Feed Bag Tips

Jen Masters,
TERA Vice-president

Understanding a feed tag can be confusing. You don’t have to be a nutritionist to get the information you need from a tag. A little knowledge goes a long way, and not all horses need the best feed. There are few things to keep in mind when choosing a feed to suit your horse’s needs.

You can tell how much energy a feed has by looking at the fat and fiber — the higher the fat, the higher the energy.

The higher the fiber, the lower the energy. This is a rule of thumb. Some better feeds have digestible fibers like beet pulp.

What is a good source of energy?

Fat and digestible fibers will fuel your horses and give them the energy needed to do long distance rides. It is important to feed a high fat feed. Carbohydrates are the most readily available energy source and all feeds will have some amount of sugar and starch in them. A good thing to look at in your feed is the non-structural carbohydrate (NSC) amount. This number can be obtained by adding the starch and sugar. A low NSC is generally considered to be 20% or less. If you have a metabolic concern with your horse, you may want to stay below the number. Some feeds have a 30% NSC. Horse feed is similar to human food in that the unhealthy feed is cheap and the good feed is expensive. There is no health food on the dollar menu.

The most expensive part of a feed is the fortification. If the feed mills leave out the vitamins and minerals, then they can sell the feed for far less than if they add these nutrients. Look to see what mills leave out the vitamins and minerals, then they can sell the

TERA Vice-president

Understanding a feed tag can be confusing. You don’t have to be a nutritionist to get the information you need from a tag. A little knowledge goes a long way, and not all horses need the best feed. There are few things to keep in mind when choosing a feed to suit your horse’s needs.

You can tell how much energy a feed has by looking at the fat and fiber — the higher the fat, the higher the energy.

The higher the fiber, the lower the energy. This is a rule of thumb. Some better feeds have digestible fibers like beet pulp.

What is a good source of energy?

Fat and digestible fibers will fuel your horses and give them the energy needed to do long distance rides. It is important to feed a high fat feed. Carbohydrates are the most readily available energy source and all feeds will have some amount of sugar and starch in them. A good thing to look at in your feed is the non-structural carbohydrate (NSC) amount. This number can be obtained by adding the starch and sugar. A low NSC is generally considered to be 20% or less. If you have a metabolic concern with your horse, you may want to stay below the number. Some feeds have a 30% NSC. Horse feed is similar to human food in that the unhealthy feed is cheap and the good feed is expensive. There is no health food on the dollar menu.

The most expensive part of a feed is the fortification. If the feed mills leave out the vitamins and minerals, then they can sell the feed for far less than if they add these nutrients. Look to see what nutrients are guaranteed. You want a nice long list.

Nutrition is a vital part of a good endurance program. You can tell if you are getting quality, digestible proteins by looking to see if amino acids are guaranteed on the feed tag. Lysine is the limiting amino acid, meaning that if it runs out, the other amino acids cannot be used. You at least want a guaranteed lysine level. It’s better to have methionine and threonine guaranteed, as well.

Inexpensive feeds are “least costed.” This means that the formula will change based on the commodities market. If the tag says “grain products” the company has the option to use oats sometimes and barley others, depending on what is least expensive at the time. So the feed may change and you wouldn’t even know it. Not all feeds that say grain products are least costed. The large companies that do all the research use ambiguous ingredients because the small companies don’t have the ability to do research. They copy the big companies formulas and then undersell them. You can always call the company and ask if their formula is least costed.

All feed companies, big and small, have “good, better, and best feeds.” You truly get what you pay for when buying feed. For example, Nutrena’s “good” feed is Triumph, Their “better” feed is Safe Choice. Their “best” feed is Proforce. Purina has even more variety. The Country Acres line is bare bones, The Impact line is “good” The “better” feed is Strategy and the “best” is Ultium.

I see people buying the “good” feed and then adding all kinds of expensive supplements to it. It’s more cost effective and convenient to just buy the “best” feed than to doctor up a “good” feed.

I studied nutrition for four years at Texas A&M and I am still learning. It is a real science to get your feeding program right. It is incredible how much bad information is out there. Do your own research as much as possible. If you do ask for advice, make sure the person has some education on the information they are offering. Nutrition is a vital part of a good endurance program.

AERC Trails Advocate for Texas

Sylvia Sazama has been asked to be the trails advocate for Texas. This entails giving the AERC Board of Directors a year-end report on trails. She lives in the Sam Houston Forest near Montgomery, where she rides and does a lot of trail work. Besides keeping these unofficial trails rideable, Sylvia is a charter member of the Sam Houston Trails Coalition (SHTC), a group that allows hikers, bikers, motorized users, and equestrians to work together, with the forest service, to keep trails open. They volunteer to clean and repair trails. Sylvia is a certified sawyer, took a Trails Master class, and is now training to operate the mini excavator and Sutter Bulldozer to work on trails. Through the SHTC, they are working on an official equestrian trail. It has been cleared and culverts are going in. The bridges have been acquired and just need to be installed. It has been slow going—they started with this goal eight years ago. She wants to hear from TERA members about the trails in your area regarding their condition, who maintains them, who is the land manager, and issues with the trails or land manager. She also encourages anyone doing trail work to log your hours on the AERC website under trails. sasazama@yahoo.com or 936-419-9312

Larry & Ann Together Forever

TERA member and ride manager, Ann Goolsby, married Larry Morrow in a lovely, intimate ceremony on the beach in Galveston on August 3, at 6 p.m. Ann was given away by her grandson, her daughter served as Maid of Honor, and Larry’s sons served as his groomsmen. The small group of friends and family in attendance enjoyed a delicious BBQ dinner as the sun set on the ocean. We all wish Ann and Larry many happy years and adventures as they embark on their new life together.

Ann and Larry many happy years and adventures as they embark on their new life together.

AERC Trails Advocate for Texas

Sylvia Sazama has been asked to be the trails advocate for Texas. This entails giving the AERC Board of Directors a year-end report on trails. She lives in the Sam Houston Forest near Montgomery, where she rides and does a lot of trail work. Besides keeping these unofficial trails rideable, Sylvia is a charter member of the Sam Houston Trails Coalition (SHTC), a group that allows hikers, bikers, motorized users, and equestrians to work together, with the forest service, to keep trails open. They volunteer to clean and repair trails. Sylvia is a certified sawyer, took a Trails Master class, and is now training to operate the mini excavator and Sutter Bulldozer to work on trails. Through the SHTC, they are working on an official equestrian trail. It has been cleared and culverts are going in. The bridges have been acquired and just need to be installed. It has been slow going—they started with this goal eight years ago. She wants to hear from TERA members about the trails in your area regarding their condition, who maintains them, who is the land manager, and issues with the trails or land manager. She also encourages anyone doing trail work to log your hours on the AERC website under trails. sasazama@yahoo.com or 936-419-9312