

FEEDING THE EX-RACEHORSE

GAIN
EQUINE NUTRITION

GAIN The Advantage with our specialised guide to nutrition for the ex-racehorse.

Offering a life to a retired racehorse can be a rewarding but challenging task. If your horse has just recently come out of full training you may need to take the time to 'rough' him or her off. Thoroughbred racehorses are finely tuned equine athletes and even those who never compete at the highest level are used to a stringent training regime from an early age. In Ireland racehorses are often rugged up 12 months of the year and are predominantly stabled all the time, some may have no access to 'turn out' while in training. The first job therefore is to gradually reintroduce the horse to grass with the ultimate goal being 24 hour turnout without a rug (an exception to this may be in very severe weather conditions).

Racehorses in full training are accustomed to eating large quantities of high energy feed on a daily basis, however once their workload has been reduced they do not have a requirement for this type of feeding programme. It is also useful to find out the horse's nutritional history from the trainer e.g. what type of feeding programme it had, was it prone to any digestive disorders such as gastric ulcers, acidosis of the hindgut, tying

up etc. as this will influence how you proceed with its care. It is important to make any changes gradually, allowing several days for their digestive system to adjust. Once this changeover has been complete their diet can primarily be based around good quality pasture if possible or hay/haylage where there is a shortage of good quality grass.

In Spring/Summer months a low calorie, high trace mineral and vitamin balancer such as **GAIN Opti-Care** is ideal to ensure nutritional requirements are being met without providing excess calories. During winter months it may be necessary to feed forage outside in addition to a moderate energy feed such as **GAIN Equestrian Cubes/Cool 'N' Easy Mix** to ensure they maintain condition and stay healthy over the winter months.

For those ex-racehorses that are going to pursue an alternative equestrian career perhaps as a riding club horse, an eventer or as a mount for hacking around you will need to take into consideration the temperament and ride-ability of the individual when designing their feeding programme. There are plenty of high calorie feeds with

low/moderate starch content that will provide the horse with adequate energy to look and perform well without the unwanted 'fizz' which can be a deterrent for many novice riders looking to take an ex-racehorse under their wing.

If your ex-racehorse has a complicated nutritional history or you have any queries about their feeding programme it is worthwhile to seek the advice of a professional, such as a vet or a nutritionist, who can help you to tailor a feeding programme for your horse.



If you have any nutritional queries please contact our team:

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