

EQUINE GUELPH
helping horses for life™

- THE START**
- ▶ the horse evolved as a grazing herbivore
 - ▶ their diet consists of plant matter such as hay, grasses & grains
 - ▶ its digestive tract has adapted to eat large quantities of plant matter

THE CHALLENGE

to get to the nutrients guarded by the plant cell wall

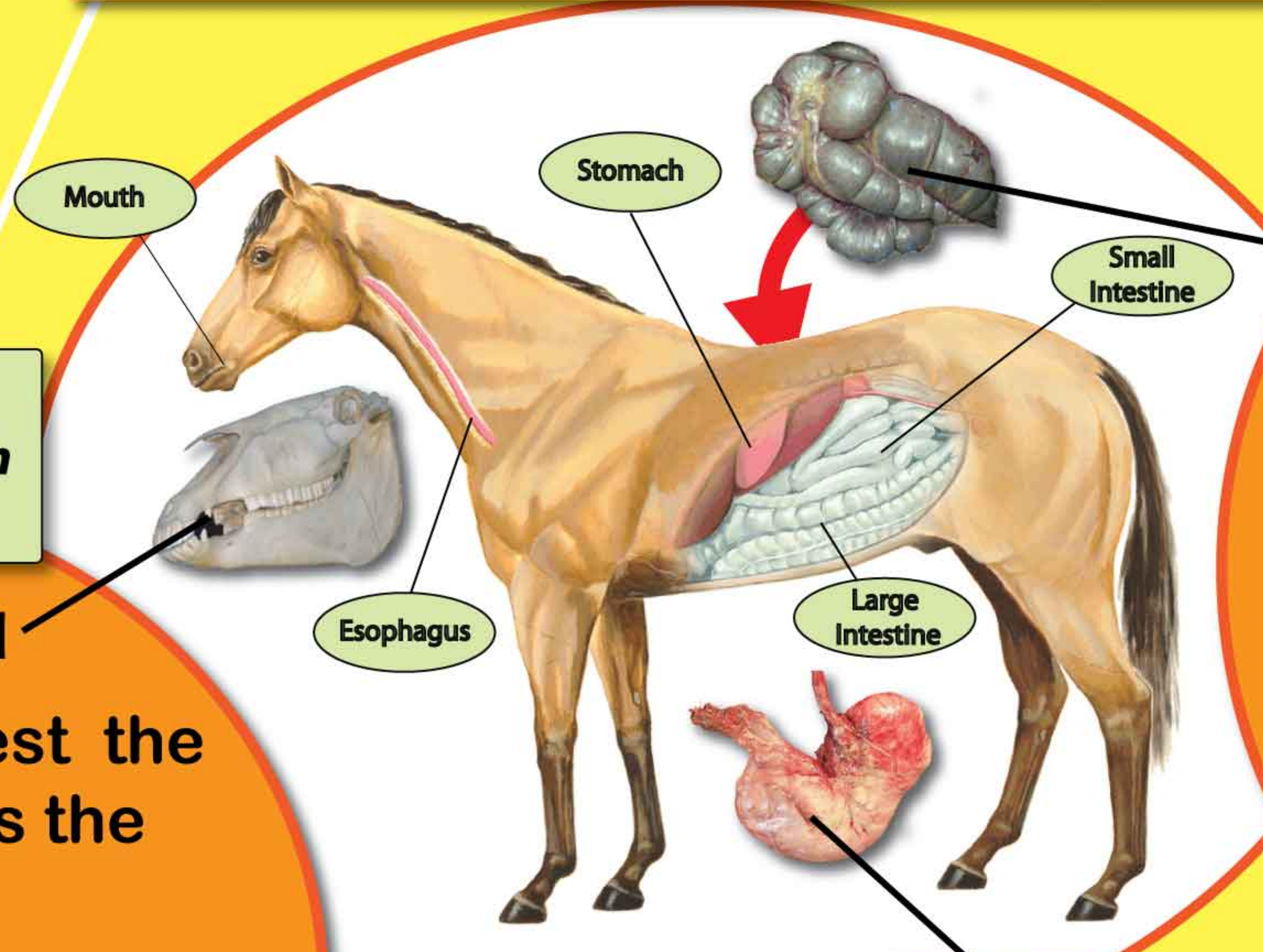
A horse should consume at least 1% of its body weight in forage per day! (5 kg for a 500 kg horse).

CECUM & COLON

▶ how do horses eat so much forage?

- ▶ cecum & colon are part of the large intestine & account for 50% of the digestive tract
- ▶ food can stay here for 48-65 hours
- ▶ microbes breakdown plant fibre

Horses should be fed small meals frequently throughout the day.



TOUR THE DIGESTIVE TRACT

Water is needed to maintain gut flow through the digestive system.

THE MOUTH

- ▶ 2 things help digest the food before it enters the stomach
- ▶ horses have incisors to shear forage & grinding teeth to help breakdown food
- ▶ saliva moistens the food & begins the digestion process

Good dentition is very important for the nutrition of the horse!

THE STOMACH

- ▶ notice how small the stomach is?
- ▶ it makes up only 10% of the capacity of the digestive tract
- ▶ once 2/3 full, it empties into the small intestines whether the food is digested or not