

How is a poor doer horse?

A **poor doer** is a horse that has trouble keeping healthy weight and condition even when it seems to be eating enough. The main problem is often a mismatch between **calorie intake** and the horse's needs, which can be affected by workload, age, temperament, health, and its naturally higher **metabolic rate**. Some poor doers burn fuel quickly, while others may have a lower appetite, weaker digestion, or trouble using feed efficiently.

A simple way to assess condition is by using a **body condition score** alongside regular weight checks and a close look at **rib coverage**, topline, and overall **muscle tone**. A horse that is dropping weight, looks tucked up, or has poor cover over the ribs and rump may need a different feeding approach. Ongoing **weight loss** should never be ignored, because it can signal that the feeding plan, turnout, workload, or health status needs to change.

Not every lean horse is a poor doer. Some are simply in **maintenance**, while others need more concentrated nutrition to support **condition** and **weight gain**. Before changing any **horse feed**, it helps to understand whether the problem is not enough forage, too little energy, poor **digestive health**, or a medical issue.

How should you feed a poor doer horse?

The ideal **horse feed** for a poor doer is usually a feed that supports a **forage-first** routine, is highly palatable, and supplies enough usable energy without overloading the gut with starch. In practical terms, that often means pairing quality **forage** with a suitable **complete horse feed**, a **high fibre feed**, or a mix of both depending on the horse's needs.

There are many **types of horse feed**, but poor doers usually do best with energy that is more **digestible fibre** and oil-based rather than heavy on cereal. This helps provide **slow release energy** and supports **gut health** and steady intake. A feed with moderate **sugar content** and controlled **starch** is often more suitable than a very rich mix that may upset digestion.

A good plan often includes:

- Plenty of **forage** from **hay** or **haylage**
- A tasty **complete horse feed** or balancer-based ration
- A fibre-rich bucket feed with **chaff** for extra chew time and slow eating
- More energy where needed, usually from a controlled, energy-dense source

For many poor doers, the goal is not just more food, but better absorbed food. A well-chosen feed should boost **calorie intake** without harming **digestive health**. If the horse is already getting enough forage, the next step is often a more targeted concentrate rather than simply increasing volume.

Which horse feed is most suitable for poor doers?

There is not one best choice for every horse, but the most effective choices tend to come from established **horse feed companies** that provide feed designed for body condition, fitness, and appetite support. Products from brands such as **Spillers horse feed** are often considered because they include options for poor doers, good-doers, and horses needing condition support. The label matters more than the brand name, though: always check the **feed label** for energy, fibre, starch, and sugar levels.

For many poor doers, the best practical choice is a feed that includes:

- **Condition cubes** for extra calories and condition support
- **Chaff** to improve chew time, palatability, and fibre content
- A **complete horse feed** if you want a more straightforward all-in-one ration
- A **feed balancer** if forage is good but the diet needs extra nutrients

Condition cubes are helpful when you need more energy in a smaller volume. They can suit horses that struggle to eat large meals, provided the total ration is managed carefully. **Chaff** helps bulk out the bucket feed, encourages chewing, and can make a ration more appealing. A good high-fibre chaff can also support **digestive health**.

When choosing between products, think about the horse's workload, temperament, and appetite. A nervous horse may benefit from a fibre-led feed with lower starch and reliable **slow release energy**. A horse in harder work may need [horse feed online shop](#) a more **energy-dense** formula, but the ration should still protect the gut and avoid sudden spikes in blood sugar.

How much horse feed should a poor doer get?

Rations should be based on the horse's **bodyweight**, current **body condition score**, amount of work, and the quantity and standard of forage already being eaten. A **horse feeding chart** is a useful starting point because it offers a rough guide for daily amounts, but it should not replace observation or professional advice. A **horse feed calculator UK** can also help estimate a starting ration, especially when paired with a weight tape and a condition assessment.

Generally, increase feed gradually and track whether the horse is improving in condition. For poor doers, **bucket feed** is often best used to supplement forage rather than replace it. Small, measured meals are safer and better than large buckets once or twice a day. Feed rate matters because the gut can only handle so much at once.

General **horse feeding rules** suggest that forage should remain the backbone of the ration. Concentrates should support the diet, not dominate it. If the horse is getting plenty of hay or haylage but is still losing condition, then the bucket feed may need to become more energy-dense, more frequent, or better balanced.

Key points to keep in mind:

- Use a **horse feeding chart** as a guide, then adjust to condition
- Check whether the horse is actually eating all forage offered
- Split **bucket feed** into smaller meals if possible
- Raise calories gradually to support safe **weight gain**
- Review the ration after any workload or turnout change

10 principles of horse feeding with poor condition

These **10 horse-feeding rules** are a practical starting point for horses in bad condition. They are founded on common **feeding guidelines for horses** and designed to support consistent recovery without disrupting the digestive system.

- 1. Keep **forage** first and be sure the horse has enough to eat over the day.
- 2. Select good-quality **hay** or **haylage**, selected for palatability and consistency.
- 3. Provide meals in small, regular portions rather than relying on large meals.
- 4. Use **small frequent meals** to safeguard the hindgut and enhance absorption.

- 5. Choose feeds that are fibre-led and good for **digestive health**.
- 6. Avoid dramatic changes in ration or **sudden change** in any feed component.
- 7. Assess the horse's teeth, worm control, and general health if weight is not improving.
- 8. Adjust the ration to workload so the horse gets adequate support for condition and exercise.
- 9. Rely on condition scoring, not guesswork, to judge progress.
- 10. Review the ration regularly and make gradual changes.

The idea is to support the horse with a steady intake of digestible calories, not to overwhelm the system. **Forage** should remain the base, and any added feed should improve nutrient balance without creating avoidable digestive stress.

How to choose a feed plan: grazing feed, balancer, or blend?

The best feeding plan depends on whether your horse needs additional fuel, a stronger vitamin and mineral supply, or both. A smart place to start is with **forage analysis**, especially if the horse is eating a lot of hay or haylage but still not keeping weight. Knowing the real nutrient profile of your forage helps you decide whether to add a **feed balancer**, a concentrate, or a bespoke **horse feed mix recipe**.

A forage-plus-balancer plan is often ideal when forage intake is solid but the overall nutrient balance is lacking. A balancer can top up deficiencies in vitamins, minerals, and amino acids without adding much extra bulk. This can be useful for a horse that needs better **condition** and **muscle tone** but does not need much more feed volume.

A hard feed plan may suit horses that need more energy. In that case, a **hard feed** can add calories, especially when combined with chaff and forage. Some owners choose a simple blend using a **horse feed mix recipe** based on a fibre cube, chaff, and balancer. This can be a flexible way to fine-tune calorie intake while keeping the ration easy to use.

Choose the plan that best fits the horse's appetite, body condition, and workload:

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- **Forage plus balancer:** best for horses needing nutritional balance more than extra bulk
- **Forage plus hard feed:** ideal for poor doers needing more energy and improved condition
- **Mixed bucket feed:** most useful when appetite is variable and you need to improve palatability

Whichever route you take, keep the diet steady enough to support gut function and avoid unnecessary **sudden change**.

How much does horse feed cost?

Horse feed cost differs greatly depending on the product type, the amount needed, and whether you are using a nutritional balancer, cubes, chaff, or a premium all-in-one ration. The real question is not just the cost per bag, but the **cost per day**. A more expensive feed may actually be a better deal if the horse needs a reduced quantity of it to maintain condition.

When planning a **feeding budget**, consider the full ration, not only the concentrate. Roughage, bedding, supplements, and regular health care all impact total feeding costs. If a horse is a genuine poor doer, spending

more on a quality ration can be worthwhile if it improves **weight gain** and reduces waste.

Horse feed companies offer products at different price points. Some premium feeds, including those from **Spillers horse feed**, are formulated for specific needs and may cost more upfront. However, if they help the horse maintain better condition with less product, the daily cost may be reasonable. A good way to compare options is to work out the daily feeding rate alongside the bag price and make sure the ration matches the horse's needs.

Horse feed for novices: typical pitfalls to watch out for

For those new to **horse feed for beginners**, the worst mistake is often believing that extra feed automatically means improved condition. That can lead to **overfeeding** without addressing the real problem. Thin horses need thoughtful ration planning, not just more feed at once.

Another common error is failing to consider **digestive health**. A horse that quickly gets more energy-dense feed may eat less comfortably, show reduced appetite, or develop runny droppings. Feeding should be introduced gradually, because a **sudden dietary change** can disrupt the hindgut and limit the benefits of the new ration.

People new to feeding also miss forage quality. If the horse is getting ample feed but inferior roughage, the diet may still be lacking. Others choose a concentrate that is very high in starch for the horse's disposition or exercise level, which can create energy swings rather than steady improvement. The aim is a balanced ration that helps maintain condition while working with the horse's natural digestive design.

Can a horse feed quiz or calculator help?

Yes, it can. A **what should I feed my horse quiz** or a **horse feed calculator UK** can be a good place to begin, especially if you are unsure how to plan the ration. These tools usually consider age, weight, workload, current feed, and condition, then recommend a feeding direction. They are not a stand-in for an expert assessment, but they can help shortlist the options.

A good **feeding assessment** should include the horse's **body condition score**, appetite, turnout, exercise level, and any signs of discomfort or poor digestion. If a calculator recommends a ration that does not match what you can see on the horse, rely on the horse in front of you and review the plan. The best tool is the one that helps you choose more wisely, not the one that gives a strict answer.

Use quizzes and calculators to shape your starting point, then watch the horse closely for changes in appetite, droppings, energy, and condition. Tuning the ration based on real-life response is the most dependable approach.

When to get horse feeding advice

You should obtain **horse feed advice UK** if your horse is becoming underweight, is not getting better despite a sensible ration, or has a history of little appetite, illness, or digestive upset. An experienced **equine nutritionist** can support create a ration that matches available forage quality, workload, and body condition. This is especially valuable for complex cases where a simple commercial feed is not enough.

Talk to a **veterinarian** if weight loss is not explained, rapid, or accompanied by changes in behaviour, droppings, drinking, or energy. Health issues, including **dental issues**, can make a horse appear to be a poor doer when the real problem is pain or poor chewing ability. Even the best **horse feed** will not work properly if the horse cannot eat and digest it comfortably.

If you have already tried adjusting forage, switching concentrates, and improving feeding management without success, professional input is the next step. An expert can help interpret the horse's history, recommend the right **complete horse feed** or balancer, and suggest a more targeted plan for safe **weight gain**.

FAQ

What horse feed is best for poor doers?

The best **horse feed** for poor doers is usually a fibre-led, palatable ration that supports **weight gain** without being too high in starch. Many horses do well on a **complete horse feed**, or a mix of **condition cubes**, **chaff**, and a **feed balancer**, alongside plenty of **forage**. The best choice depends on the horse's body condition score, workload, and appetite.

Should a poor doer horse have more hard feed or more forage?

Start with a greater amount of and better **forage**, because that is the foundation of the diet. If forage intake is already strong and the horse still needs help, add a suitable **hard feed** or calorie-dense bucket feed. The aim is to increase energy without compromising **digestive health**.

Is ready-made horse feed enough for a thin horse?

Sometimes, yes. A solid **complete horse feed** can be sufficient if the horse also has enough forage and the feeding rate is tailored to its needs. Sometimes, the horse may need extra **condition cubes**, more chaff, or a different ration to reach enough calorie intake and improve condition.

How do I know if my horse is a thin horse?

Check the **body condition score**, rib coverage, topline, and whether the horse is dropping **bodyweight** over time. A hard keeper often needs closer feeding to stop ongoing **weight loss**. If you are unsure, track changes in condition over several weeks rather than relying on appearance alone.

When should I ask for horse feeding advice for my horse?

Ask for **horse feed advice UK** if your horse keeps losing condition, refuses feed, has **dental issues**, or does not improve after a thoughtful diet change. A **veterinarian** or **equine nutritionist** can help determine the cause and design a feeding plan that promotes health, performance, and safe condition improvement.