

What Are Horse Feed Cubes and Pellets?

Horse feed cubes and horse feed pellets are both forms of **compound feed** designed to complement a horse's **forage** intake. A horse feed company UK may offer both formats because they suit different horses, management systems and feeding goals. In simple terms, cubes are a more compressed, larger format, while pellets are smaller and more finely processed.

Both are usually used alongside a **forage-based diet**, rather than replacing forage altogether. They can support a horse's daily ration by providing extra **digestible fibre, starch, protein, fat, vitamins** and **minerals**. The best choice depends on how your horse eats, how much work it does, and what kind of nutrient support it needs.

Because cubes and pellets are both forms of compound feed, people often assume they are interchangeable. In reality, the **feed texture, particle size** and formulation can affect everything from palatability to feeding behaviour. That means the right choice is not just about convenience; it is about feed suitability, equine digestion and how the feed fits the rest of the diet.

How Cubes and Pellets Are Made

The **manufacturing process** for both formats usually begins with raw ingredients being selected, mixed and prepared for processing. The exact ingredient profile varies, but many feeds include sources of fibre, cereals, oil, protein ingredients, vitamins and minerals. The aim is to create a consistent nutritional composition that supports balanced nutrition.

One common step is **milling**, where ingredients are ground to a controlled size before further processing. This helps produce a uniform product and makes it easier to manage feed conversion and feed intake. After milling, many feeds undergo **steam conditioning**, where heat and moisture are added to soften the mix and improve the way it binds together.

For pellets, **pelleting** is the defining stage. The conditioned mash is forced through a die to create small, dense pieces. Cubes also involve compaction, but they are generally formed into a larger, more block-like shape. The processing method can influence digestibility, feed texture and how the horse responds to the feed.

Some owners worry that more processing automatically means lower quality. That is not always true. Processing can improve uniformity and help create feeds with steady nutrient density, especially when the goal is to deliver energy release and balanced nutrition in a practical form.

Key Differences in Texture, Size and Feeding

The most obvious difference between cubes and pellets is the physical form. Cubes are larger and have a coarser, more substantial texture. Pellets are smaller and smoother, with a finer particle size. That difference affects how the horse handles the feed, how quickly it eats, and how much chewing is required.

Chewing matters because it influences feeding behaviour and can affect how thoroughly feed is mixed with saliva before swallowing. While both forms are designed to be easy to feed, cubes usually encourage a little more chewing than pellets. This can be useful for horses that eat too quickly or need more time at the bucket.

Palatability can vary too. Some horses prefer the firmer, chunkier feel of cubes, while others like the smaller mouthfuls of pellets. Neither format is automatically better; the horse's preferences, management needs and

body condition all matter. A fussy eater may accept one format more readily than the other, especially if the ingredient profile is appealing.

Feeding management also differs. Pellets tend to break down more quickly in the mouth and may be easier to mix with other components of the daily ration. Cubes may suit horses that benefit from slower feeding and a more measured approach to feed intake. In both cases, the practical benefit is that you can tailor the ration more precisely around forage, workload and condition.

Nutritional Differences Between Cubes and Pellets

Nutrition is not only about shape. The real difference often lies in the formula behind the feed. Both cubes and pellets can be designed to provide digestible fibre, starch, protein and fat in different proportions, depending on whether the feed is intended for maintenance, work or condition support.

For example, some cube feeds are built as conditioning feeds, with higher nutrient density to support horses needing extra body condition or topline. Others are more forage-led and designed to be fed as part of a balanced ration with plenty of roughage. Pellets can also be formulated in the same way, so the format alone does not tell you the whole story.

The key nutritional question is how the feed fits the rest of the diet. A horse already receiving plenty of forage may only need a small amount of a balancer-style pellet to supply vitamins and minerals. Another horse, especially one in harder work, may need a more energy-dense cube with more starch or fat. The right choice depends on nutrient balance, digestive system health and the horse's management goals.

Digestibility can be influenced by processing, but it also depends on ingredient quality and formulation. A well-made pellet can be highly digestible, and a well-made cube can be equally effective. What matters most is whether the feed supports balanced nutrition without upsetting the horse's digestive system or creating unnecessary energy spikes.

Which Is Better for Different Types of Horses?

There is no single answer that suits every horse. The better format depends on the horse's workload, temperament, body condition and digestive needs. A horse feed company UK will often recommend feed based on the individual horse rather than on the format alone.

A **good doer** usually benefits from a feed with controlled calories, high fibre content and careful nutrient balance. For this type of horse, either cubes or pellets may work, provided the formula is low in unnecessary starch and supports a sensible daily ration. In many cases, the smaller portions and tighter nutrient density of pellets can make them practical for a good doer.

A **performance horse** often needs more energy release to support exercise, recovery and body condition. A cube may suit some performance horses because it can be designed as a conditioning feed with extra fat, digestible fibre and protein. Pellets can also work well if the ration needs to be concise, efficient and easy to balance.

A **laminitic horse** needs especially careful ration balancing. For this horse, the priority is usually low starch, controlled energy and dependable fibre content. The feed must support equine digestion without overwhelming the system. Either cubes or pellets may be appropriate, but the ingredient profile and starch level matter far more than the format.

A **young horse** may need a ration that supports growth, musculoskeletal development and balanced nutrition. In this case, digestible fibre, protein, vitamins and minerals are important, and the feed should be chosen to fit the animal's stage of development. The format should support easy intake and reliable feed conversion without encouraging overfeeding.

When to Choose Cubes Over Pellets

Cubes can be the better option when you want a feed that takes a little longer to eat and feels more substantial in the bucket. That makes them useful for horses that bolt their feed, horses that need a more deliberate feeding pattern, or horses that benefit from a product that works alongside **ad-lib forage** rather than replacing it.

Many owners choose cubes as a **forage replacer** when they need to top up a forage-led diet with extra nutrients and chewability. This is especially helpful if the horse needs added fibre but not a large amount of concentrate. The larger texture can support slower eating, which may be useful in management plans where feed intake needs to be more controlled.

Cubes are often chosen as a **conditioning feed** for horses that need to gain or maintain body condition. Because they can be formulated with protein, fat and fibre, they may support healthier weight gain without relying heavily on cereal starch. For some horses, that is a more comfortable way to increase nutrient density while keeping the ration practical.

If your horse does better with a more structured feeding experience, cubes can also fit neatly into the routine. The main point is that they support slow eating and can be paired with ample forage, making them a sensible choice for horses whose management needs favour a more measured daily ration.

When Pellets May Be the Better Option

Pellets may be the better option when you want a compact, easy-to-mix feed that fits neatly into a **balanced ration**. Because they are smaller and more uniform, they can be useful for accurate feeding and for horses that need a straightforward supplement feed rather than a bulkier ration.

For some horses, pellets offer **easy digestion** and reliable intake. A horse that struggles with larger pieces, or one that needs a softer-feeling feed, may find pellets more acceptable. That can be especially helpful in older horses, horses with dental challenges, or horses with a sensitive appetite.

Pellets are often a practical choice for a **fussy eater**. Their smaller particle size and consistent form can make them easier to mix with chaff, oil or other feed components. If palatability is important, a well-formulated pellet can improve feed intake without making the ration too heavy.

They are also useful when the aim is precise ration balancing. A supplement feed in pellet form can help you deliver vitamins and minerals in a consistent amount, with less waste and less sorting. That makes pellets a solid option when the focus is on balanced nutrition, controlled feed rate and straightforward daily management.

How to Feed Cubes and Pellets Safely

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Safe feeding starts with the right **feed rate**. Introduce any new feed gradually and make sure it fits within the horse's overall daily ration. Even a well-designed feed can cause problems if the amount is changed too quickly or if it is added on top of an already unbalanced diet.

Ration balancing matters because cubes and pellets are usually only one part of the feeding plan. The forage base should still provide most of the horse's intake, with concentrates added to meet specific needs. If the ration contains too much starch or energy for the horse's workload, body condition can become difficult to manage.

Water intake is another important factor. Horses should always have access to fresh water, especially when feeding dry cubes or pellets. Some owners choose **soaking feed** for horses that benefit from softer feed, but soaking should only be done if the product is suitable and the horse's individual needs justify it.

Sudden changes should be avoided. Any change in feed texture, ingredient profile or amount can affect equine digestion. A gradual transition gives the digestive system time to adapt and helps reduce the risk of digestive upsets. Watch body condition, manure consistency and feeding behaviour closely whenever you make a change.

Common Myths About Cubes and Pellets

One common myth is that one format is always higher in **quality** than the other. In reality, quality depends on the ingredients, formulation and consistency of the product, not simply on whether it is a cube or a pellet. A well-made pellet can be excellent, and a poorly made cube can be unhelpful.

Another myth is that pellets have less **nutritional value** because they are smaller. This is not true. Nutritional value comes from the recipe, not the shape. A pellet can contain the same protein, fat, vitamins and minerals as a cube, provided the formulation is designed that way.

Bifid UK

+44 800 422 0888

sales@bifid.co.uk

<https://bifid.com/uk/>

Some owners think processing always reduces digestibility. While excessive heat or poor manufacturing can affect feed, controlled **processing** such as steam conditioning and pelleting can improve consistency and make a feed easier to use. Digestibility depends on the ingredients, the process and how the feed fits the horse's digestive system.

A final myth is that all horses should prefer one format over the other. Horses are individuals. Their palatability preferences, feeding behaviour, workload and management needs all affect which feed works best. The best choice is the one that supports balanced nutrition and practical feeding without causing problems.

FAQ: Cubes vs Pellets

Are cubes or pellets better for horses?

Neither is automatically better. The best choice depends on the horse's needs, body condition, workload and feeding behaviour. Cubes are often better for slower eating and conditioning, while pellets can be useful for precise ration balancing and easy mixing.

Do cubes and pellets have the same nutritional value?

They can do, but only if the ingredient list and formulation are similar. The shape does not determine nutritional value. Always compare the ingredient list, nutrient balance, starch level, protein, fat and fibre content rather than assuming one format is stronger than the other.

Can all horses eat cubes and pellets?

Most horses can eat cubes or pellets, but the feed must suit the individual horse. A good doer, performance horse, laminitic horse or young horse may all need different nutrient profiles. Always match the feed to the horse's digestive health, workload and daily ration.

Should horse cubes or pellets be soaked?

Not always. Some feeds can be soaked, but many are designed to be fed dry. Soaking feed may help horses with dental issues or those that prefer a softer texture. Check the product instructions and use soaking only when it fits the horse's needs and digestive system.

How do I choose between cubes and pellets for my horse?

Start with your horse's management needs, body condition, workload and feeding behaviour. If you want slow eating and a more substantial feed, cubes may suit you. If you want a compact supplement feed or a balanced ration with precise delivery, pellets may be better. An experienced horse feed company UK can help you compare feed suitability based on the ingredient profile and overall feeding plan.