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## **Guidelines for well-balanced horse feeding**

The CalmHealthyHorses web pages and our range of supplements are designed to help you feed your horse a healthy well-balanced diet. This is a short summary about how to use our products as part of a traditional, tried and tested approach to feeding horses. You can use our products alongside these protocols to ensure the best outcome for your horse. **If you have any questions about using our products or our recommended approach to diet please do not hesitate to e-mail me at [sue@calmhealthyhorse.co.uk](mailto:sue@calmhealthyhorse.co.uk) I am here to help.**

### **Why these protocols and our products work well together**

Keep in mind the difference between a horse's natural environment, a semi desert biome, and conditions in the UK which are warm, wet and organic. It's the stark contrast between our UK environment and the one the horse is designed for that creates so many challenges for us. Our aim is to provide the horse with a well-balanced diet in a format that best suits his digestive system. That means appropriate levels of vitamins, minerals, proteins, carbohydrates and fats through high fibre forages with species appropriate sugars, potassium and nitrate levels. In our experience, this is best done by feeding more hay than grass. Then we can supplement to the forage for the elements it falls short in, and when necessary offset any wider mineral imbalances by using Alleivate C and GrazEzy. Remember: sugars, nitrates and potassium levels in UK pastures are excessive at times of growth – this can be any time of the year given our weather and soils but is especially the case in spring and late autumn. This is why we emphasise feeding hay over grass 24/7.

Traditionally horses were fed high levels of good hay, had managed access to 'rough' pastures and received small simple bucket feeds of mainly chaff, linseed, with broad-spectrum vitamin and minerals and salt. For many reasons, modern horse keeping has evolved to keeping horses out at 'good' grass, feeding less hay and using complete feeds with added vitamins and minerals.

As a result, many horses are feeding off a 'green carpet' of inappropriate forage all year-round and then being offered commercial feeds that often bring soy, molasses, beet, alfa, and other unnecessary or inappropriate feedstuffs into the horse's diet. This scenario conflicts with the horse's digestive needs because there is in-sufficient fibre, too many carbohydrates, excessive potassium, nitrates and often inappropriate levels of important vitamin and minerals.

### **Our principles for providing a well-balanced horse diet:**

Carefully manage access to appropriate pasture grazing and eliminate access to unsuitable pasture, especially at peak times of growth or when the horse is already compromised. Use a dry lot, track system, or whatever place is at your disposal to ensure that a grass free option is part of your management arrangements. Try to make hay your horses predominant food source all year round. Many horses will balance the hay and grass intake if their digestive system is not excessively stressed but horses that are chronically out of balance lose this ability.



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### **Key ingredients for a simple balancing bucket**

*Plain chaff.* Chaff promotes chewing – it's not about nutrition. Chewing is vital to starting the digestive process. Avoid chaffs that bring alfa, processed straw, vegetable oils, molasses and other inappropriate additives as they can bring on inflammatory issues.

*Mironised linseed* – Only 100-200gms per day for 500kg horse. Linseed brings omega 3 & 6 fatty acids, has anti-inflammatory properties and mucilage, which helps to sooth and clear the gut. Avoid feeding linseed at higher rates, it is unnecessary and can bring unhelpful levels of crude proteins with associated issues.

*A good quality broad spectrum vitamin and mineral supplement.* Our **Premium vits & mins** bring all the key macro and trace minerals with vitamins in appropriate ratios and formats to ensure absorption by the horse's digestive system. .

*Additional calories.* Hay brings sufficient calories for most leisure horses but to maintain weight for working or older horses consider adding Copra, pure oils such as coconut or linseed and / or oats which are all good calorific sources. Remember to 'work then feed' i.e. don't add extra calories until you see that your horse is becoming fitter and trimmer.

Note that sometimes it can be more effective to feed **Shipshape** to provide your horse with a nutritional boost than adding calorific feeds. **Shipshape** will enable your horse to maximize his take up from the nutrition within his existing diet along with providing essential amino acids which are important for producing 'condition' rather than 'fat'.

*Protein.* Hay usually brings sufficient crude protein for most leisure horses but for working sport horses, a lack of 'energy' and topline can be protein related, here a good essential amino acid source can help. **Premium MVA** vitamins and minerals cover this need. MVA contains Premium vitamins and minerals plus all the essential amino acids. MVA can also be considered for young, growing and older horses to meet their vitamin, mineral and essential protein needs. Note, feeding a course of **Shipshape** alongside **Premium** and then moving to **Premium MVA** is a great option for older horses or those who need an initial boost to recover topline, address 'hay bellies' and optimize nutritional take up.

*Salt* - horses need salt in their bucket as well as free choice options. Note that salt also needs to be built up slowly to between 1 & 2 tablespoons with most horses. Also, the amount of salt required by the horse does vary depending on exercise, weather and seasonal effects on grazing. You will need to regularly adjust the amount in the bucket to reflect this.



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## **Using GrazEzy and Alleviate C to manage grass affected horses.**

Following our key protocols for a well-balanced diet are important to the long-term success of resolving grass affected issues. But when you first realise your horse is grass affected it is most likely that he is in a chronic state. Then the priority is to get him back to normal. Replacing grass with hay and gradually changing the bucket feed over to the recommended simple balanced bucket is the first step. As part of this process using Alleviate C and GrazEzy in combination will enable you to help your horse's mineral balances get back to normal and this will enable his digestive and other systems to function as they should.

### **What is the difference between GrazEzy and Alleviate C**

Although the ingredients might appear similar it's important to note that these products work quite differently to support your horses metabolic state.

Alleviate C brings immediate relief to horses that are exhibiting grass affected issues (see the checklist on the site). It supports the muscle and nervous systems that become stressed as a result of forage related mineral imbalances. Alleviate C can also be used to offset training related stressors and to address the need for added calcium in the diet for hard working horses that are being fed reasonably high levels of copra or oats.

GrazEzy, once built up to the necessary level as required by the individual horse brings a sustainable improvement providing our wider dietary protocols are being followed. GrazEzy addresses the mineral imbalances associated to excessive potassium and nitrates in the diet. When these minerals are out of balance we regularly see high urine PH readings of 8 and above. By using GrazEzy you will see the urine PH return to normal (7) and then the grass affected symptoms diminish as the appropriate mineral balance is achieved.

### **Starting out with Alleviate C & GrazEzy**

In the beginning, horses that are in a chronic state often benefit from feeding both products in combination for roughly 1 month. Through this loading period, you can begin to identify your horses' individual needs. For example: You may need to continue to feed both products for longer, this is often the case for chronic head-shakers and those with longstanding or very reactive behaviours. You may need to continue with just the GrazEzy, this can be the case for those with more metabolic orientated issues (long-term laminitics, or cushings ) or you may be able to cease using the products and keep them to use strategically when you notice that the your horse is at risk of grass affected issues re-emerging. Don't worry if this sounds vague - you will be able to work out what's best for your horse having gone through the loading process. Because each horse's metabolic status is individual to him, plus the potassium profile in any grazing will be fluctuating rapidly in response to the weather, it is not appropriate to state a regular and specific daily rate of product post the loading phase. It's more important that you start to develop your sense of what is required and use this to support your horse, working within the recommended levels. Compare use of these products to the application of the half halt when riding, the more balanced the horse the smaller and subtler the half halt becomes.



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### **How to add GrazEzy and Alleviate C to your horses bucket**

It is very important that you introduce the GrazEzy SLOWLY. Build up to the maximum amount your horse will take per day or bowel tolerance (manure softens) over roughly 10 days. Then continue to feed until your satisfied that the issues have been addressed and your horses wider diet is in a good place to ensure that your improvement is sustainable. Testing the Urine PH provides a good guide to your progress and can help you understand when GrazEzy is needed. GrazEzy has a bitter taste – this is why it is very important to build up slowly noting that sometimes you may need to reduce salt levels to get an optimum take up – this is perfectly normal. Every time you introduce GrazEzy you will have to build it up very SLOWLY again, even if your horse ate good levels in the past it is unlikely that he will eat his feeds regularly if you load the GrazEzy in quickly.

For best results feed Alleviate C at a high level per the pack instructions for 10 days and then reduce to the smaller maintenance level. There is usually no problem with Alleviate C being loaded straight into the feed. Alleviate C is best fed initially over 2 or 3 feeds per day if possible. Once the horses issues have subsided Alleviate C can be removed from the diet and re-applied as and when needed.

### **Once your horse is calm and healthy**

How well you manage the wider diet, how sensitive your horse is and ongoing weather and grass growing conditions (if your horse has any access to it) will dictate what levels and when you need to include GrazEzy and/or Alleviate C in your horse's bucket. The more consistent your application of the recommended basics (managed grass, ad lib hay and balanced bucket) the less likely you are to need GrazEzy and / or Alleviate C on a regular basis. However, for sensitive horses keep these products in your feed room ready to use as and when required – particularly in spring and late autumn it's a good idea to add maintenance levels to the bucket a few times per week, this will help to keep everything in check and avoid the development of Grass Affected issues.

**Always consult your vet if you suspect a clinical issue, our recommendations provide a good foundation from which your vet can best assist in addressing any medical concerns.**

**Sensitised horses are challenging so be vigilant – however we find that the sensitivity does reduce overtime if the Calm Healthy Horses approach is consistently applied.**



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### Instructions for Urine PH Testing

You can use PH strips to test your horse's urine, if its higher than 7.5 its worth acting to bring it back to normal - 7. You can buy PH litmus paper liquid testing strips over the internet, at some chemists, garden centres or pets shops that stock aquatic supplies.

Testing your horses' urine can give you some useful information about how to manage his diet. If your horses diet is well-balanced your horses' urine PH should be between 7-7.5. If it is higher, then some adjustments to the diet can be undertaken to reduce the potassium and nitrogen load on the horses' system. By doing this you will reduce stress and enable the horse's system to function as it should, any issues associated to your horse being Grass Affected should subside and disappear.

To do this:

1. If not already on a reasonably grass free ad-lib hay system drastically reduce green grass intake and offer ad-lib hay.
2. Soaking hay for approximately 45 mins can further reduce the potassium load by roughly 50% of the hay content
3. Check your bucket for any high potassium feeds like alfalfa, soy, brewer's yeast and kelp products, these are feeds we try to avoid, if your using them consider if you really need them in the diet.
4. Make sure that you are regularly adding some salt to the feed and that free choice salt is also available.

If the urine PH is still too high following these steps add or increase the GrazEzy - this will bring the PH down. It contains multiple 'buffers' and will help your horses' system to return to normal. Don't forget – you must build up salt and GrazEzy SLOWLY, small feeds with a small amount does more good than a big dose which your horse may refuse to eat or just pass straight through his system.

**If the urine is lower than 7 then the horses' system is too acidic.** These cases are in the minority in the UK. Such horses are liable to be dull, lethargic, nappy and have no 'go'. Following our Basic Balanced Diet protocols and adding more salt to the diet usually brings them back up to normal. Try to test the Urine PH reasonably regularly to get a general picture of your horses' individual status and needs.

**Always consult your vet if you suspect a clinical issue. Our recommendations provide a good foundation from which your vet can best assist in addressing any medical concerns.**