



Does Cheaper Feed Really Save Me Money?

Our nutrition expert, Beth Strength, compares diet plans for her horse.

Let's start by taking a walk through your feed room. Every horse owner, myself included, looks for ways to save a dollar or two, and we all spend a fortune on feed and hay. I spent ten years working on the retail side of the feed industry, and here's the most common thing I heard:

"I'm feeding 10 pounds of feed a day, and my horse still doesn't look like he should."

My first question is always the same: "What kind of forage are you feeding, and how much?"

Horses need around 1-2% of their body weight in forage each day. For a horse that weighs 1,000 pounds, that's 10-20 pounds of hay per day. Here's a cheat sheet so you don't have to do the math.

<u>Horse Weight</u>	<u>Pounds of Hay per Day</u>
500	5-10
700	7-14
900	9-18
1,100	11-22
1,300	13-26
1,500	15-30

If you don't know how much your horse weighs, we will happily give you a free weight tape, and teach you how to use it! Knowing your horse's approximate weight is very important for determining their diet, supplements, and medications.

Now then, let's talk about feed. That \$8-10 bag of feed is mighty tempting when you are looking at the price list at the feed store. \$20 for a bag of feed is just ridiculous, right? It looks like I can save a lot of money right there!

What I have found by peeking at tags at my feed store is that most of the economy feeds contain a 10-12% Protein and a 2.5-3% Fat, with no real vitamin/mineral package to speak of. So, after talking with some friends at the barn, I think I will

add a fat supplement and maybe a hoof supplement to try and get my horse looking and performing like I want her too.

Here is my monthly feed bill for one horse broken down. (Please don't show my husband!)

\$60.00 for one coastal hay roll

\$40.00 for one 120# O/A hay bale

\$60.00 for 6 bags of Economy Feed (10 pounds per day)

\$18.00 for 40# bag of Beet Pulp

\$30.00 for 40# bag of Fat supplement

\$22.99 for 30 days of Hoof supplement

\$20.00 for 30 days of Vitamin/Mineral Supplement

Grand Total, monthly: \$250 (give or take a few dollars) Yikes!

Now, let's look at the tag on one of those \$20 bags of feed. They have a guaranteed analysis on every bag, with Crude Protein of 14%, Crude Fat 8%, Crude Fiber 20%, and a long list of minerals and vitamins. Basically, the \$20 bag of feed has everything your horse needs in vitamins and minerals, digestible proteins, fat, enzymes, pre-biotics, and pro-biotics.

With everything being covered in the feed, I don't need the beet pulp or the supplements I was using. I also don't need to feed near the same volume that I was feeding to keep his weight balanced, his coat healthy, and his energy levels and stamina where they need to be. Here's my new feed plan:

\$60.00 for one coastal hay roll

\$40.00 for one 120# O/A hay bale

\$80.00 for 4 bags of high quality feed (6 pounds per day)

New Grand Total, monthly: \$180.00

The bottom line is that feeding premium feeds will save you a lot of money at the feed store. It will also save you a lot of money with your veterinarian, because your horse will be a lot healthier. A great feed plan is the foundation to keeping a horse healthy and happy, whether they are a pasture pet or a high-performance athlete.

Now that you're saving \$70 a month, you should consider reinvesting part of that money in a Wellness plan for your horse. Starting about \$40 a month, Springhill Equine's [Wellness plans](#) will get your horse all their vaccines and a dental float, as well as a fecal egg count and custom de-worming plan. With vaccines, good teeth, good feed, and a great owner, your horse will have everything she needs to be a star!