

The ideal **horse feed** for **laminitic horses** is usually a **low sugar feed** that is also a **low starch feed**, high in fibre, and suited to the horse's **body condition score**. In practice, that often means a **forage first** plan built around high-quality **hay**, carefully managed grazing, and a **balanced diet** that keeps **digestible energy** under control without sacrificing **gut health** or **hoof support**.

If you want the quickest answer: choose feeds that are low in **non-structural carbohydrates**, often listed as **NSC**, avoid products with high **sugar content** or **starch content**, and base the ration on fibre rather than cereals. For many laminitis-prone horses, that means a **fibre-based ration** with **soaked hay**, a suitable balancer, and careful **weight management**.

What is laminitis and why does feed matter?

Laminitis is a serious disorder affecting the sensitive tissues inside the hoof. It can cause soreness, movement problems, and long-term damage if not controlled well. Feed matters because diet has a clear influence on blood sugar regulation, insulin response, and the amount of **digestible energy** a horse gets each day.

For many horses, especially those prone to weight gain or metabolic issues, the biggest nutritional risk comes from too much **sugar and starch**. Diets rich in these can increase the chance of a laminitic episode. That is why the focus should be on maintaining **non-structural carbohydrates** low and choosing feed that supports stable energy levels rather than rapid spikes.

Good feeding is not just about avoiding harm. It also covers the wider needs of the horse, including **hoof health**, the digestive system, and appropriate condition. A horse that is underfed in fibre or poorly balanced can suffer from other issues, so the aim is not simply "less feed", but the right feed in the right amount.

What ought to a laminitic horse eat?

A laminitic horse should usually eat a diet built around **low sugar feed** products, plenty of **forage**, and tightly controlled grazing. It should be based on a **high fibre diet**, because fibre provides slower-release energy and helps support **gut health**.

A sensible place to begin is:

- Carefully controlled **forage**, mainly **hay** or **soaked hay**
- Closely monitored low-NSC compound feed or balancer if needed
- Managed **grazing management**, especially when **grass sugar** is high
- Fresh water, salt, and any supplements recommended for the horse's condition

Forage first is the key principle. Most laminitic horses do best when forage makes up the bulk of the diet, because it helps maintain chewing time, supports digestive function, and provides steady energy without the risks of cereal-heavy feeding. If the horse needs to lose weight, forage may still be the main feed, but total intake often needs to be measured carefully.

Grazing must be managed with particular care. **Grass sugar** can rise in certain conditions, and that can increase the risk for susceptible horses. Restrict access when necessary, use a grazing muzzle if advised, and monitor the horse's **body condition score** regularly.

Top horse feed options for laminitic horses

There are various **types of horse feed** that may fit a laminitis-prone horse, but the best options tend to be those with a low **grain-free horse feed UK starch content** and moderate **sugar content**. The objective is to support a stable, **balanced diet** rather than simply increasing calories.

Suitable feed types often include:

- Low-NSC fibre mixes
- Unmolassed chop
- Ration balancers
- Compressed feeds designed for laminitis-prone horses
- Moistened fibre products with low starch and sugar

Unmolassed chop can be helpful as part of a fibre-based ration, especially when you need to slow eating and improve **palatability** without adding molasses. However, it should still be checked carefully on the **feed label**, because not every chop product is necessarily suitable.

What matters most is not the marketing name, but the actual nutritional profile. A feed that looks “safe” may still be unsuitable if the **starch content** or total **NSC** is too high. A simple rule is to prioritise feeds designed for weight control, laminitis management, or low-calorie maintenance, then check the label details.

Are complete horse feeds suitable for laminitic horses?

Complete horse feed can be suitable for some laminitic horses, but only if it offers the right **nutritional balance** and has low enough **starch levels**. The word “complete” means the feed is intended to provide a broad range of nutrients, but it does not automatically mean it is safe for every laminitic horse.

Always check the **feed label** for sugar, starch, and recommended daily amounts. Some complete feeds are designed for sports horses or horses needing more condition, so they may contain more **digestible energy** than a laminitis-prone horse should have. Others are specifically made as low-calorie, low-NSC products and can work well as part of a controlled ration.

If a full feed is used, it should still be fed in controlled amounts and preferably alongside forage, not instead of it. For horses that gain weight easily or need close **weight management**, a **ration balancer** plus forage may be a more suitable option than a full complete feed.

When are roughage-based feeds a better choice?

A **fibre feed** is often the best choice when the horse has a history of laminitis, needs fewer calories, or is prone to insulin-related issues. Fibre-based products typically help maintain a more consistent release of energy and are easier to fit into a **high fibre diet**.

Beet pulp is a regular ingredient in fibre-based feeds. It can be a helpful source of fermentable fibre and may be suitable when prepared correctly. Many fibre feeds are also available as **soaked feeds**, which can improve softness, reduce eating speed, and help horses that need more hydration in their feed.

For some horses, soaked fibre products are especially beneficial because they allow you to add volume without adding much starch. That can support satiety, help with **daily intake** control, and make a diet more practical for horses that need reduced grazing or less concentrate feed.

Feeding rules for horses when managing laminitis

Sound **horse feeding rules** are vital when dealing with laminitis. The best guide is often the traditional **10 rules of feeding horses**, adjusted for laminitis risk: keep the diet centered on forage, avoid sudden changes, feed small amounts regularly if concentrates are needed, and monitor body weight closely.

A practical **feeding routine** should include:

- Recording forage and any concentrates carefully
- Making meal sizes small
- Preventing long gaps without fibre
- Introducing any feed change gradually
- Assessing **portion control** every few weeks

Regularity matters. Horses respond well on predictable feeding, and this is especially true for laminitic horses. Sudden changes in forage, turnout, or concentrate intake can affect the digestive system and overall metabolic stability. A regular routine helps promote **gut health** and supports better weight control.

Another important rule is to treat grass as feed. If a horse is turned out, **grazing management** becomes part of the feeding plan. The horse may need restricted grazing, shorter turnout periods, or access only when **grass sugar** is lower.

How to use a horse feeding chart and calculator

A **horse feeding chart** and a **horse feed calculator uk** can assist you calculate the correct ration, but they should always be used alongside careful observation and professional advice. They are valuable tools for changing rough guesses into a more balanced plan.

To use them properly, you need two important pieces of information: **bodyweight** and **body condition score**. Bodyweight helps you calculate forage and feed quantities, while body condition score shows whether the horse is underweight, ideal, or carrying too much fat. For laminitic horses, this is essential because excess condition can heighten risk.

A calculator may suggest a daily intake based on weight and workload, but laminitis management often requires fine-tuning below a standard maintenance plan. That is why you should think in terms of target condition rather than simply filling a bucket to a recommended amount. The chart or calculator gives a baseline; the horse's response tells you whether the ration is working.

If you are unsure, weigh the hay, measure the bucket feed, and review the horse's shape and behaviour over time. Changes in weight, foot comfort, and **energy levels** all tell you whether the plan is suitable.

Should you opt for a brand feed such as Spillers horse feed?

Spillers horse feed is among many named products on the market, and branded feeds can be beneficial because reputable **horse feed companies** often offer clear nutritional information, feeding guides, and specialist products. However, a brand name by itself is not enough to decide suitability for a laminitic horse.

What matters most is to read **feed labels** carefully. Compare the levels of sugar, starch, fibre, and recommended feeding rate. A branded product may be suitable if it is designed for laminitis-prone horses or for low-calorie maintenance, but a different product from the same company may be intended for horses needing more condition or performance support.

When assessing a branded feed, ask:

- Is it truly low in NSC?
- Is it suitable for the horse's **weight management** needs?
- Can it be fed in small enough amounts to avoid excess **digestible energy**?
- Can it help maintain a **balanced diet** alongside forage?

Well-known brands can be a helpful place to start, but the label matters more than the logo. The best decision is based on the horse's health needs, not marketing.

How much does horse feed cost?

Horse feed cost differs significantly depending on the kind of feed, the quality of ingredients, and daily intake needs. A bag from one of the main **horse feed companies** may seem costly at first glance, but the key issue is the **daily ration cost**, not just the listed price.

To estimate value, take into account:

- **Bag size** and how far it goes
- Daily recommended amount
- Whether the horse needs a total ration or only a supplement balancer
- The cost of extras such as add-ons or soaked fiber products

A product with a smaller **bag size** may seem more affordable, but if the horse needs a substantial amount each day, it can cost more over time. By contrast, a dense balancer or low-quantity option may have a greater price per bag but a reduced daily ration cost.

For founder-affected horses, the most cost-effective plan is often the one that cuts loss, limits unnecessary calories, and meets the horse's actual needs. Smart **horse feed cost** management should cover forage, not just loads of compound feed.

UK horse feed advice: when to ask for help

Dependable **horse feed advice uk** is essential if you are dealing with laminitis, especially if the horse has ongoing episodes, finds it hard with weight, or has other health conditions. A **veterinarian** should be consulted if laminitis is thought to be present or if the horse is right now painful. Prompt diagnosis and treatment are important.

An **horse nutrition expert** can create a diet that fits the horse's needs, especially if you are balancing reduced sugar, roughage, and body condition. This is particularly useful when the horse is difficult to keep in good shape, when forage testing is available, or when you need a more precise feeding plan.

Expert guidance is just as important for long-term **laminitis management**. The right diet that is suitable for one horse may be unsuitable for another, even if they both have laminitis history. Breed, age, workload, turnout, weight, and foot condition all affect the right strategy.

Typical errors to steer clear of

Various common feeding mistakes can cause laminitis worse. One major one is choosing feeds with hidden **molasses**. Molasses-based products are often more palatable, but they can raise the **sugar content** and make the feed more unsuitable for a sensitive horse.

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A further mistake is relying on **grain** as a quick energy source. Grain-based feeds often carry higher starch levels, which may increase the risk of a laminitic reaction. Tiny amounts can be unsuitable if the overall diet is already rich in **sugar and starch**.

Additional **laminitis triggers** related to feeding include:

- Overfeeding concentrate rations
- Ignoring forage quality
- Making sudden diet changes
- Letting uncontrolled grazing when **grass sugar** is high
- Not checking the **body condition score** regularly

Keep in mind that a feed advertised as “natural” or “conditioning” is not automatically suitable. Inspect the **feed label**, ask about NSC, and keep the focus on the horse’s actual nutritional needs.

Laminitis-safe feeding FAQ

Which horse feed is best for laminitic horses?

The most suitable **horse feed** for laminitic horses is usually a low **NSC**, **low starch feed** that supports a **high fibre diet**. For many horses, the safest plan is forage-led, with **hay** or **soaked hay** as the foundation and a balancer or fibre-based feed added only if needed.

Can laminitic horses eat complete horse feed?

Certainly, some **complete horse feed** products can be suitable if they have low **starch levels** and fit the horse’s **nutritional balance** needs. Be sure to check the **feed label** and compare the sugar and starch figures before deciding.

What amount should I feed a laminitic horse?

It depends on **bodyweight**, **body condition score**, and whether the horse needs weight loss, maintenance, or gentle conditioning. A **horse feeding chart** or **horse feed calculator uk** can help you start, but the ration should be adjusted to keep intake controlled and suitable for laminitis risk.

Are branded feeds like Spillers horse feed safe for laminitis-prone horses?

Spillers horse feed and other named feeds can be suitable if the specific product is reduced in sugar and starch and fits the horse’s needs. Don’t judge by brand alone. Compare the product against other **horse feed companies** using the label information and feeding guide.

What should I avoid feeding a horse with laminitis?

Avoid feeds high in **molasses**, high-starch **grain** mixes, and anything with a high **sugar content** or unsuitable **sugar and starch** profile. Also be careful with unrestricted grazing, because **grass sugar** can contribute to **laminitis triggers**. If you are unsure, ask a **veterinarian** or **equine nutritionist** for help.

What should i feed my horse quiz

If you are using a “ **what should i feed my horse quiz**” style approach, the most suitable answers for a laminitic horse usually point towards forage first, low sugar, low starch, and careful portion control. The quiz can assist narrow choices, but it should not replace proper assessment of the horse’s condition and needs.

Horse feed for beginners

If you are looking for **horse feed for beginners**, the simplest safe approach is to start with the basics: good forage, clean water, salt, and a feed that suits the horse’s body condition and workload. For a laminitic horse, keep the ration simple and avoid overcomplicating it with unnecessary concentrates.

Horse feed mix recipe

A simple **horse feed mix recipe** for a laminitis-prone horse might include soaked fibre, unmolassed chop, and a suitable balancer, but the exact mix should be based on the horse’s forage, **body condition score**, and professional advice. Never make up a mix with grain or molasses-heavy ingredients.

If you want the safest route, think: **forage first**, low **starch content**, low **sugar content**, careful **grazing management**, and regular review of the horse’s weight and comfort. That is the foundation of effective laminitis feeding.