

**W**e have been asked frequently for various reasons, about hay alternatives. Fortunately, Horse Journal October 2003 lists various contacts for pelleted hay which we have reproduced in the sidebar. While there is no real substitute for really good grass hay, sometimes that is simply not an option. Our experience with hay cubes has not been positive; too many foreign objects have been found there (baling twine, twigs, etc.) and the quality of the hay tends to be poor.

Hay pellets can be an excellent possibility for senior horses with bad or no teeth or for sick or debilitated animals. The timothy ones have a lower carbohydrate rate than some other hays, so are preferable for most horses. We would feed hay pellets with **DYNAMITE® PGR**, top-dressed with an ounce of **DYNAMITE® Regular** and perhaps some **HES**, especially if the animal requires more caloric value. For those equids who are insulin resistant (any cresty horse, one who founders frequently, or who has long “yak” hair, etc.) or who should not eat grain (ponies, donkeys, many Arabs, Morgans, Pasos, etc.) use only **HES** rather than the **PGR**. Or for those horses requiring joint, muscle and nerve support, dress with **TNT** instead of the **Regular**; the **TNT** has extra ingredients which have made incredible differences in literally hundreds of horses. These combinations work incredibly well in place of the commonly available senior complete feeds which usually contain lots of alfalfa, oils and animal fats, preservatives, colorings, and other ingredients we prefer to avoid. When feeding hay pellets of any sort, however, do soak them thoroughly, especially for geriatrics who have lessened salivary capacity, to reduce the possibility of choke. All **DYNAMITE®** pellets readily break down with moisture, but many hay pellets require long soaking. This is especially important in the winter when many horses just refuse to drink enough water. In such cases, add ½-1 oz **DynaSpark** to the mixture, using about 1 gallon of soak water. And of course, never forget the **DynaPro** each feeding!

Some enterprising individuals have also successfully used a chipper/shredder from the garden store running their good grass hay through that, or, when

it's feasible, some have even spread hay on the lawn running over it with a lawnmower a couple of times in order to make the hay available to their geriatric. Whatever works for you!

Another option for those in areas where only alfalfa, which has too much protein and too much calcium to be fed as a full hay diet, is available, try finding some really good sweet smelling, clean **straw** (wheat, oat or barley) and mix that with the alfalfa about 50:50. According to Horse Journal, this mix will, when fed at appropriate amounts for each horse, “bring calories into the range of a good-quality grass hay, dietary crude protein 10-11%, and the calcium:phosphorus ratio improves from 7:1 down to about 3.5:1, which is within a tolerable range for an adult horse if the total amount of phosphorus in the diet is adequate.” We suggest providing **DYNAMITE® 1 to 1 Free Choice** to ensure adequate phosphorus and to bring the ratio down to the even more acceptable one of 1-2.5:1. Of course, all should be offered anyway: **NTM Salt, 1 to 1, 2 to 1** and **Izmine**. A straw mix still may not be appropriate for babies or weanlings who might require hay pellets if grass hay is unavailable. ■

#### HAY ALTERNATIVE CONTACTS

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- China Depot, Rhode Island, [www.chinadepot.com](http://www.chinadepot.com) 401-725-8141
- Sterrett Brothers Hay and Feed, Washington, [www.sterrettbroshayandfeed.com](http://www.sterrettbroshayandfeed.com) 425-822-9011
- Farmer's Mill and Elevator, Minnesota [www.assurancefeed.com](http://www.assurancefeed.com) 800-645-5648
- Hubbard Feeds, Minnesota [www.hubbardfeeds.com](http://www.hubbardfeeds.com) 507-388-9400
- Seminole Feeds, Florida [www.seminolefeed.com](http://www.seminolefeed.com) 800-683-1881
- Lucerne Farms, Maine [www.lucernefarms.com](http://www.lucernefarms.com) 800-723-4923
- Ontario Dehy Ontario, Canada [www.ontariodehy.com](http://www.ontariodehy.com) 877-289-3349
- Triple Crown Feed, Minnesota [www.triplecrownfeed.com](http://www.triplecrownfeed.com) 800-451-9916
- First Thunder Feeds, Colorado 800-361-7080