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Rations for Light Horses
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Cooperative Extension Service
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RATIONS FOR LIGHT HORSES

NOTE: The author is Melvin Bradley, Professor Emeritus, Department of Animal Science, University of Missouri. This series of bulletins is reprinted for Michigan use through courtesy of the University of Missouri—Richard Dunn, Extension Specialist in Animal Science, Michigan State University.

The amount of feed offered a horse in a 24-hour period is his ration. His needs vary greatly according to work performed, size, stage of growth, condition, and individuality.

Some horses are "easy keepers," whereas others are not. The amount offered each horse should be adjusted to his condition. The best of rations will not keep horses in condition if they have parasite infestations or bad teeth.

About these rations

In general, rations listed first are cheapest and simplest to prepare. They meet the needs of the animal but lack of variety may limit intake over long feeding periods or under circumstances where large intake is desired. All rations meet the need of the animal and most have a built-in margin of safety.

As much grass as practical has been suggested because of its excellence and economy.

Legumes are recommended as half of most rations except those for hard working horses consuming much grain where colic or loose bowels may be a problem. Foals and yearlings should be fed choice legume hay. Alfalfa is preferred. Because of its high mineral protein, and vitamin content, it can be used effectively in breeding rations. All hays should be dust and mold-free.

Milo, barley, or wheat can substitute for corn on a pound for pound basis. Any of these can be fed up to 5-8 lbs. total daily without oats in rations. When more grain is required, oats should probably make up the difference. The customary mixture is half oats and half one of the other grains for variety and economy. (See *Extension Bulletins E-917, and E-918. Feeds for Light Horses and Feeding Light Horses.*)

Coarse grinding, cracking, rolling, or crushing increases palatability and feeding value about 5-10% with most grains. Finely-ground grain should not be fed to horses.

Loose salt should be available free-choice to all horses at all times. Feed minerals free-choice apart from salt at all times.

Rations have been calculated for horses with a mature weight of 1,000-1,200 lbs.

Use the following percentages of daily amounts for mature weights other than 1,000 lbs.

Weight (lbs.)	%	Weight (lbs.)	%
400	50	1,000	100
600	68	1,200	115
800	85	1,400	130

A ration for every purpose

A. 1,000-lb. Mature *Idle* Horse

1. *Economy Rations*
 - a. Pasture when available
 - b. Roughages suitable to maintain a beef cow
 - c. 16 lbs. timothy hay
½ lb. soybean meal
2. *Standard Rations*
 - a. 18 lbs. mixed hay
 - b. 12 lbs. prairie hay
3 lbs. corn
½ lb. soybean meal
 - c. 12 lbs. timothy hay
4 lbs. oats
 - d. 16 lbs. mixed hay
1 lb. wheat bran
½ lb. molasses

3. *Conditioning Rations*

- a. 12 lbs. timothy
3 lbs. cracked corn
3 lbs. crimped oats
1 lb. wheat bran
- b. 12 lbs. mixed hay
4 lbs. crimped oats
2 lbs. cracked corn
1 lb. crimped barley
¾ lbs. linseed meal

B. 1,000 lb. *Working* Horse

1. *Economy Rations*

	Light work (under 3 hrs.) lbs.	Medium work (3-5 hrs.) lbs.	Heavy work (over 5 hrs.) lbs.
Mixed hay	-	10	-
Non-legume	-	-	10
Grass pasture	free-choice	-	-
Corn	6	5	6
Molasses	-	-	1
Oats	-	5	8

2. *Standard Rations*

Mixed Hay	12	10	-
Non-legume	-	-	10
Corn-cracked	3	5	7
Barley	-	4	-
Oats, crimped	3	-	7
Wheat bran	-	-	1

3. *Conditioning Rations*

Mixed hay	-	-	-
(½ good Alfalfa)	12	-	-
Non-legume	-	10	10
Alfalfa Leaf Meal	-	1	1
Barley, crimped	1	-	-
Corn, cracked	2	3	6
Oats, crimped	3	5	6
Molasses	-	1	1
Linseed meal	½	-	½
Soybean meal	-	½	-
Wheat bran	-	1	1

C. 1,200-lb. Stallion

(Consider a ration from A. above and increase its quantity by 15% for an idle stallion.)

1. Standard Rations

	Light Breeding lbs.	Heavy Breeding lbs.
Timothy-clover	10	-
Timothy-lespedeza	-	12
Corn, cracked	2	-
Oats, crimped	4	9
Molasses	1	1
Soybean meal	½	1
Wheat bran	-	3

2. Conditioning Rations

	Light Breeding lbs.	Heavy Breeding lbs.
Timothy-Clover Hay	10	-
Alfalfa Hay	-	10
Corn, cracked	2	4
Oats, crimped	4	8
Barley, crimped	-	3
Molasses	1	1
Linseed meal	½	½
Wheat bran	1	1

D. 1,000-lb. Pregnant Mare

(0-7 months, same as A. above; 8 and 9 months, consider rations in B. above.)

	lbs.	(10 to 11 months)	lbs.
1. Timothy hay	15	1. Non-legume Hay	15
Corn	2	Corn, cracked	2
Oats	1	Oats, crushed	2
Wheat bran	1	Molasses	½
2. Timothy-Clover Hay	15	Soybean meal	¼
Corn, cracked	2	Wheat bran	1
Molasses	1	2. Alfalfa Hay	14
Oats, crushed	1	Corn, cracked	3
Wheat bran	1	Oats, crushed	3
		Molasses	1
		Wheat bran	1

E. 1,000-lb. Lactating Mare

	lbs.		lbs.
1. Alfalfa Hay	12	3. Timothy Hay	15
Corn, cracked	7	Corn, cracked	5
Oats, crushed	5	Oats, crushed	5
2. Mixed Hay	15	Molasses	1
Corn, cracked	5	Soybean meal	½
Oats, crushed	5		
Wheat bran	1		

F. 100-450 lb. Suckling Foals (creep)

	lbs.		lbs.
1. Good Alfalfa	3-4	2. Good Alfalfa	3-4
Corn, cracked	1	Oats, crushed	3
Oats, crushed	2	Wheat bran	1
Soybean meal	¼	Molasses	½
		Linseed meal	¼

G. 500-600-lb. Weanling Foals

	lbs.		lbs.
1. Alfalfa	7	3. Timothy-Clover	7
Corn, cracked	3	Oats, crushed	3
Oats, crushed	3	Molasses	½
2. Alfalfa-Brome	7	Soybean meal	½
Corn, cracked	2	Wheat bran	2
Oats, crushed	4	4. Timothy-Clover	9
Soybean meal	½	Corn, cracked	1
		Oats, crushed	3
		Molasses	½
		Linseed meal	½
		Wheat bran	1

H. 700-800-lb. Yearling

	lbs.		lbs.
1. Abundant pasture		3. Alfalfa-Brome	10
2. Mixed-hay	10	Corn, cracked	2
Oats, crushed	3	Oats, crushed	2
Molasses	1	Wheat bran	1
Wheat bran	1	4. Timothy-Clover	12
Soybean meal	½	Corn, cracked	3
		Soybean meal	½

I. 1,000-lb. Two-Year-Old

	lbs.		lbs.
1. Good pasture		4. Non-legume	12
2. Consider Mature horse rations above		Oats, crushed	2
3. Mixed Hay	12	Molasses	1
Corn, cracked	2	Soybean meal	¼
Oats, crushed	1		

MINERAL MIXES

Mix	Lime-stone	Dicalcium Phosphate	Mono Calcium Phosphate	Mono Sodium Phosphate	1 oz/ Day Supplies	
					Ca, gm	P, gm
A	1	0	0	0	11	0
B	1	1	0	0	9.8	2.9
C	1	0	1	0	7.7	3.4
D	0	1	0	0	7.5	5.8
E	1	1	0	2	6.1	6.2
F	0	0	1	1	2.2	6.6
G	0	0	1	2	1.5	6.5
H	0	0	0	1	0	6.4

Uses of Mineral Mixes

- A. Poor grass hay; lots of bran or oil meals
- B. Foals—yearlings
- C. Moderate work—grass hay
Hard work—grain
- D. Moderate work—including pregnant mare
- E. Lactation
- F. Breeding program with mixed hay
- G. Pregnant mare (depending on P in soil)

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