

# NET TEX



## Complete Equine Care

### What type of Balancer should I choose, Powder or Pellets?

#### Pellets:

A pelleted feed balancer is a lot like a vitamin/mineral supplement for your horse, but differs in the amount of protein and macro minerals that it adds to your horse's diet. Balancers are available with a range of protein levels. Deciding on which balancer to use depends on the quality and protein level in available forage as well as the requirements of the horse, physiological state and level of exercise.



It is recommended to carry out a forage and soil analysis in order to highlight any nutrient excesses, deficiencies or imbalances that may affect the horse.

Horse feeds are formulated to be fed at a certain rate. Some horses do not receive the recommended feeding rate because it provides too many mega joules of digestible energy for the work load of that horse, and providing the whole ration could lead to obesity. When fed below the recommended feeding rate, the horse may not receive the adequate levels of protein, vitamins, and minerals.

Balancers are a very versatile feedstuff. They can be fed alone, in addition to the forage to support the short fall of trace elements and protein or they can be added to a concentrate ration when extra nutritional fortification is required. Equine diets that are formulated using straights normally require the extra support of a balancer.

Pelleted feed balancers can be expensive to feed especially if you have more than one horse or a larger sized horse.

Powder or Pellets?



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### Powders:

Powdered vitamin and mineral supplements can also differ in the amount of protein and macro minerals that they provide for your horses diet. It is advisable to look at the ingredients they contain before choosing as some may not deliver sufficient levels to support a balanced diet.

Many may contain a level of sugar in various forms: Glucose, Dextrose, Maltodextrin or Dextrin. These are often used as fillers/ stabilisers. When choosing a supplement be aware that the label should list the ingredient with the highest inclusion rate first, therefore you can determine what you are getting from your supplement. Although sugar does have a place in the horses diet there are many sugar intolerant horses and ponies whose diets need to be monitored carefully so as not to receive excess levels.



Powders can be added to straights or low forage diets to ensure all the required vitamins and minerals are received. Feeding a powder can be more cost effective than feeding a balancer and remain fresher for longer, especially when it is sealed in sachets and in a plastic container to help prevent environmental contaminants such as damp or rodent interference.

Although feeding a powder means it must be added to a high quality chaff or chop, this increases the chew time of the horse producing saliva which is a natural buffer, but saliva is only produced when horses chew. Acid is produced in the stomach of a horse 24 hours a day and horses are designed to spend 18 hours out of 24 hours eating. The lowest part of the horse's stomach is most acidic and most liquid, as you move up the stomach it becomes less acidic and less liquid with a fibre mat at the top that protects the squamous region (that lacks its own protection) when the horse is not eating.

This is why it is so important for horses not to go without food for extended periods of time as this fibre mat and layering will be passed out of the stomach in around an hour and leave the stomach without any protection.

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