



FEEDING FAQ'S

If you need to know anything about feeding your horse, specific to British Horse Feeds products or otherwise, check out our FAQs. Take advantage of our extensive knowledge of horse nutrition to make sure your horse is fed in the best possible way, to ensure he's happy and in great condition.

If you have a question not in our FAQs, do get in contact with us, and we will do our best to answer it straight away.

Are British Horse Feeds products heating? Can I feed to a “fizzy” horse?

“Heating” and “Fizziness” are believed to be the horse’s reaction to feeds that are rich in non-fibre carbohydrates – starch, sugars etc. As such they may be a response to the activity of insulin of flooding the cells in the body with sugars that may spark of an increase in activity, especially the brain.

However the low levels of sugars in Speedi-Beet and Fibre-Beet are unlikely to have any effect.

Are Speedi-Beet & Fibre-Beet OK for a horse with Cushings?

Yes they are. Cushing’s Syndrome is associated with hyperglycaemia (too much glucose circulating in the blood) and abnormal patterns in plasma insulin. It is due to aberrations in the pituitary gland. The glucose levels in Speedi-Beet & Fibre-Beet are low and will be largely used in the gut wall to help protein absorption. Levels absorbed will not affect the syndrome.

Can Fibre-Beet replace hard feed as well as forage?

Fibre-Beet can be fed to provide additional energy, when forage alone is insufficient but we would also recommend the addition of a balancer, like Baileys Lo-Cal or Performance Balancer, to provide the vitamins and minerals lacking from a forage/fibre-only diet

Can I feed Speedi-Beet or Fibre-Beet to a senior horse?

Both Speedi-Beet and Fibre-Beet are ideal for the veteran horse. Once soaked they are palatable and easy to eat, even if your horse has missing teeth. As horses get older their digestive efficiency declines and so a readily digestible feedstuff, like Speedi-Beet/Fibre-Beet, is ideal. Don’t forget to ensure a supply of vitamins and minerals, though, by feeding a low calorie balancer or broad spectrum supplement.

Can I feed British Horse Feeds products to young horses, foals and mares?

Both Speedi-Beet and Fibre-Beet have fibre profiles that are similar to those of grass. In addition the presence of pectins and high levels of soluble fibre moderates the fermentation in the hindgut giving a good release of nutrients associated with slow release energy. As such they are suitable for all ages and classes of horses.

Can I feed Fibre-Beet dry?

Although Fibre-Beet has been designed to be fed soaked, this is not necessary due to the micronization carried out during the production process. Soaking is, however, a good policy. Chewing and swallowing soaked material works enzymes into the product, improving the efficiency of digestion. It also ensures bulking of the horse's feed and maintains water intake during feeding.

Can I feed Fibre-Beet with haylage?

Yes. Haylage and silage are "pre-fermented" and their profile will be dependent on the profile of the grass when cut. Therefore, feeding Fibre-Beet will help to reduce variation.

Can I feed Speedi-Beet or Fibre-Beet to a convalescent horse?

Yes. Speedi-Beet or Fibre-Beet can be fed in any situation. As they are soaked feeds, when fed before feeding other feeds such as forage, they will increase feeding time and so help allay boredom. Their palatability will also help mask the taste of any medication introduced.

Can I just feed Speedi-Beet with forage alone and no compound feed?

Forage is by far the most important part of a horse's diet so, if it is in short supply or when forage alone is insufficient for the level of activity, adding Speedi-Beet will provide useful extra digestible fibre. We would also recommend that a source of vitamins and minerals be fed, in the form of a broad spectrum supplement or balancer, like Baileys Lo-Cal in order to supply nutrients that are lacking from a forage-only diet.

Can I over-feed Speedi-Beet? What is the maximum amount I can feed to my horse?

Over-feeding Speedi-Beet is unlikely to cause any problems in terms of gut function and integrity. In fact observations show a significant decline in colics and associated problems when feeding beet fibre. However, due to its high energy level it would be wise to restrict the level of Speedi-Beet fed in line with the level of horse activity.

We would recommend, as a general daily guideline, 100g of Speedi-Beet (dry weight) for every 100 kg of horse weight e.g. 0.25 kg for a 250-300 kg pony, 0.5 kg for a 500-600 kg horse. However, depending upon the rest of the diet fed and level of horse activity, this rate can be increased to 500g of Speedi-Beet per 100 kg horse weight each day. New feeds should always be introduced gradually and horse condition monitored.

Can I prepare enough Speedi-Beet or Fibre-Beet for two feeds (i.e. over 24 hours)?

Yes. There is no problem, except perhaps during very hot, humid periods where there may be a slight risk from mould growth. The nutrients will remain unaffected.

Can I use British Horse Feeds to put weight on my horse?

Speedi-Beet and Fibre-Beet can be added to any dietary regime. If offered over and above your horse's normal diet, then weight and condition will increase. Speedi-Beet and Fibre-Beet can also be used as top dressings to increase the intake of other feeds, or can be used to substitute for less nutritious feedstuffs. The prebiotic effect of beet fibre will improve the

nutrient availability of all the diet, and so weight gain can be quite rapid. You should, therefore, be prepared to reduce the levels once condition has been achieved.

Can I use Speedi-Beet & Fibre-Beet to help lose weight?

Both Speedi-Beet and Fibre-Beet can absorb more than the recommended amount of water. If you feed a 7:1 soak of Speedi-Beet, or 5:1 soak of Fibre-Beet, before turn out or before providing forage, you will make your horse feel quite full at the time of day when he usually eats the fastest. Because horses are trickle feeders they will then tend to graze less and more slowly. So you can feed your horse less and he will lose weight without losing condition.

Can Speedi-Beet and Fibre-Beet cause Colic?

The patented process that produces Speedi-Beet means the product is extremely friable (crumbly when dry!) and allows complete water penetration on soaking. As such it is of the same consistency as the rest of the gut contents (chyme) and so should not cause any form of impaction colic. Fibre-Beet, when soaked, has a similar consistency.

The fermentation products of both these products do not produce any significant amounts of gas and the presence of cellulose fibre bulks the gut and helps avoid torsion.

Do I need to feed chop or another fibre feed like alfalfa with Fibre-Beet?

No, Fibre-Beet contains alfalfa so supplies all you need from your fibre source.

Do I need to soak Fibre-Beet, as it contains Speedi-Beet?

Soaking of Fibre-Beet is preferred, but not essential. The Speedi-Beet content has been micronized which improves soaking and reduces impaction and feeding un-soaked will not cause the problems associated with traditional sugar beet pellets.

However, soaking is a good preparation, not just a “softening”. Chewing and swallowing soaked material works enzymes into the product improving the efficiency of digestion. It also ensures bulking of the horses feed and maintains water intake during feeding. The ideal moist diet!

Does it matter if I use too much water?

No that's fine. Speedi-Beet can soak up to at least seven times its own weight of water and Fibre-Beet up to 5 times its own weight. The final mix will be a bit sloppier, but it is a great method of getting extra water into your horse.

Fast release energy. Isn't that bad?

Fast and slow release energy can be misleading terms. Nutrients are released through enzyme action or microbial fermentation and these nutrients will release energy when metabolised. In the case of “slow release” this is a continuous, steady breakdown of the fibre in the hindgut, and “fast release” is generally glucose – from starch – which is absorbed soon after a meal. In the normally functioning horse this glucose is taken up by the cells and set to work. Any excess is stored as glycogen for later use. Glucose is essential for brain function, some muscular activity and to aid the transport of other nutrients (such as amino acids) across the gut membrane. We recommend the use of hard feeds, in moderation, as they are important in providing the correct energy profile for your horse and his activity.

Fibre-Beet can also be used as a top dressing?

Fibre-Beet is very attractive to equines. Not only is the aroma and taste extremely palatable, the shape of the lozenge means it is easy for your horse to pick up and chew.

How can Fibre-Beet replace hard feed as well as forage?

Hard feed is usually fed to increase the energy intake where forage alone is insufficient. The enhanced energy levels of Fibre-Beet will allow replacement of hard feed.

How do I use Fibre-Beet?

Fibre-Beet can be fed to replace a proportion of the forage fed. It can also be used as a top dressing in association with hard feed or to replace hard feed totally. If replacing hard feed totally we would recommend using a multivitamin/mineral supplement or a balancer, like Baileys Lo-Cal

How does Fibre-Beet help maintain hindgut function?

By reducing the amount of forage given, and replacing it with a stable fibre source, the variation in free sugars and polysaccharides is reduced, ensuring fewer problems in the hindgut.

How does Speedi-Beet soak so quickly?

Once sugar has been extracted the pulp is dried and compressed into dense pellets. Water can soak through the closely impacted fibre, but only very slowly. With Speedi-Beet the manufacturing process forces the fibres apart, allowing greater accessibility to water. It's like cardboard converted to blotting paper.

How much Fibre-Beet should I feed?

If Fibre-Beet is used as a forage replacer feed 250g/100kg body weight of your horse. Giving Fibre-Beet before grazing or a hay bag will allow the horse to control its own intake. If Fibre-Beet is being used to replace hard feed then, as a rule of thumb, replace 1/3-1/2 with Fibre-Beet. Assess your horse's condition and use your judgement to adjust quantities fed.

Fibre-Beet can be fed at up to a maximum rate of 1kg per 100kg of horse weight. Always monitor horse condition and consult us directly for advice if needed.

How much Speedi-Beet can I feed my horse?

This is a bit like "how long is a piece of string?" We would recommend, as a general guideline, 100g of Speedi-Beet (dry weight) for every 100 kg of horse weight e.g. 0.25 kg for a 250-300 kg pony, 0.5 kg for a 500-600 kg horse. Speedi-Beet can, however, be fed at up to a maximum of 500g per 100kg horse weight. The key factor, as with feeding any material, is observation. Start with these levels and adjust them according to the horse's general condition and activity. The most important thing is to provide plenty of forage. Adding Speedi-Beet should initially be at the expense of other straights, unless you are specifically looking for other results such as weight gain or increased levels of activity.

I already feed Speedi-Beet. Should I change?

If you are happy with the consistency of quality of your forage and your horse's condition is good, then continue as you are doing. If you feed both Speedi-Beet and alfalfa, then you could substitute both with Fibre-Beet. Fibre-Beet is formulated from complementary proportions of Speedi-Beet and alfalfa and make it the ideal choice in this situation.

I don't feed sugar beet. Why should I?

The fibre profile of sugar beet is ideal for horses. Equally divided between cellulose, hemicelluloses and pectins, beet provides fibres that can be fermented along the whole gut length at different rates, as well as providing slowly fermented fibre and much needed bulk.

Fibre is an extremely complex range of β -linked carbohydrates that varies between different plant species. The profile in sugar beet is such that microbial fermentation (the only way animals can utilise fibre) in the gut gives the right proportions of energy rich nutrients for the horse.

I don't use sugar beet or alfalfa. Should I be doing so?

We believe Fibre-Beet is one of the best commercial fibre feeds available. Both Speedi-Beet and alfalfa are regarded in their own right as excellent feedstuffs for horses. Research has shown that, in the correct proportions, sugar beet and alfalfa together give an improvement in nutrient availability that is greater than the individual components. Fibre-Beet combines these qualities in such a way as to provide a “super forage” with added essential trace elements for optimum nutrition.

I have just got a new horse, and unsure what to feed him, where would be a good place to start?

If at all possible when buying a new horse, try to initially keep him on the same diet as previously. As with all animals, changing the diet should be done gradually.

Changing environment can be stressful for a horse, so if you are unable to continue with the horse’s original diet, it is important that you feed a diet which will be relatively low in energy and high in fibre. This should help to keep the horse as calm as possible. In particular look for high fibre, low starch feeds.

If Speedi-Beet isn’t sugar-free, won’t I be better off not feeding it?

All feeding stuffs contain sugars, or chains of sugars (e.g. starch). In fact, at around 5%, Speedi-Beet has lower total sugar than oat feed (13%), Grass (11%), Alfalfa (8%) and almost any other feedstuff.

If you are concerned, after soaking Speedi-Beet, squeeze out the excess water and pour off. The sugar that has dissolved in the water will, therefore, be discarded. Trials have demonstrated a 60% reduction in sugar content, with only one “wash”.

I’ve heard Fibre-Beet is good at heading off colic. Why is this?

When fed moist Fibre-Beet helps to lubricate and mix the gut contents, providing bulk to keep the gut full. It also helps maintain the correct proportions of hindgut microflora, which reduces those microbes associated with gas and toxin production. Fibre-Beet will even out extremes in forage variation, to maintain gut function and regular gut contractions (peristalsis), keeping everything moving. A healthy gut function means colic is less likely.

Should I stop feeding hay?

No. Hay, grass and haylage should provide the majority of any horse’s feed. They do need to be topped up as activity increases, or if they are of limited quality, but should never be removed.

Should I stop grazing?

NO! Horses are trickle feeders; their behaviour is geared to continuous feeding of small amounts of feed (grazing) and it is this that maintains gut function and integrity. Our Products should be fed to supplement grazing, not to replace it.

Should I stop using hard feed?

You should be supplying the horse with as much energy through fibre as you can. Then hard feed can be used to supplement this as necessary.

What are the benefits of Alfalfa?

Alfalfa (lucerne) is a member of the legume family and has a favourable amino acid profile for muscle tone and function. The leaves are rich in protein and essential minerals whilst the stem has a beneficial fibre profile. This fibre is rich in cellulose and so provides excellent bulking, whilst the hemicelluloses are easily fermentable for slow release energy. Mixed with Speedi-Beet in the ratio that we have in Fibre-Beet, has been shown in independent research to be optimal for digestibility.

What are the benefits of Speedi-Beet?

Speedi-Beet is an unmolassed sugar beet pulp whose cell matrix has been disrupted by a patented process, including micronization. Non-fibrous nutrients have been “unlocked” enabling them to be digested and absorbed in the small intestine more efficiently than unprocessed product. The fibre profile of Speedi-Beet allows optimum beneficial fermentation, in both end products and rate of fermentation, giving an improvement in slow-release energy.

What are the correct proportions for feeding?

1 part of Fibre-Beet, to 3 parts of water by weight. Soaking time is 45 minutes in cold water soaking and 15 minutes in warm water (to fully absorb into the alfalfa and oat component).

What are the correct proportions for soaking Speedi-Beet?

The recommended proportion is one part of Speedi-Beet to five parts of water by weight. For example **250g** of Speedi-Beet should be soaked in **1.25kg** (or 1.25litres). The amounts aren't too critical. When first using Speedi-Beet, weigh out the amounts and judge the amount to scoop for subsequent feeds.

What can I feed Speedi-Beet with?

Speedi-Beet can be fed in conjunction with any feedstuff you would normally feed your horse. Straights and forages can all be partially substituted with Speedi-Beet, depending upon the horse's requirements and activity. Cutting back mixes or cubes to substitute with Speedi-Beet will reduce vitamin and mineral intake which should be replaced by topping up the diet with a balancer.

What do you mean by Energy Profile?

Technically, energy is the heat released from biochemical reactions that are happening in the horse's body all the time. Different nutrients, when broken down by the horse's metabolism, release various amounts of energy as well as pushing down specific metabolic pathways. If we supply nutrients solely because they are fast or slow release we may end up with imbalances. For example glucose, which is derived from starch, is essential in the gut wall to actively absorb other nutrients. Sugars – glucose, sucrose, fructose are used by the fast twitch muscles for energy, whilst slow twitch muscles can use the “slow release” fibre components.

So energy profile is a way of ensuring that there is a balanced energy donation from all the nutrients in a feed to help a balanced metabolism for your horse's lifestyle.

What is Fibre-Beet?

Fibre-Beet is a carefully formulated combination of Speedi-Beet, alfalfa and oat fibre supplemented with biotin, sodium and calcium. You've got all the benefits of Speedi-Beet with its high level of easily digested soluble fibre for slow energy release along with low starch and sugar. The alfalfa provides quality protein containing essential amino acids for muscle tone and function and the oat fibre provides a complementary nutrient profile. Fibre-Beet is designed to be fed wet which is the most natural way to feed your horse.

What is Micronization?

Micronization is a cooking process which improves nutrient availability. Infra-red rays cause the water molecules present in the feedstuff to rapidly vibrate and heat up. This results in water vaporisation and expansion.

In the case of Speedi-Beet, micronization disrupts the fibre, including that encircling the cells allowing “locked-in” nutrients to become available for subsequent digestion.

For cereals, micronization gelatinises starch granules, vastly improving the small intestine digestibility of starch and reducing the potential for it to get to the hindgut.

For proteins, such as soya, it causes mild denaturing thereby improving digestibility

For oilseeds, micronization ruptures the oil cells allowing the oil to infuse into the matrix of the seed, again improving digestibility.

What is the difference between Speedi-Beet and Fibre-Beet?

Speedi Beet is unmolassed (95% sugar free) sugar beet that soaks in 10 minutes. Fibre-Beet is a combination of Speedi Beet, alfalfa, oat fibre and Biotin and takes 45 minutes to soak in cold water/15 minutes in warm water. Both products are ideal for horses and ponies prone to laminitis as both are low sugar/high fibre products. Fibre Beet can be fed as a forage replacer as it recognizes the fact that horses evolved principally to eat grass which contains 80 to 90% water. Both Speedi-Beet and Fibre-Beet are designed to be fed wet, which is the most natural way to feed your horse. The principle difference between Fibre-Beet and Speedi-Beet is that Fibre-Beet is designed to be used as a “super forage”, whilst Speedi-Beet is suited to replace a portion of the hard feed.

What should I do if my horse eats some unsoaked Speedi-Beet accidentally?

Speedi-Beet has been processed to be a quick soaking flake. This results in the flake being extremely friable and this means it will not compact in the gut. So if a horse does eat Speedi-Beet dry – and we have had reports of horses eating up to a whole bag! – the best thing is to give it small amounts to drink at frequent intervals and to walk him.

This will help the gut transit of Speedi-Beet. Because micronization affects the Water Binding Capacity of the beet there is no occurrence of it drawing water from the horse itself. Controlled water absorption will avoid any gut discomfort.

Why are profiles important?

Within any headline nutrient the constituents are many and varied in their proportions; Protein is made up of 20+ amino acids. Fibre is a term covering a complex range and combination of beta linked chains of sugars having a diversity of physical and fermentative properties.

It is by looking at the profiles of protein (amino acids), oil (fatty acids, omega 3 etc.) and carbohydrates (starch or fibre) that we can understand fully their contribution to nutrition.

Why are Speedi-Beet and Fibre-Beet good for laminitics?

Nutritional laminitis can be caused by the hindgut microbes producing lactic in high quantities, causing disruption to the microflora and stimulating toxin production. One of the major sources is undigested starch. Both Speedi-Beet and Fibre-Beet allow you to reduce starchy feeds in the diet – so there’s less undigested starch. In addition the fermentation of the fibre in Speedi-Beet and Fibre-Beet produces lower levels of lactic acid than grass or hay.

Why does Speedi-Beet have greater nutrient availability than sugar beet pulp?

The manufacturing process of Speedi-Beet forces the fibres apart and also disrupts them. This releases non-fibrous nutrients rendering them available to digestive enzymes and increasing the surface area for gut bacteria to attack and ferment them. As fermentation is time dependent (the time it takes to pass through the hindgut) improving accessibility to the microbes allows more slow release energy to be generated. The Effective Degradability of Speedi-Beet is close on 100%.

Why is fibre so important?

The horse has evolved to utilise fibrous material that is fermented in the hindgut by specialist microbes. The horse absorbs the fermentation products, to supply its energy needs. Unlike us it can only produce limited amounts of some pancreatic

enzymes and so is not suited to eat starchy or protein rich foods. These will not be entirely absorbed and will enter the hindgut disrupting the microflora present.

The microbial populations in the hindgut compete with each other. When given the right substrate to ferment they will proliferate and succeed. If too much starch or protein enter the hindgut those associated microbes will increase, produce their own products that may be toxic to the horse, and grow at the expense of the more “friendly” bacteria.

Why is it necessary to replace forage with Fibre-Beet?

Depending upon the season, forage can be in short supply. As well as this, forage sources can be widely variable in their make-up. Bought in hay or haylage is only as good as the season’s cut and may be quite different bale to bale. By replacing a proportion with a standardised product of known quality, such as Fibre-Beet, a more even and stable forage base can be achieved.

Why is Speedi-Beet approved by The Laminitis Trust?

The major nutritional cause of Laminitis is the microbial fermentation of non-fibrous carbohydrates such as sugar, starch and fructans in the hindgut. Sugar and starch (from cereals, oilseeds, pulses etc.) and fructans (from grass and alfalfa) reaching the hindgut are fermented by certain microbes that are usually present in very low numbers. Their fermentation end products, including lactic acid, create a microenvironment that encourages their growth. Within a very short time they become the dominant species, disrupting the integrity of the hindgut and producing increasing amounts of adverse products such as lactic acid, which have been strongly associated with laminitis.

Speedi-Beet contains negligible amounts of starch, the sugar is highly available (due to the micronizing process) and is absorbed in the small intestine and there are no fructans. So there is nothing in Speedi-Beet to disrupt normal hindgut function.

Why is Speedi-Beet good for laminitis?

Nutritional laminitis is caused by a number of factors, the most important being a disruption of normal hindgut function. A key factor in this is the presence of unabsorbed sugars and starch. These are fermented, producing lactic acid, which has a number of negative effects.

Speedi-Beet contains no starch, has one of the lowest sugar levels of any feed – including forage – and by replacing starchy hard feed, vastly reduces the opportunity for starch to be fermented in the hindgut. In addition Speedi-Beet’s own fermentation pattern has one of the lowest lactic acid levels of any fibre source. Without lactic acid in the hindgut, microbial disruption and toxin production does not occur and laminitic cues are avoided.

Why should I reduce the levels of my hard feed?

The horse needs high levels of fibre, both as a fermentable nutrient, but also to provide bulk in the gut to avoid colic, torsion and other physical problems. Supplementing forage with a higher calorie fibre source, like Speedi-Beet or Fibre-Beet, maintains gut integrity and provides extra slow release energy. This means that fewer calories need to be supplied by a mix or cube and is ideal for horses whose starch intake needs controlling.

You say Fibre-Beet is a forage replacer. How much Fibre-Beet and how little forage can I safely feed?

This depends on the forage and the activity of the horse. With a poor quality forage, you can replace up to half, as long as there is sufficient for trickle feeding. For better quality sources, up to one third.

