The Forage-First Horse

POSITIVE ROOTS
EQUINE BEHAVIOR & TRAINING

A cheat sheet to help you identify signs of nutritional imbalance and build a simple, forage-based diet that works.

Symptoms of Nutritional Deficiencies

Hoof Related Symptoms

- Cracking, chipping, or peeling hoof walls
- Poor or slow hoof growth
- Persistent sole sensitivity or thrush
- Flared, shelly hooves

May indicate Copper/Zinc inbalance or deficiency

Coat and Skin

- Sun-bleached coats, especially in bays and blacks
- Dull, dry, or brittle hair
- Skin flakiness or chronic skin issues
- Delayed or patchy shedding

Copper deficiencies often show in coat color. Skin and coat need adequate omega-3s too.

Muscle & Energy Concerns

- Weak topline or muscle wasting
- Poor stamina or recovery
- Girthiness or general sensitivity
- Muscle tightness after light work
- Inconsistent performance or focus

Deficiencies in Vitamin E, Selenium, and protein can contribute to these symptoms.

Behavioral & General Health

- Anxiety or increased spookiness
- Fertility issues
- Loose stool or inconsistent manure
- Delayed training or rehab progress
- Picky eating habits

Chronic low-grade inflammation and mineral imbalances can impact both gut and brain.

🔍 Know Your Forage

Forage Analysis is the most accurate way to balance your horse's diet. Compare results to NRC requirements.
If testing isn't feasible, use **regional forage averages**

What's in Your Hay?

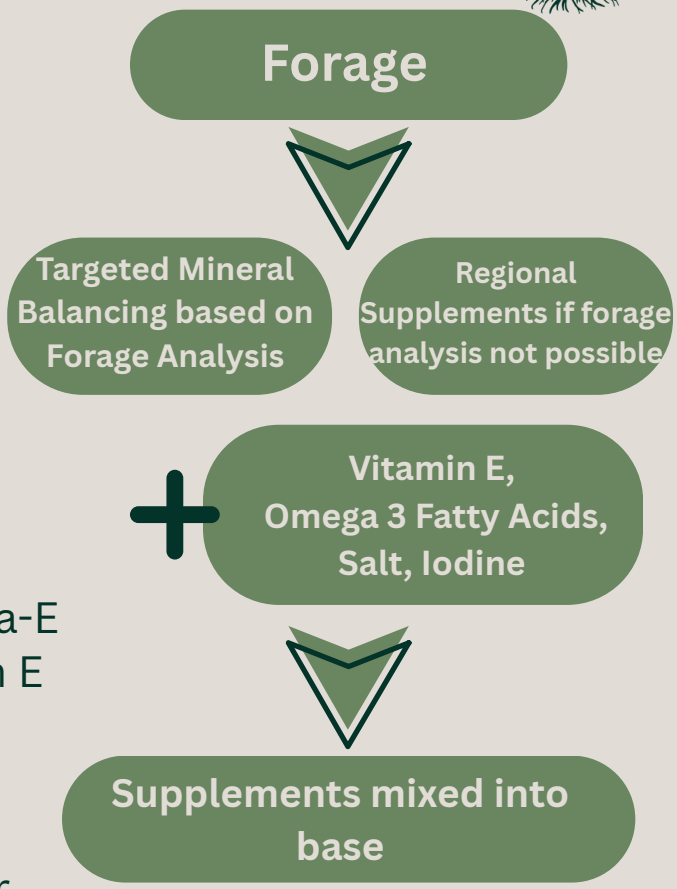
Likely deficient:
Copper
Zinc
Sodium

MAY be deficient:
Magnesium
Iodine
Selenium

Likely NOT deficient:
Protein
Calcium
Phosphorus
Potassium
Iron
Manganese

A Simple Forage Based Diet Plan

1. **Forage**
   - 1.5–2% of body weight per day
2. **Forage-Based Carrier**
   - Soaked hay pellets or beet pulp.
3. **Natural Vitamin E**
   - Start at 2,000 IU/day
   - Recommended brands: Emcelle, Black Horse Products Vitamin E, BioStar SunnE 1000
4. **Omega-3s**
   - Chia or flax are effective
   - Custom Equine Nutrition's Omega-E covers both omega-3 and vitamin E
5. **Trace Mineral Balancer**
   - Minimum targets for a 1000 lb horse for average hay:
     - 450 mg Zinc & 150 mg Copper (more if high iron)
     - 3.5 g Magnesium
     - 1-4 mg Iodine
     - 4 g Sodium
6. **Salt /Iodine (if not in balancer)**
   - 1–2 oz white salt (iodized or not) and/or free-choice loose salt



Budget-Friendly Option: Pete Ramey's "Cheater Diet"
Per 1,000 lbs bodyweight:
450 mg Zinc & 150 mg Copper
(double if iron is high)
2 tbsp plain white salt
📖 Learn more:
hoofrehab.com/Diet

Keep this guide handy and revisit it when assessing your horse's nutrition, hoof health, or behavior. Nutrition is the foundation for everything else!

POSITIVE ROOTS
EQUINE BEHAVIOR & TRAINING

Empowering you with science-based, compassionate equine care.

Supplement Comparison

POSITIVE ROOTS
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	Supplement	Cost/ Day	SE	Zinc	Copper	Iron	Vitamin E	Sodium	Iodine	Mg
More Ideal	Vermont Blend (50 lbs; 200 days)	$0.99	2 mg*	900	300	-	-	7 g	3 mg	6 g
	California Trace PLus (40 lbs; 160 days	$1.38	2 mg	750	300	-	1950 IU	-	3.5 mg	-
	KIS Trace (80 lbs;320 days)	$1.15	3 mg*	850	285	-	2500 IU	-	3 mg	4 g
	MadBarn Amino Trace+ (20 kg; 100 days)	$2.19	2 mg	760	300	20 mg	1250 IU	7.3 g	5 mg	11 g
	Equi-VM (20 lbs; 320 days)	$0.50	2.2 mg	870	280	-	1000 IU	1.7 g	1.2 mg	2.3 g
	Southwest Spectrum (40 lbs; 129 days)	$2.13	2 mg	900	300	-	4000 IU	-	4 mg	10 g
	Lone Star Trace (40 lbs; 101 days)	$3.21	2 mg	720	260	-	5000 IU	12.5 g	4 mg	6 g
Less Ideal	Triple Crown 30 (50 lbs; 50 days)	$0.80	-	454	136	227 mg	1000 IU	2.3-4.3 g	-	10.9 g
	High Point Grass (45 lbs; 240 days)	$1.04	1.5 mg	360	125	-	750 IU	3.4-5.1 g	2 mg	1.7 g
	Purina Enrich Plus (50 lbs; 50 days)	$1.00	1 mg	227	84	-	600 IU	2.7 g	-	4.1 g
	Based on Common Hay Analysis Ave.		Dependent on area	450+	150+	No added Iron	1000/500 lbs bodyweight	4+ g	1-4 mg	~3.5+ g