

Nutritional Priorities

For the Mare: Lactating



Now that you have a healthy mare and newborn foal, the job of the mare has greatly increased. She must now recover from a taxing 11 months while also producing large amounts of milk for a hungry, growing foal for several months. During lactation, the mare will need increased energy, protein and mineral intake, even higher than for many high-performance athletes. She not only needs extra for the production of the milk but she also needs more energy for maintaining her own BCS after foaling with her increased activity staying with the foal and protecting it.

- Forage alone will not be adequate for the lactating mare. The peak demands on the mare will be around the 2 to 3 months after foaling. She will need extra calories and a vitamin/mineral supplement during this peak time. The amount fed to the mare at this time can have an impact on the quality of the milk and in turn, the growth (and future health) of the foal.
- There can be significant differences between mares, sometimes based on breed, temperament or genetics. Some broodmares produce large amounts of good quality milk and maintain their BCS, but others are the “hard keepers” that require extra nutritional support, so continue to monitor BCS during these four months and ensure lots of available forage.
- Consult with your equine nutritionist to choose the appropriate concentrate and vitamin/mineral supplement for a lactating mare. Feed several small meals with less than 6 lbs of concentrate per feeding.
- If the mare is getting lots of forage along with a concentrate for the lactating mare and she is losing weight, then discuss the value of adding a vegetable oil to provide a higher energy density to the diet. Start with small amounts to get the mare used to it and increase it over 2 weeks to the needed amount.
- Monitor the mare as there can be significant differences in their nutritional needs and keep in mind the changes in quality of pasture and adjust for dry or cold periods that may slow down the growth of good pasture or change its nutritional quality
- There is value in having the milk analyzed to ensure that the milk is providing all that the foal needs for proper health and growth.
- A salt block or preferably, a small bucket of loose salt (sodium chloride) should be provided. Loose salt is preferred and this can be placed in the stall or the run-in shed and replenished as needed. Don't depend on a mineral block only, but ensure there is an adequate amount of minerals in the forage and/or concentrate source and add supplements as necessary.

Nutritional Priorities

For the Mare: Lactating



- Clean, palatable water should be available for all mares, without competition as water needs increase significantly during lactation. Keep buckets full and check 3 times per day to ensure the buckets are full whether outside or in stalls (have at least 3 large buckets in the stall, if it is necessary to stall the mare and foal. Adequate water supply is critical. Monitor the amount consumed daily. Check for dehydration signs as well.
- Work with your veterinarian to ensure that vaccinations are up-to-date as needed for the disease risks in your area, and consult about deworming needs
- Monitor the way in which the mare eats to pick up any possible dental issues. She is getting higher amounts of concentrates and this may change the way she chews, thus resulting in a change in the wear pattern of her teeth. If possible, plan dental treatments for after the weaning of the foal. Regular farrier work is important to maintain as needed.
- Regular turnout and exercise is important for the mare and foal. Keep outside whenever possible, with shelter provided for shade and wind protection.

For more information sign up for Equine Guelph's 12 week online course on Management of the Mare, Stallion and Foal. Check the Education pages of Equine Guelph for more information.