Tour the Digestive Tract

The Mouth
- 2 things help digest the food before it enters the stomach
- Horses have incisors to shear forage & grinding teeth to help break down 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

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 break down plant fibre

Horses should be fed small meals frequently throughout the day.

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

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