

HORSES

Food and water for horses

Horses have a simple stomach (only one chamber). They eat grasses and soft plants. If they are working, they often need supplementary feeding. Horses that are not working or carrying young need to be allowed to graze every day on good pasture. Small quantities of hay, cut grass or supplementary feeds (if available) can be given to them at night.

Food for working Horses

Amount of food

Working horses need at least 2 kg (4.4 lb) of concentrate feed daily in addition to grazing and hay. A heavy working horse can require 4 kg (8.8 lb) of concentrate feed daily.

Type of food

Coconut meal, mill mix, molasses and maize are good concentrate feeds for horses. Small amounts of these concentrates are often mixed in with chaffed (chopped) grass. Vegetables and fruit can also be fed to horses. Waste vegetables and fruits can be chopped up and added to the feed.

Some grasses, such as setaria and kikuyu grass, contain substances that can cause horses to develop bighead disease. If fed in large amounts, Leucaena can cause horses to lose their hair.

Water

It is best if horses always have access to water, except immediately after exercise. A horse requires 25–30 litres (7–8 gallons) of water per day. It needs less when eating green grass, which contains water. It will need more water when the food is dry or the weather is hot. Pregnant or suckling mares need an additional 12–15 litres (3–4 US gallons) of water per day.

CAUTION: Do not give water to horses immediately after exercise while they are still hot as it can cause colic. Walk the animals around and allow them to cool down before giving water.

Shelter

Horses should be provided with shade and shelter. Trees provide shade. Shelter can be provided by a simple shed made of wood or sheeting that has three walls and a roof. Horses can be fed hay or supplementary feed in the shelter when necessary.

Who can farmers contact for further information?

Farmers may contact staff of the local Ministry of Agriculture or SPC Land Resources Division staff. For additional technical assistance, contact the SPC Land Resources Division at: gibsons@spc.int

