

'The key thing is a

International event rider Izzy Taylor is one of Britain's most exciting up and coming riders. With her horses competing at the top level it's crucial that she feeds for optimum performance, so Spillers® nutritionist Sarah Elphick visits her at home to answer her most pressing feeding questions



also help support glycogen recovery.

Q HOW should I best feed my youngsters during their first season eventing?

A AS with any other horse, maintaining hydration, feeding plenty of forage and providing a balanced diet should all be priorities. Look for fibre and oil based feeds containing controlled levels of starch to help maintain a calm temperament and prevent over-exuberant behaviour.

Q HOW do I keep my horses' energy up during the three days of a four-star?

A FIRSTLY, don't be tempted to increase or change your feed immediately before or during the event to compensate for increase in work. This constitutes a rapid dietary change and may increase the risk of colic or tying-up.

Maintaining hydration and electrolyte balance should be key priorities – a commercially prepared electrolyte which also contains dextrose/sucrose may help to support recovery.

Q A couple of my horses are reluctant drinkers. How can I coax them to drink more?

A FLAVOURINGS such as molasses or apple juice may help, but remember to make sure they are accustomed to drinking flavoured water at home first and always provide plain water as an alternative too.

Q IZZY asks: what should I feed to build up muscle on my horses?

A SARAH advises: diet is just one piece of the puzzle, but nutritionally the aim should be to maintain a healthy body condition score [see p4 for more on this] and ensure the diet provides a balanced supply of vitamins, minerals and quality protein.

Some horses may also benefit from a supplement containing amino acids, the building blocks of protein, and vitamin E, which may help to support muscle health. But these should always be given additionally and not as a replacement of a balanced diet.

Always make sure that supplements are covered by the UFAS BETA NOPS code.

Q SHOULD I be feeding my horses differently after an event? For example, how can I aid recovery?

A RECOVERY relies on several factors including health, fitness, rest, rehydration and the replacement of electrolytes.

But remember that the diet itself should not be significantly changed after an event as this could increase the risk of colic, but cereal-based feed should be reduced during any period of rest; as guide by half from the evening before until the evening after.

In order to replace lost electrolytes and aid rehydration, add in salt (one-two tablespoons of table salt and one tablespoon Lo-Salt) or a commercially prepared electrolyte alongside access to water and forage. Electrolyte supplements containing dextrose/sucrose may

SPILLERS® SAYS...

SPRING is a great time to reassess your horse's diet.

If you have a yard of 10 or more horses and would like to book a free feed consultation contact the Spillers team, tel: 01908 226626 or teamspillers@effem.com.

The SPILLERS® nutritionist will weigh and assess your horse free of charge, giving you unbiased advice on feeding and making sure you're ready for the season ahead.

Q SHOULD the way I feed and water my horse change when I'm at a competition? Or is it best to leave alone and just feed as I would when at home?

A THE metabolic effects of eating a meal last for several hours. As such, feeding concentrates less than five hours before competition is not recommended.

But feeding small amounts of hay is not detrimental and, in fact, will help to maintain a "fibre mat" in the horse's stomach. This will help to prevent what is



known as "gastric splashing".

Do not withhold water as this increases the risk of dehydration, fatigue and tying-up. Small amounts of water (half a bucket) can be offered during and after exercise – allowing a horse access to water directly after exercise will not cause colic or laminitis.

It's important to feed correctly after an event, too. Post-competition ensure that the horse's temperature, respiration and heart rate has returned to normal before feeding concentrate meals.



balanced diet'



Q IS there a performance difference between hay and haylage?

A WITH both hay and haylage it is the nutritional value and hygienic quality of forage that may affect the horse. Haylage is not automatically higher in energy, sugar or protein and in truth, the only way to assess the nutritional value of either hay or haylage is to have it analysed.

In regards to hygiene, poor harvest and/or storage conditions increase the risk of moulds, yeasts and dust, all of which may

impact on respiratory health and consequently performance.

Q SHOULD I re-evaluate my horses' feed at the start of every season even if I'm happy with their condition?

A RE-EVALUATING the horses' diets is sensible, even if it doesn't result in any immediate changes. Always make sure you are providing a balanced diet, particularly if you have reduced or adjusted their feeds during their rest period.

Q WHEN a couple of my horses get really fit, they become fussy and leave supplements and feed — what can I do?

A IT'S not uncommon for very fit horses to become fussy with their feeds, so try splitting your feeds and supplements into as many small meals as possible.

In some cases, a small amount of fenugreek herb (available in supermarkets) may help to tempt fussy feeders. Make sure you maintain fibre intake as a healthy gut will help maintain a healthy appetite.