

TIPS FOR CHOOSING HAY FOR HORSES

Dry grass is the most common feed consumed by horses, except for paddocks, so its value in the horse ration is indisputable. At certain times of the year, hay may be the only fodder horses can use, so the selection of well-preserved hay that is harvested at the appropriate time is critical. Grasses can be broadly divided into three types: herbs, clover, and mixed.



Dry hay: Grasses from popular lawn paddocks can be divided into two main groups, cool season and warm season grasses. In general, cool season grasses are more delicious than horses, but they are preferred because horses are more accustomed to hot season grasses.

Another special category is cereal grasses. These hays are made from the leaves, stems and grains of oat, barley and wheat plants. A quality grain straw is harvested when the grain is not ripe (in the soft pulp stage) and its leaves and stems are still green and therefore higher in digestible nutrients. If grain straw is harvested after the grain has been removed, it is no longer considered straw and chaff. Oatmeal is the most common cereal fed in the US and is very beneficial if harvested at the right time.

Fescue has received a lot of attention in the last few decades for its sometimes harmful effects on pregnant mares when the endophyte is infected with the fungus. As with a paddock grass, it appears to be consumed more by horses in the fall after the frosts have hit and the sugar content has increased in the grass. It is harvested in the spring and summer so flavor may not be an issue for certain horses.

Color is important when choosing grass, but the color also depends on the type of grass. Therefore, green-looking dry grass does not always mean the best grass. Warm-season grasses are generally not more attractive than cool-season varieties because they are often more golden in color. Cereal grasses

should be light green in color; a yellow, straw-like color indicates that the grass was harvested too late and will have less nutritional value. It is also important to look at plant maturity later on. "Maturity is judged by the number of seed spikes, their age, the ratio, color and texture of leaves and stems. I eat a few in my hand to get an idea of the grass. Early maturity seeds are softer than the more immature ones. In addition, it is important to carry out odor and dust inspection.

Clover: It is often preferred by horse owners because of its high quality nutritional content. Evaluation of clover requires extensive visual evaluation. The outside of the bale can be misleading, especially if it is located at the edge of a heap with exposure to the sun or other elements, the assessment requires opening several bales. Small bales can be opened easily, but the same cannot be said for larger bobbins. Pure clovers are rarely round, but when faced with tightly wrapped round bales that cannot be opened, an instrument called a straw probe designed to extract seed samples from inside the straw bales can be used. It is used to collect straw samples for chemical analysis and nutrient determination. Then the color of the clover is evaluated. It may be bright green, brownish-green, or light green, or not green at all; maybe it's yellow. Color does not determine the result when determining clover quality, but it can be a clue to how it is made. If it is bright green, it indicates that the straw is likely to be cut at an appropriate time, possibly not plundered after cutting and dried quickly and baled in a timely manner. Nutrients are best preserved when baled under optimal conditions. Apart from color, probably the most important criterion when choosing clover is leaf-to-root ratio. The abundance of leaves and the presence of stem indicate that the clover is done to the desired maturity and that a few leaves are loosened during baling. The opposite is true for legumes, and they sometimes have profuse stems and few leaves. This usually means that the leaves were formed during baling or while the hay was lying in the field.

Mixed grasses: The term mixed grasses may be an indistinct cluster of grasses that requires clarification. Mixed meadow often has turf tangles; some are bred specifically designed for horses, while others may not. Mixing grass with a grain has two important advantages. The first involves the improvement of the land. Legumes add nitrogen to soils; so grass-grown legumes can reduce fertilizer needs and growing costs. Another advantage includes flavor, because adding legumes to grass can increase sweetness and consumption. The introduction of a legume also improves quality by increasing energy, protein and calcium.

Our consultancy services include physical, chemical, nutrient determination and microbiological examination, evaluation and reporting of professional roughage (grass, alfalfa, etc.). It is recommended to analyzed your forages twice a year.



AGG HORSE NUTRITION CONSULTANCY

Turkey phone: +90 542 5337576 E-mail: atbeslenmesi@gmail.com

Netherlands phone: +31 625395468 email: aggequinenutrition@gmail.com