

## Feeding the High Risk Metabolic Horse

### Who:

- Horses with Cushing's disease (PPID)
- Horses with Equine Metabolic Syndrome (EMS)
- Horses with high body fat-- body condition score > 6/9
- Horses who have had laminitis in the past

### Pasture

Ideally, a horse that is high risk should have limited access to pasture, if any. This is especially important during the spring months, when there is an abundance of fresh, green grass. Dry lot or over-grazed pastures are best. Avoid turnout during the afternoon hours, when the sugar levels in the grass are highest. If the horse must be kept outside at all times, a grazing muzzle may be necessary to control intake.

### Hay

Feed high-quality hay with a lower NSC (non-structural carbohydrate) content. Grass hay is best; avoid alfalfa. Most high risk horses can safely consume 1-1.5% of their body weight a day, divided into several feedings. Additionally, soaking the hay for 30 minutes before feeding can help to remove excess sugars, as long as the water is drained before feeding. However, this may also remove some of the important vitamins and minerals as well, so supplementing with a balanced mineral ration may be necessary. For horses who bolt down their hay, slow-feeders such as the NibbleNet® or Porta-Grazer® may help to slow down intake and keep your horse occupied for longer periods of time.

### Grain

There are several commercially available feeds designed for the laminitic horse. These feeds have a lower energy content while still providing essential vitamins and nutrients. Consider feeding a ration balancer instead of grain, as most laminitic horses do fine with an all-hay diet. Avoid feeds with molasses or other high sugar additives. Avoid feeding straight corn or oats.

### Exercise

Regular exercise is crucial for weight loss and maintaining a good body condition. As little as 10-15 minutes a day, even in a round pen, is better than no exercise.

### Monitoring

Keeping track of your horse's weight loss can help you to make adjustments as needed. The best method is using a weight tape, which your veterinarian or feed store can provide for you.

Please feel free to call us with any questions!  
Auburn Equine / AMC Large Animal Services  
530-823-0162

