

Which should you give a horse before exercise?

This best **horse feed** before exercise is a feed that supports **steady energy**, protects **digestive comfort**, and matches the horse's **workload**. In most cases, that means a **forage-first** approach built around **forage**, such as **hay** or **haylage**, with a carefully chosen bucket feed only if extra energy is needed. A **complete horse feed** can be a practical choice because it combines nutrients in a **balanced ration**, which is helpful for owners who want simple feeding without having to piece together several different products.

Ahead of exercise, the goal is not to "load" a horse with calories right before work. Instead, the feed should support **energy release** across the **training session** without upsetting the stomach. That is why **overweight horse feed** many horses do best with **fibre-based feed** or a **low-starch feed**, especially if they are prone to sharp behaviour, poor **stomach health**, or digestive upset. In contrast, [low starch performance feed](#) feeds high in **sugar** and **starch** can provide quick energy, but they are not always the safest choice before work.

To choose the right **types of horse feed**, start with the horse's **body condition**, **condition score**, and **exercise intensity**. A horse in light work may only need forage, while a **performance horse** in harder work may benefit from a feed that adds **digestible energy** without overloading starch. The best pre-exercise plan is always the one that is digestible, predictable, and suited to the individual horse.

How long before riding should a horse be fed?

Good **feed timing** is important as much as the feed itself. As a rule, a horse should not be given a large bucket feed immediately before riding. A common rule of thumb is to feed a forage-based meal several hours before exercise, then allow access to water and time for digestion before the **training session**. This can help reduce the risk of discomfort and keeps the horse relaxed for work.

If you are looking at a **horse feeding chart**, use it as a starting point rather than a fixed rule. Charts often group horses by **workload**, which helps you judge whether the horse needs only forage or a small amount of concentrate. The key is to keep the stomach relatively settled before exercise and to avoid a heavy meal that could interfere with movement, breathing, or willingness to go forward.

For useful **horse feeding rules**, think in terms of digestion. Bigger meals take longer to process, while **forage** is usually gentler on the gut than rich concentrate feeds. If you want tailored guidance, **horse feed advice uk** sources often recommend using feed labels, your horse's condition, and workload to guide timing. A **horse feed calculator uk** can also help estimate daily amounts based on bodyweight and work level, though you should still adjust for temperament, fitness, and overall condition.

As a simple rule, avoid making major changes to the ration on the same day as riding. Consistency supports **gut health**, keeps **hydration** more stable, and helps maintain a steady horse. The aim is always **digestive comfort** first, then performance.

Best pre-exercise horse feed options

The most suitable pre-exercise options depend on the horse's needs, but the most practical choices are those that give **slow-release energy** without too much starch. For many horses, a **complete horse feed** is a practical solution because it is formulated to provide nutrients in the right balance. If the horse is already on plenty of forage, the complete feed may only need to be a limited part of the ration. This makes it useful for owners who want an uncomplicated routine and a sensible **balanced ration**.

One commonly recognised name in the market is **spillers horse feed**, and products like this often include options for different work levels, from leisure horses to harder-working animals. When comparing brands from different **horse feed companies**, focus less on the label and more on the ingredient profile: how much **fibre** it contains, how much **sugar** and **starch** it includes, and whether it suits the horse's workload and temperament.

The main **types of horse feed** used before exercise include:

- **Forage** such as hay or haylage, which supports gut fill and a steadier digestive rhythm.
- **Concentrates**, which are more calorie-dense and may be useful for horses in harder work.
- **Cubes**, which can be easier to measure and may suit horses that need a consistent bucket feed.
- **Pellets**, which are often convenient, tidy, and helpful for horses that need a more controlled ration.

A simple **horse feed mix recipe** for pre-exercise use might combine chopped forage, a small amount of cubes or pellets, and water if needed to improve palatability and reduce dust. That said, keep any home mix consistent and avoid making it too rich. The safest pre-work bucket is usually one that favours fibre, offers modest calorie support, and does not overwhelm the stomach.

For horses that need more energy, look for feeds that promote **steady energy release** through fibre, oil, and forage rather than relying heavily on starch. This approach is often better for **digestive health**, a calmer temperament, and a more consistent work pattern. In many cases, the best choice is not the "most energising" feed, but the one that gives the right amount of **usable energy** for the work demanded.

Things to avoid before riding

Good **horse feeding rules** are equally about what to avoid as what to offer. Before exercise, avoid large meals that leave the horse feeling full, sluggish, or uncomfortable. Big feed portions can affect movement and may increase the risk of digestive issues, especially if the horse is asked to work hard soon after eating.

It is also wise to avoid quick changes in feed brand or feed type before a ride. A horse that is already sensitive can react poorly to a new ration, particularly if it is higher in **sugar** or **starch** than the previous diet. For **horse feed for beginners**, this is an important basic rule: change feed gradually, one step at a time, and allow the horse to adjust before expecting peak performance.

Do not choose feed based on **horse feed cost** alone. The cheapest bag is not always the best value if it causes poor behaviour, wasted feed, or digestive problems. Equally, the most expensive product is not automatically the best fit. Compare ingredients, feed rate, and how well the feed supports the horse's work. Some **horse feed companies** market high-energy products for performance, but the real question is whether the horse needs that level of fuel before exercise.

For many horses, a feed too rich in starch is a poor pre-work choice. It may seem like a quick solution, but it can work against calmness, comfort, and steady energy. If the horse is already getting enough forage, a small amount of a fibre-led concentrate may be safer than a large cereal-based meal. If unsure, keep the ration simple and forage-led.

How much should you provide before work?

The correct amount depends on the horse's build, training load, and body condition, so there is not one fixed answer that fits every horse. A **horse feeding chart** can help you work out daily totals, but the pre-exercise portion should usually be small. The aim is to offer enough fuel for the work without leading to an overly full stomach or a sudden rise in available energy.

A **horse feed calculator uk** tool can help you work out overall daily intake, especially if you are balancing forage with bucket feed. Still, use the result as a reference rather than a fixed prescription. The best feed volume before exercise is one that suits the horse's current **condition score**, training demands, and digestive comfort. A horse in moderate work may need only forage and a modest concentrate allowance, while a higher-level athlete may need more carefully planned energy support.

Horse feed cost also influences how much you feed. If a feed is expensive, it can be tempting to underfeed it or stretch the ration too far. That may leave the horse short of energy or nutrients. On the other hand, overfeeding concentrate to get "more value" can lead to waste and poor gut function. The smarter approach is to choose a feed that fits the horse's **types of horse feed** needs and use the minimal effective amount.

Feed amount should reflect **exercise intensity**. Light hacking or easy schooling usually requires reduced pre-work fuel than fast work, jumping, or long conditioning sessions. For more demanding work, use feed that supports **slow-release energy** and make sure forage remains the mainstay. The horse should feel alert but not overfaced, supported but not overloaded.

Establishing a easy pre-exercise meal routine

A sensible routine makes feeding easier for **horse feed for beginners** and experienced owners alike. Start with a forage-led base, then add a measured bucket feed only if the horse needs it. This keeps the ration predictable and supports **horse feeding rules** that maintain digestive function. A steady pattern is especially important for a horse that works regularly, because a stable routine helps with both behaviour and performance.

For a practical **horse feed advice uk** approach, use this order:

- Offer forage as the foundation of the diet.
- Use a **complete horse feed** or fibre-led concentrate only if extra energy or nutrients are needed.
- Set the feed volume moderate before exercise.
- Leave suitable time between the meal and the **training session**.
- Track the horse's **body condition**, appetite, and behaviour.

If you are deciding between feed styles, remember that a **complete horse feed** can make easier planning because it is usually designed to be fed as part of a **balanced ration**. That can be especially helpful for people who want a simple solution without juggling several ingredients. If you prefer a more hands-on approach, a carefully built mix of forage, cubes, or pellets may also work well, as long as the diet remains consistent and not overly rich.

Think of the routine as a way to support the horse's day, not just the ride. Good pre-exercise feeding supports **stomach health**, calm focus, and usable energy. If the horse is changing shape, losing condition, or becoming too fresh, modify the ration in response to the full picture rather than just the next workout.

A sensible pre-exercise ration is usually forage-based, low in starch, and matched to workload rather than chosen for excitement or quick results.

Common questions about horse feed before exercise

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What is the best horse feed before work?

The best **horse feed** before exercise is usually primarily forage-based, with a small amount of **complete horse feed**, cubes, or pellets only if the horse needs extra energy. A **low-starch feed** with plenty of **fibre** is often the best option because it supports **digestive comfort**, **gut health**, and steadier **energy release**.

Is it better to feed my horse before or after exercise?

Many horses do better when fed a larger meal after riding rather than right before it. Before work, keep feed light and forage-led, then give the main ration later once the horse has recovered. This supports hydration, comfort, and more comfortable digestion.

Is complete horse feed suitable before work?

Yes, a **complete horse feed** can be suitable before exercise if it is fed in a sensible quantity and matches the horse's **workload**. It is often a handy option for owners who want a simple, balanced ration. Check whether the feed is fibre-based or higher in starch so you can judge how it may affect behaviour and stomach comfort.

How much time should pass before riding after feeding?

As a general guide, allow several hours between a large meal and riding. Smaller forage-based meals are usually easier to manage than large concentrate feeds. Good **feed timing** helps reduce discomfort and supports a more productive training session.

How do I work out how much horse feed my horse needs?

Use a **horse feeding chart** or **horse feed calculator uk** as a starting point, then adjust for condition, workload, and temperament. Watch the horse's **condition score**, appetite, and performance. The right amount is the least ration that maintains body condition, supports work, and avoids excess starch or unnecessary **horse feed cost**.