

ESTIMATION OF PASTURE DRY MATTER INTAKE AND ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION IN GRAZING MANAGEMENT FOR HORSES

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Summary

Pasture is a valuable source of nutrients for grazing horses. Pasture can provide some or all of the horse's digestible energy, crude protein, vitamin A and E requirements; although pasture's ability to provide minerals is variable to limited. In order to fully realize the value of pasture, dry matter intake must be accurately estimated to account for intake of pasture derived nutrients. Several estimates of pasture dry matter intake have been published for horses grazing over periods ranging from 3 to 24 h. A pasture dry matter intake prediction equation was developed using these data. The equation is useful in accounting for pasture nutrient intake relative to requirements, as well as to determine the length of time horses should have access to pasture in order to consume a target intake (e.g., that necessary to consume daily maintenance digestible energy requirements and maintain body weight).