

Feeding the Pregnant Mare

Key Points

from the article,
*Is Your Mare
Having a First or a
Third World
Pregnancy?*

The Horse's Back
blog

www.thehorsesback.com



Energy

- Feed her more for the last 3 months of pregnancy, but not before.
- Increase energy but not calories, so feed protein rather than carbohydrates. Avoid high grain content and molassed feeds.
- Make sure she gets enough lysine, the amino acid in protein for fetal growth.

Forage

- Roughage keeps her digestion healthy and colic risk low.
- Make sure more forage is available for the last 3 months of pregnancy.
- Little and often is good - the unborn foal is putting pressure on the gut.
- Little and often also reduces any risk of colic.
- Think low carbohydrate, especially if mare puts on weight easily. Lucerne is good.

Minerals – General

- Ensure the mineral intake is correct for the last 3 months of pregnancy.
- Correct mineral intake aids a strong immune system in the mare.
- Correct mineral intake aids the unborn foal's growth and joint development.
- Minerals are stored in the unborn foal's liver for use during the first 3 months of life.
- Correct mineral intake for the mare helps reduce the chances of angular limb deformities in the growing foal.
- A grass or hay analysis will help you to get the right – supplement for what's missing, not what's already there.

The Most Important Minerals

- **Calcium** is vital for the foal's bone development and nervous function.
- Calcium must be combined with **phosphorous** to be absorbed. The ratio is two parts calcium to one part phosphorous (ie, 2:1).
- **Copper** is essential for bone and joint development in the foal.
- Too little copper increases the risk of angular limb deformities.
- Horses don't get **iron** deficiency - extra iron leads to a relative deficiency in copper and zinc, and therefore joint issues – so there's no need to add iron.
- **Selenium** is vital for the mare's immune system and good colostrum.
- Selenium is needed to prevent retained placenta in the mare.
- Too much selenium can kill the mare - if unsure, get a blood test done.
- **Iodine** affects bone development – too much OR too little can cause incomplete joint development. If in doubt, get a blood test done.