collagen synthesis and also works as an anti-oxidant. High levels of oxidants have been seen in the joint fluid of horses with osteoarthritis. It is particularly beneficial for older horses at risk of, or already suffering from, joint problems as a result of wear and tear. It can be added to the feed daily.



For horses showing signs of digestive upset Pure Gut Balancer

Our Pure Gut Balancer contains a powerful combination of pre and probiotics to help nourish the good bacteria in the hind gut and aid digestion. It can be fed alongside our feeds if your horse is showing signs of digestive upset or when changing their diet to help restore hind gut balance.



How to buy Pure feeds and supplements

We are dedicated to making high-quality, natural horse feeds. All our feeds contain everything your horse needs nutritionally in one bag, which means it's very convenient from till to trough. And, because it's all in one bag, Pure Feed can save you money compared to buying multiple products.

- Buy directly from Pure Feed.
- Visit www.purefeed.com or call 01458 333 333.
- Buy in store at your local retailer. We have national coverage and are expanding all the time. You can find your nearest stockist on our website www.purefeed.com.

As well as making great products we offer great customer support. We have an expert nutritional team available to answer your queries Monday to Friday 9:00am to 5:00pm. So switching to Pure really is the natural choice.

How to contact The Pure Feed Company

Helpline: 01458 333 333 (9:00 – 17.00 Monday to Friday)

General and nutritional enquiries: info@purefeed.com

