

# Ask the Nutritionist

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*Ask the Nutritionist is a new monthly column featuring questions answered by PhD equine nutritionists and sponsored by Purina Animal Nutrition.*

*Have a nutrition question you want to see featured? Email the Editor. For clinics looking for specific nutritional advice, visit [purinamills.com/ask-an-expert](http://purinamills.com/ask-an-expert).*

## Are there any special nutritional considerations for a horse recovering from a soft-tissue injury while on stall rest or turnout?

Nutrition is important during the recovery period because it helps support a horse's inherent healing powers. Energy management is key for horses on stall rest. Injured horses should be kept quiet during the recovery period to prevent further aggravation of the injury.

Make caloric adjustments for horses who are suddenly not exercising or working and are confined to a stall. Reducing the amount of concentrate feed an injured horse receives, while still providing enough feed to meet nutrient requirements, is a good first step. Horse owners tend to cut out concentrate rations completely or scale back to just a "handful" of feed, but this strategy can lead to nutrient deficiencies which can slow healing.

Feeding a ration balancer, like Purina® Enrich Plus®, can help provide the protein, vitamins and minerals a horse requires for base metabolism and healing. A small meal of 0.5-1 pounds per day, fed twice per day (depending on body weight of the horse), will suffice while managing calories and energy input.

Horses on stall rest also need adequate forage to meet fiber requirements. Aim to provide 1.5-2.0% of body weight in good quality grass hay to help keep injured horses nutritionally satisfied and prevent boredom while confined in a stall. We highly recommend hay nets, hay bags or other forage feeding systems to slow down intake and prolong mealtimes. And, pay attention to the type of hay fed – calories and nutrition matter here, too. Some types of hay, like alfalfa or a rich grass, may provide more calories than the horse needs while on stall rest. A moderate to good quality grass hay can be fed in larger amounts while controlling energy inputs.

Horses on stall rest are at an increased risk for gastric ulcers. Feeding Purina® Outlast® Gastric Support Supplement can help support proper pH in the stomach for horses during their layup.

### Nutritional needs during soft tissue injury recovery

Reduce concentrated feed to meet nutrient requirements



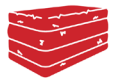
Incorporate a ration balancer



Provide gastric support



Provide adequate forage



Forage requirements are typically met for horses on pasture. However, monitor closely so that horses do not become overweight on lush pasture or underweight on poor pasture. Horses on poor quality pasture may require supplemental hay, and a grazing muzzle can be used to curb consumption of lush pasture. A ration balancer can help balance the pasture's nutrients to facilitate healing.



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Mary Beth Gordon is the Director of Equine Research and New Product Development at Purina Animal Nutrition. She and her research team have completed over 200 research protocols at the Purina Animal Nutrition Center, leading to the creation of 11 new products and 15+ reformulated products in the equine market since 2005.