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practical tips on feeding the mare & foal



Laying good Foundations

Correct nutrition from conception onwards helps ensure the production of a strong healthy foal. Indeed, not feeding the mare correctly throughout pregnancy and lactation can impact on how well your foal grows and develops.

Ensure the mare is receiving a suitable stud feed for her bodytype.

- ❖ 'Good-doer' = Baileys Stud Balancer which is low in calories but nutrient-dense
- ❖ 'Poorer-doer' = higher calorie Stud Cubes or Mix
- ❖ Whatever feed you choose it's very important to feed it at the manufacturer's recommended levels to ensure the mare is receiving all the nutrients she and her growing foal need

Consider the type and quality of forage your mare has access to.

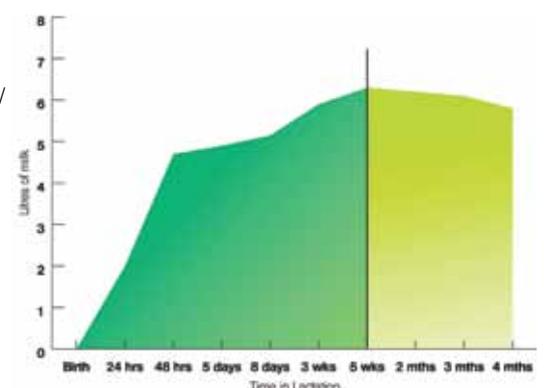
- ❖ Good quality grass that is high in calories may mean she only requires a low calorie Stud Balancer to support her requirements (remember even the best grass will not provide your mares with all the vitamins, minerals and protein she needs)
- ❖ For poorer grass or if relying on hay or haylage, changing to higher calorie Stud Cubes/Mix may be necessary

During the last trimester, the foal is growing rapidly. Some mares may require a higher calorie diet at this stage to help maintain condition and, if so, move from a low calorie Stud Balancer to Stud Cubes/Mix at this stage.

- ❖ Divide into small meals due to limited internal space and to maximise digestibility

Milk production requires more energy than hard work so in the early stages of lactation the mare's feed needs to be gradually increased accordingly. The volume of milk she produces will peak around 5 weeks into lactation and, if insufficient nutrients and/or calories are provided by her diet, she will "milk off her back", losing weight and top line.

MARE LACTATION CURVE
showing volumes of milk produced from birth to four months





FEEDING THE FOAL

It is often not necessary to feed a very young foal (3 months and under) as it ultimately relies on its mother's milk.

When do I need to supplement the foal's diet?

- ❖ If the mare's diet has been lacking the foal may be small, weak and not thriving as well as would be expected
- ❖ If the foal is hungry and/or not thriving, it is likely that the mare's milk is of poor quality or in short supply
- ❖ If the foal is getting top heavy or growing very rapidly

What do I supplement with?

Under 3 months

- ❖ Calories required for a weak foal or one receiving an inadequate milk supply, offer milk-based Baileys Foal Creep Pellets
- ❖ Too heavy/growing rapidly foals should be given a vitamin and mineral supplement like Baileys Foal Assist paste to support growth whilst minimising calorie/energy intake

Over 3 months

The foal is old enough to digest compound feeds so it's important to feed its own stud ration to counteract shortfalls in the mare's milk and to encourage the digestive system to adapt for weaning.

- ❖ Stud & Youngstock Cubes/Mix if higher calories are needed
- ❖ Stud Balancer for a low calorie/energy diet, whilst still supporting nutrient requirements

WHAT DO I NEED TO CONSIDER WHEN PREPPING FOR THE FUTURITY?

Give yourself plenty of time – ideally a minimum of 8 weeks to make any changes.

Foals under 3 months of age will

predominantly be receiving their dam's milk and forage and it may be necessary to prevent them from eating the mare's feed to avoid them getting "top heavy".

Foals aged 3 months or older should already be on their own stud ration and if not, then introduce one.

- ❖ Stud Balancer if a low calorie diet is required
- ❖ Stud Balancer and Outshine high oil supplement if a small amount of weight gain is required.
- ❖ Prep Mix or Stud & Youngstock Mix if more weight gain is needed

Ensure the feed is not only designed to meet calorie/energy demands to support bodyweight and growth but to provide essential nutrients for correct development

- ❖ An unbalanced diet may not only affect your foal's development but also its condition and muscle tone and, ultimately, its performance on the day

Feed as many small feeds as you can over the day so you are not overloading your foal's digestive system.

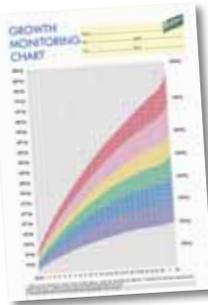
Consider the quality of your foal's forage.

- ❖ Good quality grass is likely to be high in calories so consider lower calorie Stud Balancer to ensure vitamins and minerals are still provided and counteract any shortfalls within the pasture
- ❖ For foals holding too much weight or growing too rapidly, you may need to consider reducing grass or milk intake, if the foal is not weaned, and substituting grass with a lower calorie hay/haylage
- ❖ Late-cut fibrous hay is less digestible and likely to sit undigested in the gut, increasing the risk of 'hay belly' – opt for soft early-cut forages to reduce this but also provide more valuable nutrients.

- ❖ If you cannot source a better quality forage, then alfalfa chaff, like Baileys Alfalfa Blend or Alfalfa Plus Oil can be fed alongside the concentrate feed to help raise the overall protein and fibre content of the diet

You may wish to top dress the diet with additional oil, or Baileys Outshine high oil supplement, to help fill out any weaker foals or simply to help provide a shiny coat.

Supplementing with a digestive enhancer, like Baileys Digest Plus prebiotic, when changing feed, routine or when travelling, may be beneficial to help prevent digestive upset, like loose droppings or loss of condition.



Monitoring growth regularly is ideal, either with a weighbridge (if you are lucky to have access to one) or weighttape.

Plotting weight on a Growth Monitoring Chart also helps you

to log weight and growth rate and, when used with careful inspections of your foal, can act as an early warning system before problems arise.

Remember, correct feeding helps significantly in achieving a correct and well-developed foal but, alongside a well managed exercise regime and plenty of elbow grease, results can be improved.

For further information or a practical and individual diet for your horse, contact one of Baileys Nutrition team on: 01371 850 247 (option 2)
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