

# TCM Equine Summer Diet

By Don Doran, LMT, Equine Performance Consultant  
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According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM ) food therapy, eating specific foods, while avoiding others, can assist in helping to keep the body cooler during the extreme heat of summer.

Some suggestions for the TCM equine summer diet would include the following food groups:

## **Grains:**

If feeding grains during the summer months, and the horse is not in heavy training, don't use oats. Oats are considered a warming grain in TCM, best used in cooler conditions to create heat in the body. Barley is considered a cooling grain and is a better grain choice in the heat of the summer or hot climates. Corn, so often tagged as a hot feed actually is neutral in TCM.

If using bran in the ration, use wheat bran rather than oat bran, which is warming.

## **Forage**

The lighter the hay the better in the summer months. Grass hay or a mixed grass hay is the best choice during the heat.

One of the best cooling foods that is a favorite for just about every horse is watermelon.

Adding 2-4 sliced halves broken up, rind and all, and mixed with the grain or fed alone usually puts a smile on every horse's face.

This is a wonderful cooling/cold food that is economical, available and can be fed throughout the summer months.

Cucumber and celery are two other cooling foods that most horses enjoy the taste.

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Adding a few slices and cut stalks will help cool out the system.

Herbs that can be cooling to the body, such as mint and cilantro are a welcome addition in most horses diets. A few sprigs daily helps to keep the heat at bay.

When I had horses in the Caskills of New York we had several large pastures with streams running through them. During the summers I noticed that horses would congregate and drink from the same area on a regular basis.

Closer exploration revealed a field of mint just upstream. Horses love the taste and mint loves wet soil to grow in.

It is a nice cooling treat for hot conditions.

Foods to avoid during the summer include: garlic and oats as they are both heat producers.

Additionally any soybean oil based foods as they are considered warming.

There are numerous other foods that can help to cool the horse in high temperature conditions. Choosing and adding a few on a daily basis can add greatly to your horses comfort level through the dog days of summer.