



EQUINE LIFE

PREMIUM HORSE FEED
FOR EVERY LIFE STAGE

Manufactured by **Moyer**
& SON INC.

Horse Talk

SWEET FEEDS, PELLETS & OATS

Sweet Feeds: Many horses are fed "sweet feeds". But, what do sweet feeds contain? Are they composed of all grains, including oats, corn, other grains, and a large percent molasses? Do they offer any nutritional advantage over pellets? What do manufacturers actually put into sweet feeds?

One method, probably the original way, of formulating a sweet feed is to include the following ingredients:

- Oats
- Corn
- Barley - usually an inexpensive ingredient (Equine Life Feeds contain no barley, it's harder to digest than oats.)
- A protein source, hopefully a good protein
- Vitamins
- Molasses
- Macro minerals--calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, sulfur and sodium chloride
- Trace minerals--zinc, copper, manganese, iron and selenium
- Fat (usually a vegetable source)

Additionally, a second type of sweet feed is a ration that is formulated with some or all of the above ingredients, plus a "mixing pellet". This mixing pellet could contain many ingredients that are "good" or contain ingredients that are included in the ration strictly to keep "price down". Some of the ingredients in a mixing pellet could not be added to the sweet feed in their normal form, as the final product would appear "dusty". As a result, manufacturers "pellet" some of the ingredients, including vitamins and minerals, and incorporate the "mixing pellet" into the final ration. The total carbohydrate of the finished feed can be lowered by using mixing pellets with low starch contents vs. using all grain to make up the "carb" portion of the diet. Higher priced sweet feeds usually contain a fair percentage of good quality oats, which are the most easily digested grain. However, some sweet feeds contain no oats, just mixing pellets, corn, barley (which is usually cheap) and molasses. Compare prices, you typically get what you pay for.

Pellets: Some people think that pellets contain all low cost ingredients—this is not always true. Pellets can offer the following benefits: longer shelf life, better handling in bulk situations, no sorting of ingredients by the horse, plus, depending upon the formulation, a lower starch content. Corn is normally a cheap ingredient in our local area. If the first ingredient on the tag is corn, then the starch content may be high for this particular product. The trend for feeding today's horse is a higher fat, lower carbohydrate ration.

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Horse Talk *continued*

Sweet feeds may contain very large amounts of fat. Some of our performance sweet feeds contain 12% fat by weight. If we were to include this amount of fat into a pellet, the final product would be too soft and produce too many "fines". Several Equine Life Pelleted feeds contain 6% fat, which, under normal circumstances, is more than adequate.

Oats: Oats are a "grass crop". They like a cool season with a low amount of moisture. Local oats (oats grown in our area) do not do well. Local oats are often "low test" weight per bushel. Better grades of oats are grown in more northern areas of the United States and Canada, which is where the weather better suits the crop. Oats are the most easily digested grain by the horse, and are broken down in the small intestine before reaching the cecum. The oat molecule is smaller vs. other grains and is absorbed into the system more easily than corn and barley. The benefit of crimping oats is minimal. You may lose some of the "groat" portion, which is where the nutrition is located, during the crimping process.

Oat quality can vary greatly. Quality is normally based on "bushel weight". Heavier testing oats are better than lighter testing oats. Light oats (32 lbs. per bushel or less) are not good quality oats as the product will be mostly shell and little groat. The heavier the oat, the more nutrition there is within the oat. We do not use light oats at our facility; however, they are available to the feed industry, usually at bargain prices. It might be difficult to identify good oats in a finished sweet feed as molasses content can help disguise poor quality oats.

Oats are still fed by many horse people as the exclusive portion of the grain ration. In some cases people mix oats with their sweet feed or pellets and formulate "their own" finished ration. Reputable companies will formulate their diets to include all the necessary minerals and vitamins needed by the horse. By adding oats to a totally balanced diet, you "dilute" the minerals and vitamins in the total diet.

SUMMARY

How do you know what to feed? Look at feed tags. Some contain generic phrases to identify ingredients such as "grain products" or "plant protein products". Personally, I would not buy these products as the manufacturer can change ingredients weekly based on price. We do not least cost or change our formulation based upon market prices. Pellets handle better, store longer, but Sweet Feeds are still very popular, and as mentioned, may contain more fat.

I would not feed straight oats, as they are not nutritionally complete. If you feed straight oats you must supplement with a lot of over-priced additives to achieve what a balanced formula should contain. Ask questions. You have the right to know what you are buying. We offer up-to-date rations containing natural Vitamin E and the newly approved Sel-Plex selenium yeast. We have been in business for 136 years and continue to offer competitively priced, super quality horse feed rations delivered direct to your farm.

I am always available to answer any questions you may have regarding Equine Life Premium Horse Feed and Supplements. I can be reached on my cellular phone at 610-216-0364 or via E-mail at equinelife@emoyer.com.