



# Managing Gastric Ulcers Through Nutrition



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Many factors contribute to gastric ulcers in horses including diet and stress. Treatment involves expensive medication. Preventing and managing ulcers is very important for performance horse welfare. Diet and nutritional supplements can play important roles in successfully managing ulcers.

All ages and breeds of horses are susceptible to equine gastric ulcer syndrome, or EGUS, with ulcers forming not only in the squamous portion of the stomach but also the distal oesophagus, glandular portion of the stomach, and the proximal aspect of the duodenum. Once ulcers are diagnosed, medications, principally omeprazole, should be used to heal ulcers initially.

**However, the following management tactics will help maintain healing and prevent recurrence:**

- Offer as much fibre or forage as possible, and avoid prolonged periods without forage (e.g., during transport and overnight);
- Consider lucerne hay, as it provides some natural buffering qualities;
- For horses in little or no work and “easy keepers,” offer a lower energy forage and slow feeder hay nets to maximise the amount of time spent consuming the feed.
- Use low-starch, high fibre feeds whenever possible to increase saliva production and support gastric health;
- Decrease meal size and avoid overconsumption of starch from grain, using digestible fibre and oils as preferential energy sources and ensuring that grain offered is appropriately processed;
- Allow pasture turnout as much as possible, even if a grazing muzzle needs to be used;
- Ensure horses have access to water at all times; and
- Avoid stressful situations as much as possible.
- Use a research-proven digestive aid such as a buffer (Gastrolize antacid, Triacton, Sucralox), which supports the health of the stomach.



As always, consult with your veterinarian or an equine nutritionist prior to instituting changes in your horse’s diet and implement safe supplement strategies.