

## Horse News and Views



Fall is the time when we should watch for subtle changes in our horses, e.g., body condition or eating behaviour. As stored feed (hay and grain) is provided to horses in increasing amounts, certain conditions become more prevalent or more evident than when the horses depended on pasture for their nutrients. They include:

- Low body condition score (BCS) – horses coming off pasture and onto a winter feeding program should be in a BCS ranging between 3 to 3.5 (where 1 is a bag of bones and 5 is Miss Piggy). Horses that are housed outdoors can be on the high side, since an extra layer of fat will help when winter wind chill is a factor they must deal with.
- Choking – horses occasionally get food stuck in their oesophagus. This is usually a medical emergency requiring a veterinarian. The feeding of dry supplements, such as beet pulp or pellet rations, is commonly blamed, but the true cause may be poorly chewed feed or the bolting of food.
- Quidding (or a quiddor) - when food drops from the horse's mouth in the process of mastication. It is commonly associated with poor occlusion of teeth and requires the services of your veterinarian to examine the mouth and correct any malocclusion problems.
- Bolting of food (greedy feeder) – is the rapid consumption of grain or commercially prepared feed. This can lead to indigestion or colic. Horse owners commonly place bricks in the feeder to slow the horse's consumption of grain.

Horse owners should refrain from being chefs in the barn (trying to tailor-make a ration) when they have little or no knowledge of the nutrient content of their hay and other feedstuffs. The first step to a good feeding program is to have your hay tested for its nutrient content. Products such as kelp, sprouted barley and beet pulp should only be used to balance deficiencies. Feed company representatives can help to design a balanced ration based on the hay analysis, the feedstuffs available and the needs of the horses.

For further information, contact Dr. Bob Wright (519) 846-3412 or visit our website: <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/livestock>

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