**Feeding and Nutrition**

Some Rules for Good Feeding

* Feed small amounts often
* Fresh water should always be available
* Salt (loose or in a block) should always be available
* Feed plenty of roughage
* Feed hay before grain
* Feed according to a pony’s size, condition, age and work, and the weather
* Don’t ride your pony right after feeding (give him an hour to digest)
* Make changes in feed gradually
* Feed on a regular schedule
* Feed only good quality hay and grain
* Keep feeders, tubs and water buckets clean
* Notice how your pony normally eats

Roughage – should be most of what your horse eats. Roughage includes hay, grass, and things like hay cubes, hay pellets, or beet pulp

Concentrates – provide extra energy and protein. Not all horses need concentrates. Include grain, pelleted feed, sweet feed, oil, vitamin or mineral supplements. A Ration Balancer is a kind of concentrate meant to be fed at low levels (about a pound a day) that includes vitamins, minerals and protein – “just to make sure”.

Succulents – Juicy foods, often given for treats, like apples or carrots.

Six Classes of Nutrients –

* Carbohydrates – the main ingredient in roughage. Horses should get 1½% to 2% of their body weight in carbohydrates every day – so a 1000 pound horse needs 15-20 pounds of good quality hay every day.
* Protein – an average mature horse needs about 1½ pounds of protein a day, 2 pounds or more if it is in work. Grass hay contains 8% - 14% protein, alfalfa hay is 12% - 18%. In other words, 15 – 20 pounds of hay probably has enough protein for most horses.
* Fat – horses do need a small amount of this, but most should get plenty from hay (usually about 1 ½% fat) or grain (approximately 5% fat) or pelleted feed. Occasionally horses in heavy work who cannot keep weight on are given vegetable oil in their feed
* Vitamins – horses need vitamins, just like people. Again, they usually get enough from a balanced diet, but some owners give vitamin supplements.
* Minerals – same as vitamins. Mineral supplementation can be important in some parts of the country – for example iodine in Montana, or selenium in Florida
* Water – your horse needs 8-12 gallons of water a day

