

## Helping Customes Deal With High Cost or Unavailability of Good Hay

Some great information from one of Rusty Bane's dealers showing horse owners some options to the high cost of hay, or in many cases, the total unavailability of decent hay. This is going to be a problem all winter and into the spring in many areas.

If you have a chance to help people with this, encourage them to plan ahead and gradually blend in Horse Chow or one of our other complete feeds while they still have hay, slowly increasing the complete feed and decreasing hay over as much time as they can. If they have to go "cold turkey", they will have the best results if they can divide the horse's daily ration into 3 - 4 meals per day. Horses that have been eating complete feeds do very well when that is what they are used to but sometimes when they have been used to long-stemmed hay, they may begin to look for other things to chew on if fed the complete feed in two large meals per day. Horses eat the complete feed more quickly and don't have to chew as much as with long-stemmed hay so they spend more time without something to eat. In a long stretch of nothing to do and left in a stall or dry lot, they can try to chew on the boards, other horse's tails, etc. However, if they have been changed over very gradually or their daily ration is fed in smaller meals more frequently and they are given plenty of exercise and turn-out, they will do quite well and not turn into termites.

Another thing to alert folks to, even if they have hay, is that in many areas the hay quality isn't as good as they are used to. Even if they have plenty of hay, encourage horse owners to watch their horses body condition because if the hay quality has declined, they will have to increase the feed offered or maybe even change products to make up for the decrease in nutrient availability in the hay. I talked to a lady this week that is feeding 4 lbs of alfalfa cubes to her horse along with some Strategy® and is concerned about weight loss. This horse is used to eating pasture and the pasture has been all gone for awhile, there is no hay and the alfalfa cubes were all the forage this horse was getting. Surprisingly, the horse owner didn't realize on her own that her horse needed more forage, but it made sense to her when I told her. Be aware to watch for people buying alfalfa cubes or pellets, beet pulp, or complete feeds for the first time and ask enough questions to be sure the owner is going to implement them properly and know how much to feed.

It makes a good display to put 15 - 20 lbs of hay in a hay net and 4 lbs of Omolene in a bucket, then weigh out the amount of Horse Chow, Equine Sr, etc. that it would take to replace the hay and grain and put that in a bucket or trough...show people how to feed these products properly.

It is going to be an interesting winter and spring for many horse owners, and we can help them get through it successfully while we all wait and pray for a good hay year in 2008.

**Is the Hay to Feed ration of 5 lbs. Hay = 4 Lbs. Horse Chow 100 the same if the product is Equine Senior, Equine Junior, Horeseman's Edge 12 Complete or Horse Chow 200?**

5 lbs of hay = 4 lbs of Horse Chow 100 from a calorie standpoint, giving average quality hay 800 calories per pound and Horse Chow 100 1000 calories per pound. You can use your slipstick to figure out the trade off in calories between different hay and different complete feed products.

Now, the thing you have to be careful about is that you still provide adequate fiber. I always use roughly 1.3% of body weight as a minimum for a complete feed to provide similar fiber as 1% of body weight in long-stemmed hay. So, if you are feeding 20 lbs of hay and 4 lbs of Strategy, you might go to 20 lbs of Horse Chow 200 to replace the 24 lbs of hay and feed. Or, you could go with 19 lbs of Horse Chow 100 and 2 lbs of Strategy or 17.5 lbs of Horse Chow and 3 lbs of Strategy....different combinations are possible. However, if you found someone feeding 12 lbs of hay and 6 lbs of Strategy, you would need to go with a minimum of 13 lbs of Horse Chow 100 and cut back to 5.3 lbs of Strategy.

You just have to calculate the total calories, then see how much Horse Chow or other Complete feed they need to meet the calorie amount, then make sure the recommendation provides the minimum feeding rate of the complete feed. For instance, Complete Advantage might be hard to recommend for someone feeding only 12 - 15 lbs of hay and 3 lbs of Omolene 200....it would only take 9.9 lbs of Complete Advantage to provide

**the same number of calories but that wouldn't provide adequate fiber at that feeding rate. So, as with other situations, you have to choose the complete feed according to age, activity level, etc. of the horse. Then either feed it alone as the total diet or blend it with the appropriate concentrated feed product, usually at a reduced feeding rate compared with feeding that feed with a long-stemmed hay.**

**Karen E. Davison, Ph.D.  
Manager - Equine Tech. Services  
LOL Purina Feed**