

# SUGAR –THE SWEET TRUTH

When considering the sugar content of your horses' diet is important to look at the wider picture and consider everything your horse eats daily including grass and long stem forage such as hay and haylage.

Sugars are the 'building blocks' for plant growth and are produced through photosynthesis and are then turned into fibre for the plant cell walls. The amount of sugar found in grass changes daily and weather can reduce or increase the sugar production.

Sugar is a non-structural carbohydrate (NSC) and most NSC's in the diet are broken down in the small intestine and become glucose (a simple sugar) which provides energy to be used instantly or can be stored in the liver and muscles as glycogen. Glucose enables the horse to function correctly and is the only 'fuel' that can be used by the brain and the only substance that makes glycogen.



Some horses require a low sugar diet to aid in the management of metabolic, digestive, or behavioural issues, however, it is important to remember that percentages of sugar in feeds are not the only way your horse consumes sugar. Horses are herbivores and were designed to graze for long periods of time. When taking your horse's sugar consumption into consideration, it is almost more important to assess the sugar that is provided through their forage rather than finding the lowest sugar feed they could possibly have.

Here are some examples of a typical daily sugar intake for a 500kg horse provided through a range of feeds and forage:

PRODUCT	SUGAR	CONTENT
Conditioning Feed	(2kg)	128g
Low Sugar Mix	(2kg)	120g
Low sugar balancer	(800g)	71.2g
Cereal based feed	(2kg)	178g
Grass (24hr turnout on good grass)		891g
Hay	(7.5kg)	825g
Haylage	(10kg)	800g

Forage provides the main source of a horse's sugar intake and this is very important to consider when trying to feed your horse a low sugar diet.

It is important to remember that the sugar content of grasses will vary depending on the weather, time of day, stage of growth, plant species and geographic region. These factors also apply to conserved forages alongside the time of year that they were cut.

Horses need NSC's in their diet to be able to perform normal physiological functions and it is impossible to remove all the sugar from the diets however there are ways that will help to reduce their intake such as muzzling, strip grazing and soaking hay.

Saracen Feeds that are low in sugar include:

SHAPE-UP™	VETERAN MIX	RE-LEVE® -MIX
SUPER FIBRE CUBES	LEVEL GROW MIX	HORSE & PONY COOLING CUBES
ESSENTIAL BALANCER	RE-COVERY MASH	RE-LEVE® -CUBES