

FEEDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEEPING HORSES HYDRATED IN HOT SUMMER CONDITIONS.

Often overlooked, water is a key nutrient for horses. Whilst horses can survive for some time without food, 1-2 days without water can lead to serious health conditions, such as impaction colic. A combination of pre-planned small dietary modifications and daily management methods during hot, humid weather can help to maintain your horse in optimum hydration.

1. Encouraging Water Intake

- Monitor water consumption by checking buckets/troughs and regularly refilling them with fresh water. A 500kg horse will normally consume between approximately 20-55 liters of water in a 24-hour period
- Feed dried forage. Offering hay, along with pasture will promote water storage in the hindgut.
- Give the horse access to rock salt or a salt block.
- Hydration can also be encouraged by moistening foods. Concentrates can be mixed with water and hay can be wet down to increase dietary water intake.
- If the horse is sensitive to changes in the taste of water, or you are competing in a place with strange tasting water, take water from home.

2. Small changes can make a big difference during hot periods.

- Offer several smaller meals instead of one or two larger feedings.
- Feed horses in shady places and offer drinking water with a temperature between 7° to 18° C for maximal consumption. Consider keeping water buckets in shade or undercover. Ice blocks can be added to water to reduce temperature during very hot days.
- If horses are sweating heavily in the heat, consider supplementing with electrolytes. Adding Restore[®] to the horse's daily feed is a great way to replace electrolytes. Restore[®] is scientifically formulated to mimic sweat loss.
- Increasing the animal's forage intake several days before the extreme heat will help to ensure the animal remains hydrated, as fibre acts as a reservoir, storing water and electrolytes in the hindgut. For every kilogram of forage eaten, a horse will drink approximately 4 litres of water. Forage also helps the gastrointestinal tract to maintain normal digestive function.
- Small amounts of chaff or soaked beet pulp may be offered intermittently to increase hydration during hot weather.
- If water monitoring indicates reduced water consumption, using a water intake enhancer, such as KER Drinkup[®], can encourage horses to drink.
- For horses travelling and competing, use of KER Restore[®] paste is recommended to aid electrolyte replacement and encourage drinking. To encourage drinking upon arrival, use electrolytes before travelling. Give the night before or morning of travel depending on the timing of departure.
- Finally, horses kept in optimal condition (rather than being overweight) are more comfortable in the heat.

Medical treatment of dehydration should be discussed with your veterinarian.

For detailed diet advice or rehydration plan for an individual horse contact KER on advice@ker.com or Milne Feeds WA based equine nutrition advisor Michelle Meylan on 0429 107 790 or pegasus@milne.com.au.

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