

Feeding the Senior Horse with Dental Issues

With modern improvements in management and veterinary care, horses are living longer than ever. This means that their teeth wear out before they do! Horses have “hypsodont” teeth that continuously erupt throughout their life and as they chew, the grinding motion wears the tooth surface down. As they age, their teeth become smooth and cupped out, which decreases their ability to effectively chew their food. Eventually, their teeth become worn all the way down to the gumline (“expired”) or fall out. More serious dental issues are also common in older horses, such as gum disease and loose or infected teeth. It is very important that your horse receives regular dental care every 6-12 months to check for and address these issues. This will make your horse’s mouth comfortable and healthy, but unfortunately can’t turn back the clock on worn-out teeth. The good news is that with a proper feeding regimen, your horse can still maintain weight with good nutrition. Feeding changes should be made slowly over 7-14 days.

Feeding Plan:

- A complete senior feed has built-in forage and can provide all the fiber that your horse needs.
- Senior feed can be fed dry or soaked. For geriatric horses with many missing or expired (worn to the gumline) teeth, the entire diet should be fed as a soaked mash.
- Chewing and digesting hay is difficult for senior horses with dental issues. Soft, leafy hay can be fed if the horse can chew it well, but do not count on it for adequate nutrition.
- Geriatric horses do great on pasture because grass is softer and easier to chew than hay.
- Alternative forage sources include chopped hay, soaked beet pulp, and soaked hay cubes/pellets.
- Amount to feed (combination of senior feed, alfalfa cubes, chopped hay, beet pulp, hay pellets):
 - Maintenance: 1.5-2% of body weight in dry matter (15-20 lb for 1000 lb horse)
 - Weight gain: 2-3% of body weight in dry matter (20-30 lb for 1000 lb horse).
 - Weight loss: 1.25-1.5% of body weight in dry matter (12.5-15 lb for 1000 lb horse)
- A fat supplement should be added when additional calories are needed.
- The diet should be split into 2-3 meals per day.
- Senior horses should be separated at meal time so they have time to eat their entire ration.
- Sample feeding plan for maintenance of 1000 lb horse:
 - 10 lb senior feed + 10 lb chopped hay/soaked alfalfa cubes + 4 oz Cocosoya oil

See feed charts on the back!

Feed Recommendations

Hard Keeper Senior (not metabolic)						
Feed	NSC (starch+sugar)	Protein	Fat	Fiber	Calories kcal/lb	Feeding rate/ 1000 lb
Triple Crown Senior Gold	11.40%	15%	13%	18%	1,800	6+ lb
Triple Crown Senior Active+	12.90%	14%	12%	16%	1,535	5+ lb
Sentinel Active Senior	19.70%	14%	12%	16%	1,580	4.5+ lb
Nutrena Proforce Senior	18.00%	14%	11%	17%	1,450	4.5+ lb
Tribute Senior Sport	16.50%	14%	10%	18%	1,510	4+ lb
Triple Crown Senior	14.70%	14%	10%	17%	1,546	6+ lb
Purina Equine Senior Active	16.00%	14%	10%	18%	1,600	3.5+ lb
Tribute Wholesome Blends Senior	16.50%	14%	8%	20%	1,470	4+ lb
Nutrena SafeChoice Senior	20.00%	14%	8%	16%	1,270	5+ lb
Nutrena SafeChoice Senior LM	18.50%	14%	8%	16%	1,270	5+ lb
Hard Keeper Senior- metabolic (ID)						
Feed	NSC (starch+sugar)	Protein	Fat	Fiber	Calories kcal/lb	Feeding rate/ 1000 lb
Triple Crown Senior Gold	11.40%	15%	13%	18%	1,800	6+ lb
Triple Crown Senior Active+	12.90%	14%	12%	16%	1,535	5+ lb
Triple Crown Senior	14.70%	14%	10%	17%	1,546	6+ lb
Easy Keeper Senior (not metabolic)						
Feed	NSC (starch+sugar)	Protein	Fat	Fiber	Calories kcal/lb	Feeding rate/ 1000 lb
Tribute Seniority	18.00%	14%	6%	18%	1,290	4+ lb
Purina Equine Senior	19.00%	14%	6%	18%	1,225	5.5+ lb
Purina Impact Professional Senior	18.00%	14%	5%	19%	1,175	5+ lb
Sentinel Senior	17.20%	14%	6%	18%	1,400	4.5+ lb
Tribute Seniority Textured	22.00%	14%	6%	15%	1,420	4+ lb
Easy Keeper Senior & metabolic (EMS/ID)						
Feed	NSC (starch+sugar)	Protein	Fat	Fiber	Calories kcal/lb	Feeding rate/ 1000 lb
Tribute Seniority Low NSC	10%	14%	6%	22%	1,270	4+ lb
High fat supplements to top-dress for hard keepers						
Feed	NSC (starch+sugar)	Protein	Fat	Fiber	Calories kcal/lb	Feeding rate/ 1000 lb
Tribute K Finish	23.00%	12%	25%	8%	1,890	0.5-3 lb
Purina Amplify	23.00%	14%	30%	6%	2,000	1-4 lb
Nutrena Empower Boost	26.00%	12%	22%	8%	1,750	0.5-3 lb
Renew Gold	21.00%	16%	17%	22%	1,650	1-1.5 lb