

Hay Quality for horses

Hay is an essential part of the equine diet. High quality hay is rich in nutrients, low in fiber, free of dust and mold.

Petplan Equine has advice to help you choose a high quality hay to feed to your horse.

{ STAGE OF MATURITY }

Feeding an early-maturity hay will satisfy a horse's nutrient requirements quickly, which is why you might need to feed less of it to your horse.

With maturity the nutritional content of the grass begins to decrease. A mid- to late-maturity hay will provide fewer nutrients, as protein and energy levels decrease, so you might need more of it.

Colour

A green colour usually means that the hay contains high level of protein and vitamins. However, colour shouldn't be the main factor in choosing hay as it is not a good indicator of digestibility and level of nitrates.

{ LEAFINESS }

The ratio of leaves to stems is an excellent indicator of hay quality.

Hay with a high leaf content and very few seedheads has most vitamins and a greater energy value.

FOREIGN MATERIALS

It's important to make sure that the hay is free from weeds and matter such as wire or nails. However, it might be difficult to distinguish a toxic weed from a non-toxic, so the best would be to just avoid hay that has weeds or trash in the bales.

Odour

The smell of new mown hay is the standard by which hay odour is judged.