

# 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.*

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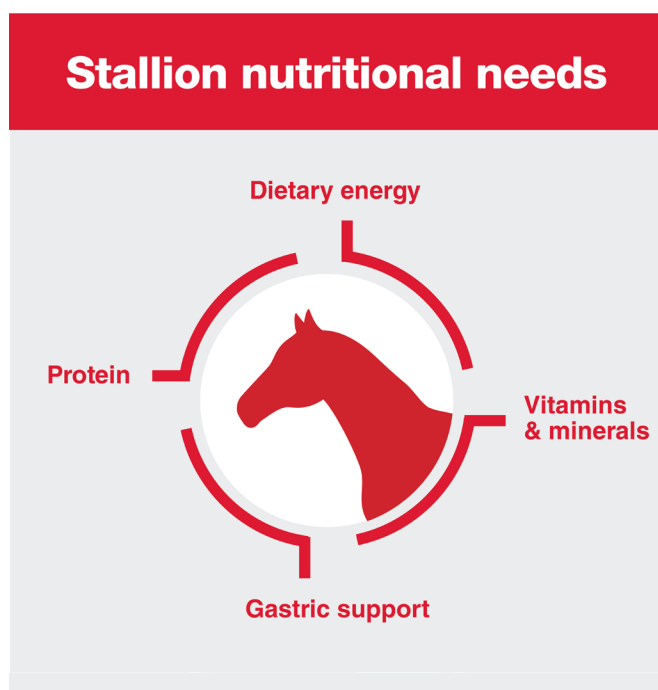
## What are some nutritional considerations for stallions during breeding season?

A stallion's nutritional needs are similar to other adult active horses, with consideration given to the increased requirements specifically related to breeding. A stallion actively competing, performing or training has elevated nutritional needs, which should be met while also accounting for incremental nutrition needed for breeding.

The level of breeding activity will dictate nutritional modifications. Consider the number of mares booked, the number of collections per day and the method of semen collection. A highly active breeding stallion being collected three times per week could have 1.5 times the dietary energy requirements compared with a stallion that is only breeding a single mare per week.

Similar trends hold true for other nutrients like protein, vitamins and minerals.

Each stallion should be assigned a body condition score (BCS) before, during and after breeding season to monitor nutritional status. For most stallions, a BCS between 5 and 6 on a 9-point scale is ideal. Stallions with a lower BCS have been reported to have lower semen quality, while stallions at a higher BCS have



shown decreased libido or inability to mount the phantom or mare.

Many diets can support a stallion's nutritional needs. Start with good quality forage fed at a minimum of 2.0% body weight per day, and complement with a quality concentrate feed formulated to meet the needs of breeding stallions (check the label), like Purina® Strategy® GX, Omolene® 200 or Ultium® Competition horse feeds.

Semen collection on top of other competition, performance or training can be stressful on a stallion, which may manifest as gastric discomfort. Use of a gastric support supplement, like Purina® Outlast® Supplement, can provide additional support for gastric health.

Research on supplementing the stallion's diet to improve semen quality is limited. Studies have primarily focused on increasing dietary fat or changing fat sources. Dietary additions of marine-derived omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants and other additives have been explored, but study results vary.

Overall, understanding a stallion's nutritional needs and meeting them with a quality feeding program will help ensure the stallion has the necessary substrates to produce high-quality semen.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Robert Jacobs is the Equine Technical Innovation Manager at Purina Animal Nutrition. He is responsible for conducting research aimed at better understanding how nutrition impacts various areas of equine physiology.