Total Mixed Rations –
A new concept for feeding horses

It is important to note that ‘TMRs’ and ‘Complete’ feeds are different. Many feed companies market their feeds as being “complete and balanced”, however one crucial point that prevents most of these complete feeds also being TMRs is the fact that they are NOT balanced for the horses forage requirement. To optimise digestive health, forage should make up at least 50% of the horses daily feed intake. Horses have evolved as grazing animals and their digestive tracts have therefore evolved to be suited to a high forage diet. However, as our demands on horses have increased over the years, we have had to look at other, more concentrated energy sources such as cereal grains and more recently fats to fulfil energy requirements. This is where the term ‘concentrate feed’ has evolved from and from there, the term ‘complete feed’ has also evolved. Most complete feeds are concentrated, cereal-based feeds and are now balanced for the mineral and vitamin requirements of the horse. However they lack any, or sufficient essential forage to be classified as a TMR, meaning supplementary forage must be fed alongside these feeds.

Many of the gastric health issues (such as Gastric Ulceration and Colic) can be caused, at least in part by feeding large quantities of cereal-grain based feeds, and/or a lack of sufficient forage in the diet. The effectiveness of TMRs for horses have recently been investigated in America by World Renowned Equine Nutritionist Dr. Sarah Ralston and others. They have concluded that Equine TMRs not only provide more efficient feed conversion for growing horses but also minimise sudden peaks in blood glucose and insulin associated with feeding conventional concentrate feeds. Researchers in both New Zealand and America have found that vices such as wood chewing (and wind sucking) that are often seen in stabled horses, and health problems such as gastric ulceration and colic, can be reduced in horses with more consistent and continuous access to forage provided by TMRs as they are more slowly consumed than conventional pelleted and textured cereal-based feeds (Waldron 2010, Ralston 2012). Ulceration and Colic can be classified as a TMR, meaning supplementary forage must be fed alongside these feeds.

“FiberEdge® and FiberSure® have been developed as equine TMRs that can fulfill all of your horses’ requirements, INCLUDING their requirement for forage, with a single feed.”

Fiber Fresh Feeds’ programme of nutrition research has developed two feeds that can be fed to horses not only as primary (base) feeds, but also as a sole feed or TMR. FiberEdge® and FiberSure® are the only two examples of equine TMRs in New Zealand. In addition to the benefits of conventional TMRs these two feeds also feature moist high energy HNF® Fiber and fresh Captured Grain®. The high energy HNF® present in all Fiber Fresh feeds provides a superior form of forage suitable for all horses. Captured Grain®, when fed in conjunction with HNF®, maximises the nutrient and energy potential of grain.

The advantage of a TMR is that it is nutritionally complete, and balanced for essential forage. Each 1kg of FiberEdge® and FiberSure® feed provides the correct proportion of forage, energy, protein and all vitamins and minerals needed by the horse. These forage dominant feeds can be fed either as the primary feed in the ration, or as the sole feed to satisfy 100% of the daily nutritional requirements of the horse. If used as a sole feed the daily feeding amounts will be higher, however, other feeds including forages such as hays and chaffs (or even pasture) would no longer be necessary. TMRs can be effective feeds for all horses but are especially useful if your horse is being boxed for long periods at a time, or where pasture quality is variable. FiberEdge® is formulated as a high energy TMR especially for horses in the highest level of competition, while FiberSure® has been prepared as a TMR for growing horses, stallions and pregnant and lactating mares with elevated nutrient and energy needs. When used as a sole feed, TMRs provide racehorse breeders, owners and trainers an exciting new alternative to existing feed options.

FiberEdge® and FiberSure® have been developed as equine TMRs that can fulfill all of your horses’ requirements, INCLUDING their requirement for forage, with a single feed.

*NAlthough Fiber Fresh feeds are moist and rehydrating horses must always have access to clean fresh water.

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