

## LOOKING AFTER THE VETERAN

Rebecca Ingram, Dodson & Horrell Marketing Manager commented, "We have been working with the VHS right from the very start and have built up a great relationship. Julianne and her fellow colleagues work very hard caring for veterans along with promoting the correct management of older horses and ponies; they provide a very important source of information and help for owners."

### **When do I need to change my veteran's diet?**

Like humans, horses age at different rates and there is no set age at which you should begin feeding your horse a veteran ration. However, if your horse is exhibiting any of the signs below then it is probably time to reconsider his dietary needs.

- May drop condition during the winter
- Loses muscle tone around hips and withers
- Quids (difficulty chewing)
- Back has dropped a little
- Often stumbles
- Occasional diarrhoea
- May develop a cough when fed hay

### **Sixteen Plus Mix & Sixteen Plus Cubes**

Specially formulated with the old horse in mind, using beneficial ingredients such as biotin, glucosamine and a pre-biotic, Sixteen Plus Mix and Cubes are a tried and tested way of feeding your old friend to ensure that he gets the most out of the later years of life – that's why they are preferred choice of the Veteran Horse Society and Veteran Horse Welfare.

### **Routine checks for the veteran**

It is also advisable as your horse gets older that you carry out some vital checks as part of your routine:

#### ***Weekly***

Weight and condition score; small changes in body weight are often difficult to see. Using a weigh-tape and condition score card will help you detect any weight loss early and act on it before it becomes a problem. Remember to weigh at the same time of day as body weight will fluctuate throughout the day. Check pasture and remove droppings.

#### ***Every 6-8 weeks***

Worm regularly; older horses may have residual worm damage, which can affect their ability to digest and absorb their food. You should ask your vet for the latest advice on worming programmes.

#### ***Every 6 months***

Have their teeth checked by a qualified equine dental technician; worn, missing and / or broken teeth will mean your horse cannot chew his food efficiently.

### **Hay Replacers**

Old horses will lose weight if they cannot eat fibre properly; a hay replacer is vital before increasing hard feed.

Hay replacers should be fed instead of hay at a minimum of 1.5% bodyweight per day but in the winter this may need to be increased to over 2% of their bodyweight.

The choice will depend upon the amount of weight loss and the condition of the teeth, option 1 is for horses losing only a little weight through to option 4 for horses which are losing lots of weight through the winter. Use an approved equine dental technician or speak to your vet to check teeth regularly.

#### ***Option 1***

Steam hay for a couple of hours before feeding to soften stems.

#### ***Option 2***

Use haylages (remembering to adjust for water content), as fermentation has already broken some of the fibre down.

#### ***Option 3***

Soak unmolassed sugar beet and then add an equal weight of Alfalfa. You should feed  $\frac{3}{4}$  kg per 100kg body weight eg 12hh, 250kg pony needs 1.9kg Alfalfa and 1.9kg unmolassed sugar beet; a 500kg 16hh horse needs 3.75kg Alfalfa and 3.75kg unmolassed sugar beet. Make sure your horse is receiving enough phosphorus by adding 0.5kg of bran.

**Option 4**

Weigh out 0.6kg per 100kg bodyweight of unmolassed sugar beet, soak; add the same weight of Pasture Nuts half an hour before feeding. Just before feeding add the same weight of Alfalfa. E.g. 300kg pony should be fed 1.8kg dry weight sugar beet (which is subsequently soaked), 1.8kg of Pasture Nuts and 1.8kg Alfalfa.

To discuss feeding your veteran horse or pony contact the Dodson & Horrell expert Feed Team on 0845 345 2627 or visit [www.dodsonandhorrell.com](http://www.dodsonandhorrell.com)

