

newsletter

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B L E N D I N G N A T U R E A N D T E C H N O L O G Y



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Be sure to visit our exciting new-look website at www.equusfeeds.co.za

MANAGING YOUR HORSE IN DROUGHT CONDITIONS

Abnormally dry conditions across South Africa have posed unique health care and management challenges for horse owners. Below, we discuss a few changes you can make to assist your horse during this time.

Grazing/Pasture

When green pasture dwindles and temperatures are hot, horses move around their paddocks less and instead wait in the shade for feeding time. These horses are more inclined to have gastrointestinal upsets, as exercise can help to keep the gut moving.

Feeding as much long-stemmed grass hay as possible, spread throughout the paddock, helps to keep them eating and occupied during the day. This is preferable to having them wait around for an occasional big concentrate feeding.

When moisture finally returns, it is important to moderate horses' access to rapidly changing pasture so that their systems can readjust to the new green grass. This is especially important for horses suffering from laminitis.



Long stemmed Hay

Drought conditions also reduce hay supplies, making it difficult for owners to maintain consistent hay diets for their horses.

If you can't maintain a consistent hay type, source, and quality, gradually reduce the amount of the original batch and mix it with an increasing amount of the new hay (over three to five days) to ease the transition. When purchasing hay from a new source, always examine it carefully for mould, dust, weeds, etc.

Hay should be the staple of the equine diet and should never fall below 1% of body weight per day. Even if it is not of great nutritional value, it should still be provided.

For horses with unique conditions such as Laminitis, Insulin Resistance, Tying-up and Cushing's disease etc, you will need to pay close attention to the type of hay. Some hays are just not suitable for such conditions. For example Oat Hay contains larger amounts of NSC (Non Structural Carbohydrates) which should be avoided.

Consider Forage Alternatives

In cases where hay is scarce and/or of poor quality, forage substitutes can be a good option. These include beet pulp (suitable for NSC sensitive horses), high fibre or lucerne cubes, and even soybean hulls. These products help to ensure that the horse has enough fibre in his diet to ensure gastrointestinal health. Do note that while such products can supplement a horse's diet, they should not replace long stemmed hay entirely.

When considering fibre cubes, choose one that has a large cube size as these have the advantage of providing a larger fibre particle size which require more chewing which in turn produces stomach acid-reducing saliva and slows down eating time, assisting once again with digestive health

Check your current concentrate feed.

To ensure that your horse is getting as much fibre as possible, also consider changing to a concentrate feed that includes a lot of fibre. This will assist in ensuring that your horse is receiving as much fibre as possible from all sources. Check with your feed manufacturer on their maximum and minimum inclusions and look for products containing at the very least 10% fibre. Equus products typically contain a maximum of 14% with high fibre products containing as much as 24%.

Toxic Plants

Horses with adequate forage usually avoid eating toxic weeds. During drought conditions, however, when weeds might be the only green plants on pasture, horses are more likely to eat them. You should learn to recognize these and, if possible, remove them from pastures.

Sand Colic

Horses tend to ingest more dirt and sand when turned out in drought conditions as they often try to graze the last few short shoots and roots. Sand accumulation in the gut can be a serious problem that can lead to colic. Reduce sand ingestion by feeding off the ground or feeding in sand-free areas of the pasture.

This sometimes requires more than simply using a feeder, as hay still falls on the ground and is picked out of the soil. Consider placing rubber mats under feeders or feeding in stalls without sandy floors. Feeding a psyllium product regularly (usually one week per month) can also be beneficial, but it should complement these other management practices and should not be relied on alone. Psyllium products help to "bulk up" ingested material helping things like sand to move out of the digestive system.

In addition, rotate pastures regularly to avoid overgrazing and to assist in keeping drought-stressed grasses alive. This will preserve some ground cover, thus reducing wind and water erosion and soil loss later.

Water

Monitor water quality and provide extra fresh water. If horses are housed in large groups, offer plenty of room for watering and feeding because injuries can occur as horses compete for limited watering and feeding areas.

Wind

Wind should also be taken into account; blowing dust can irritate eyes and cause respiratory problems. Fly masks provide protection from insects and some can also help protect against intense sunlight and dust. Adequate shelter and clean bedding can also assist in helping horses avoid airborne dust.

Wildfires

Drought also often has wildfire risks in many areas. Horse owners who live in fire-prone areas should prepare for wildfires by having evacuation plans. All horse owners should have (or have easy access to) a serviceable truck and trailer they can use quickly in an emergency.

Dear Equus,

After 30 years of competitive riding, during which I have constantly chopped and changed feeds, I have finally found my horse feed.

Although I ride now only for pleasure, I still want to ensure that my horses are in top condition. Recently, I took two horses off the track and, at first, I put them onto another brand, but they both lost condition (which I had expected) but also become impossible to handle, let alone ride. This led me to ask around and I heard about Equus.

Well, within two weeks of changing to Equus Cool'n Perform 12% and Equus Nice 'n Easy, I can honestly say this has made a huge difference.

They both developed great condition with a lovely shine and they are now a pleasure to handle and ride. They look wonderful and my farrier has even commented on how much better their hoof growth and quality is.

My horses really do not need a lot of Equus to stay looking good and this has helped me to save money, especially as there is no need to add any extras.

Each bag I open is the same and I know I am getting a consistent product that is under strict controls.

I will never feed anything else. Thank you for a great feed.

Angie Storm

Before



After



PRODUCT FOCUS : EQUUS NICE 'N EASY



Equus Nice 'n Easy offers many applications ranging from a consistent quality forage alternative to an ideal feed solution for good doers or horses on box rest requiring maintenance feeding only. It is also suitable for horses not needing a high energy or protein concentrate but still wanting something in their feed bowls.

Nice 'n Easy can be used as a partial hay replacer in rations for all classes of horses. It is also ideal for stretching available hay in times of hay scarcity or when the quality of available roughage is not desirable.

Nice 'n Easy is fortified with all the essential vitamins and minerals and also contains added oils making it a very suitable maintenance ration especially for good doers with low activity, but in need of a quality ration that will also ensure a healthy coat. Nice 'n Easy also contains 1g/kg of live yeast culture for improved gut health.

Additional advantages of using Equus Nice 'n Easy:

- Reduced feed wastage – very little waste occurs with pellets as compared to the 20% or more wastage with long-stemmed hays.
- Consistent and maximum nutrient quality – pellets are manufactured under rigid quality control standards and must meet product nutrient guarantees.
- Avoiding dust and mould spores – minimizes exposure to harmful dust and mould spores compared to long-stemmed hays, which can be useful for horses with respiratory issues.

Visit www.equusfeeds.co.za for further information on Equus Nice 'n Easy and other products in our range

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For an absolutely free consultation with no further obligation contact our professional consultants to schedule a visit to your yard.

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