

Selecting the right horse feed matters because every horse has different nutritional requirements, body condition, and workload. A cereal-free horse feed can be a practical option for horses that need low starch, high fibre, or a more forage based daily ration. It may also suit horses with laminitis, sensitive digestive health, or owners who want steadier energy release without the spikes that some cereal-based feeds can cause.

This article explains what cereal-free horse feed is, who it suits, how to compare types of horse feed, and how to use a horse feeding chart or horse feed calculator uk style approach to match feed to your horse. It also covers horse feeding rules, horse feed cost, and simple horse feed mix recipe ideas for practical use. If you are looking for horse feed for beginners or clearer horse feeding advice uk, this article is designed to help you make sense of the options.

What's cereal-free horse feed?

Cereal-free horse feed is horse feed made without common grains such as oats, barley, or maize. Instead of relying on starch from cereals, it usually uses fiber, oil, protein, and added vitamins and minerals to support a balanced diet. This makes it part of a broader group of low starch feeds that are often designed to support digestive health and a more even energy release.

Many cereal free products are still complete horse feed options, meaning they can provide enough nutrients for a horse when fed at the correct feeding rate with the right forage. Others are concentrate feed or balancer products that need to be paired with hay, haylage, or other forage. It is important to know the difference because "cereal-free" does not automatically mean "complete".

When comparing types of horse feed, look at the ingredient list and the analysis. A high fibre, forage based feed may be suitable for weight management, while a more energy-dense option with added oil and protein may be better for a performance horse. What matters is matching the feed to the horse's metabolism, workload, and condition score.

In practical terms, cereal-free horse feed often aims to support:

- stable energy release
- improved digestive health and hindgut health
- weight gain or weight management depending on the formula
- lower starch intake for horses prone to laminitis
- controlled acceptance without unnecessary cereals

Who benefits from cereal-free horse feed?

A cereal-free diet can be suitable for many horses, but it is especially useful when you want to cut back on starch or form a more forage based ration. It is often considered by owners working with horse feed for beginners because it can be more straightforward to manage than high-cereal diets, particularly when the horse needs calm energy and good gut health.

Even so, cereal free does not mean one-size-fits-all. A leisure horse living mainly on forage may only need a balancer plus a small amount of concentrate feed, while a harder-working horse may need a more specific complete horse feed or extra supplements to meet its dietary needs.

Useful situations for cereal-free horse feed include:

- horses that need a low starch ration
- horses that have had laminitis before
- horses needing weight management without excess starch
- poor doers that need steady weight gain through fibre and oil
- performance horses needing more even energy release
- horses with digestive sensitivity or hindgut health issues

Good advice on horse feeding in the UK always starts with the individual horse, not the label. Check body condition, workload, forage intake, and whether the horse has any medical issues. Horse feeding rules also matter here: changes must be gradual, fresh water must always be available, and the feed chosen should suit the horse's daily ration rather than simply looking appealing on the bag.

If you are new to horse feed for beginners, a vet or qualified nutritionist can help you decide whether a cereal-free horse feed is appropriate. For some horses, a balancer and forage may be enough. For others, a complete horse feed may be the simplest way to cover vitamins and minerals without overfeeding **overweight horse feed** starch.

Types of horse feed that are cereal free

There are various types of horse feed that can be cereal free, and each fulfils a different purpose. Certain options are designed to replace a full bucket feed, while others are intended to top up forage and provide focused support.

Common cereal-free choices include:

- **Complete horse feed:** A full ration feed that can provide fuel, fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals.
- **Balancer:** A concentrated source of vitamins and minerals, often fed alongside hay or haylage.
- **High fibre chaff or cubes:** Useful for increasing chew time and supporting digestive health.
- **Low starch mash:** Often used for taste appeal, hydration, and easier feeding.
- **Concentrate feed:** A wide category that may be cereal free and used for additional calories or nutrients.

Some horse feed companies specialise in low starch, high fibre feeding systems, while others offer a wide range of products for different work levels. Spillers horse feed is one example of a brand many owners recognise when comparing feeding options, and its product range illustrates how horse feed companies often group feeds by workload, condition, and digestive support rather than simply by whether they contain cereal.

When reading labels, note the balance of fibre, protein, and oil. A cereal-free feed can still be energy-rich if it uses digestible fibre and fats. It may also include supplements such as yeast, digestive aids, or added amino acids to support muscle maintenance and overall performance.

For some horses, the best solution is not a single product but a combination of hay, haylage, balancer, and a cereal-free concentrate feed. That can be especially useful when you need to support body condition without increasing starch or upsetting the horse's metabolism.

How to choose a suitable horse feed for your horse

Choosing the right horse feed starts with a good understanding of forage intake, body condition, workload, and any health concerns. A horse feed calculator uk tool can be handy for estimating the likely daily ration, but it should always be used alongside a horse feeding chart and professional guidance if your horse has special needs.

A easy way to assess the right feed is to ask:

- Is the horse maintaining, losing, or gaining weight?
- How much hay or haylage is already being eaten?
- Does the horse need more calories, more protein, or more vitamins and minerals?
- Is the horse a performance horse, a leisure horse, or a horse in rehab?
- Is the horse prone to laminitis, excitability, or poor digestive health?

A horse feeding chart can help you match feed type to condition score and workload. For example, a horse with a good body condition and low workload may only need forage plus a balancer. A thinner horse may need a higher calorie complete horse feed or extra fibre-based calories. A horse in harder work may require a feed with more digestibility and protein to support muscle and recovery.

When using any horse feed calculator uk style guide, remember that numbers are only a starting point. Individual metabolism, forage quality, and feeding rate all affect results. A feed that suits one horse may not suit another, even if they are similar in size.

Look for these qualities in a good cereal-free horse feed:

- detailed labelling of starch and sugar levels
- appropriate protein for muscle support and tissue repair
- fibre for gut function and palatability
- added vitamins and minerals to meet nutritional requirements
- feeding directions that fit your horse's workload and body condition

Complete horse feed can be especially useful if you want an all-in-one solution. However, if your horse already gets a good amount of hay or haylage and only needs a small top-up, a balancer may be more efficient and cost-effective.

Horse feeding rules every owner should use

Good horse feeding rules help maintain gut health, maintain a healthy body condition, and reduce the risk of issues such as laminitis or poor hindgut health. Whether you use cereal-free horse feed or another type, the basics do not change.

The 10 rules of feeding horses can be summarised as follows:

- 1. Make forage the foundation of forage such as hay or haylage.
- 2. Adjust the ration step by step over several days or longer.
- 3. Measure by weight, not by eye.
- 4. Tailor the feed to condition score and workload.
- 5. Prevent sharp rises in starch.
- 6. Keep clean water available at all times.
- 7. Keep feeding times as consistent as possible.
- 8. Review teeth, worming, and overall health regularly.
- 9. Add supplements only if required.
- 10. Revisit the ration whenever work, season, or condition changes.

A horse ration chart is useful here because it offers a structure for balancing forage, concentrate feed, and any balancer or supplements. It can also help you avoid overfeeding a horse that is already getting enough energy from hay or haylage.

Remember that “more feed” is not always the answer. When a horse is underweight, the cause could be dental problems, worm burden, poor forage digestibility, or illness rather than a lack of bucket feed. Likewise, a horse that gains weight too easily may need better weight management rather than more calories.

For plenty of horses, the best feeding plan is the simplest one that satisfies dietary needs without excess starch.

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How much does horse feed cost?

The cost of horse feed depends on the product type, the brand, the bag size, and how much you need to provide each day. So, how much does horse feed cost on average? There is no single answer, but cereal-free options can range from low-cost balancers to high-end complete horse feed products that are priced higher because of their fibre, oil, protein, and vitamin content.

When comparing horse feed cost, look at the price per day rather than the price per bag. A more expensive bag may last longer if the feeding rate is lower. Likewise, a balancer may seem costly but can be cheaper in the long run if it replaces a larger amount of concentrate feed.

Things that influence horse feed cost include:

- brand and formulation from different horse feed companies
- whether the feed is complete horse feed or a topper
- amount needed for each daily ration
- whether supplements are already included
- specialised ingredients for digestive health or low starch feeding

Spillers horse feed and other established horse feed companies offer multiple options at different price points, which makes comparison easier. If budget matters, compare the daily feeding rate against what the feed provides. A cheap feed that lacks vitamins and minerals may lead to extra spending on supplements, while a more complete option may reduce the need for add-ons.

Also factor in forage. Good hay or haylage is a major part of the total feeding budget, and a forage based plan often delivers better value than relying heavily on bucket feed alone.

Basic cereal-free horse feed mix ideas

A horse feed mix recipe can be very simple or as detailed as you need it to be. The aim is to build a ration that helps maintain gut health, eatability, and nutritional balance without cereal. If you want a workable horse feed mix recipe, start with forage and add only what the horse genuinely needs.

Basic cereal-free horse feed mix ideas include:

- **Hay with balancer:** Hay or haylage with a balancer for minerals and vitamins.

- **Fibre-rich bucket feed:** Chopped forage, fibre cubes, and a little oil for energy.
- **Conditioning support mix:** A cereal-free complete horse feed with added protein for weight gain.
- **Performance support mix:** Forage, low starch concentrate feed, and targeted supplements.

If you are making a horse feed mix recipe at home, be careful not to create an incomplete ration. Mixing ingredients without understanding nutritional requirements can leave gaps in vitamins and minerals or overload the horse with certain nutrients. A complete horse feed or balancer can **laminitis prone pony feed** make home feeding more reliable because it reduces guesswork.

For some horses, a homemade mix can make the feed more appealing and encourage eating. However, the mix should still support the horse's metabolism and avoid too much starch. The main focus should be fibre, sensible protein levels, and appropriate calories rather than volume alone.

Some owners also use supplements to fine-tune the diet, but supplements should not replace a proper feed base. If a horse needs help with muscle, coat condition, or digestion, use them to enhance a balanced ration, not to patch up an unsuitable one.

Frequent errors when switching to cereal-free feeding

Switching to cereal-free horse feed is often beneficial, but mistakes are common, especially for horse feed for beginners. Good horse feeding advice uk always stresses that the transition should be managed carefully and in line with horse feeding rules.

Common mistakes include:

- changing feed too quickly and affecting digestive health
- assuming cereal-free automatically means complete horse feed
- forgetting to check the condition score before carrying out changes
- feeding by volume instead of weight
- relying on too many supplements when forage and balancer would be enough
- neglecting hay or haylage quality
- selecting a feed with too little protein for the horse's workload
- feeding a low starch feed but still providing too many total calories

A further issue is misreading laminitis support. A cereal-free ration may help reduce starch, but it does not automatically solve every laminitis case. Overall diet, weight management, turnout, movement, and underlying health all matter.

It is also easy to pick a feed based on label claims rather than performance in the stable. Palatability matters because the best feed is one the horse will actually eat, but a tasty feed still has to meet nutritional requirements and support hindgut health. Always look at the full ration, not just the bucket feed.

FAQ: cereal-free horse feed

What is cereal-free horse feed?

Cereal-free horse feed is horse feed made without grains such as oats, barley, or maize. It usually relies on fibre, oil, protein, and added vitamins and minerals instead of cereal starch. Many products are designed to support digestive health, stable energy release, and a balanced diet.

Is cereal-free horse feed suitable for all horses?

Not always. Many horses benefit from it, especially those needing low starch or weight management support, but the best choice depends on body condition, workload, forage intake, and health status. Some horses may need a complete horse feed, while others only need a balancer plus forage. Horse feeding advice uk from a nutritionist or vet is helpful if you are unsure.

How do I choose the best horse feed for my horse?

Start with forage, condition score, workload, and any health issues such as laminitis or poor digestive health. Use a horse feeding chart as a guide and, if needed, a horse feed calculator uk approach to estimate the daily ration. Then compare types of horse feed for starch, fibre, protein, and vitamins and minerals to find the best match.

How much does horse feed cost on average?

Horse feed cost varies widely depending on the product, brand, and feeding rate. The most useful comparison is cost per day rather than cost per bag. Some horse feed companies offer budget-friendly balancers, while others sell high-end complete horse feed products with better ingredient quality or tailored support.

Can I make a cereal-free horse feed mix at home?

Yes, but it needs attention. A simple horse feed mix recipe might include forage, fibre-based ingredients, and a balancer or complete horse feed to cover vitamins and minerals. Homemade mixes should still meet nutritional requirements and avoid unbalanced levels of starch, protein, or calories. If in doubt, leave the mix simple and get expert horse feeding advice uk.