



DODSON & HORRELL

ANIMAL HEALTH, NUTRITION AND WELL-BEING

FEEDING SUCCESS

FEEDING HORSES ON BOX-REST

All you need to know

Box-rest can be a very challenging time for both you and your horse. The pressure of trying to keep your horse happy, concern about the underlying condition, and the reduced workload can all make box-rest very stressful.

Adapting your horse's diet whilst your horse is on box-rest is crucial and providing nutritional support can help to give your horse the best possible chance of a speedy recovery.

Support normal intestinal function:

- Putting your horse on box-rest can disrupt normal intestinal movement and bacterial population
- It is essential to manage your horse's transition to box-rest carefully to keep the gut functioning as normal as there is an association between sudden periods of time confined to a stable and incidence of colic
- Maintain fibre intake with ad lib forage, and adding a low-energy chaff such as Fibergy to meals
- Introducing Kwikbeet to your horse's diet can promote digestive function
- Divide concentrate feed into several small meals per day
- Additional support for the digestive system can be provided by supplements containing prebiotics or probiotics such as Digestive Support

Reduce energy intake:

- A sudden decrease in your horse's activity levels mean that they require less energy
- If energy intake is not reduced your horse could be at risk of:
 - Rhabdomyolysis (Tying-Up)
 - Weight gain
 - Struggling to settle into new routine
- As a general guideline the quantity of hard feed should be reduced by half
- If you are feeding less than the recommended amount of a complete feed, then it important to top up your horse's diet with a balancer or vitamin and mineral supplement



Call us now for expert nutritional advice: **01270 782223**

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Preventing boredom:

- We all know how boring long periods of bed rest can be - it is no different for horses!
- Boredom and/or stress can lead to stereotypic behaviours such as crib-biting, weaving and box walking
- Ensuring that your horse has plenty of forage to chew can help to prevent boredom. If possible forage should be provided ad-lib
- Using two small-holed haynets inside each other is a great way to make hay last longer
- Hiding low energy treats such as our Equi-Bites in a haynet or hanging vegetables such as turnips from a string in the stable can help to reduce boredom
- Stable toys can be helpful - always check with your vet that they will not aggravate your horse's injury
- Horses are herd animals so having a companion next door and regular grooming can help to alleviate stress
- Some horses will respond well to a mirror placed on the stable wall or a radio playing nearby

Maintaining condition:

- This can be very challenging - some horses will gain condition due to reduced exercise, whereas some will be stressed leading to reduced appetite and weight loss
- Using a weigh tape to measure your horse's body weight every fortnight is important
- For horses who may gain too much condition feeding a low-energy chaff such as Fibergy alongside a balancer, for example Ultimate Balancer, could be ideal
- If your horse's appetite decreases then extra B vitamins could encourage their appetite. Garlic and mint can also increase palatability of feed
- Our Nutritional Advisors can help you find the best feed for your horse whilst on box rest

Promoting healing:

- Antioxidants and high-quality protein are essential for health and healing
- Amino acids are the building blocks of protein; horses can make around half of these amino acids themselves but the rest must be provided by their diet
- Dodson & Horrell have a range of feeds that provide essential amino acids, as well as antioxidants vitamin E and selenium

Additional supportive care:

- Horses on box rest can be exposed to more dust and spores from hay - soaking hay for 30 minutes can help
- Use dust free bedding
- Ensure the stable is well ventilated to promote respiratory health
- Maintaining water intake is important to reduce the risk of impaction colic. Providing lukewarm water or adding a small amount of cordial can tempt fussy drinkers

Recommended Products:

- **Ultimate Balancer** - Ideal for good doers on box-rest to ensure they get all the vitamins and minerals they need. High in essential amino acids, B-vitamins and antioxidants to support recovery
- **Fibergy** - A low-energy blend of alfalfa and oat chaff, suitable for all horses and ponies. High in fibre to promote chewing and gut motility.
- **Digestive Support** - A combined approach digestive supplement containing yeast, prebiotics and psyllium for the nutritional maintenance of healthy hindgut function and pH

Top Tip!

Spread your horse's meals and forage out as much as possible over the day, including a late evening feed. This will help to reduce boredom and promote healthy hindgut function.

Please visit our website, get in touch via social media or call: **01270 782223**

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