



# BENCHMARK HORSE FEEDS are changing the game

Until the launch of Benchmark Feeds in 2020 there had been little innovation to reduce the starch loading in steam extruded and pelleted horse feeds in Australia. Over many years Australian horse feed manufacturers have been a significant consumer of mill run or mill mix, a high starch by-product of the flour milling industry. While many will argue that the inclusion of this material has nutritional merit, the main factor for its inclusion is undoubtedly its low cost.

As a rule of thumb, the higher the inclusion rate of mill run in a horse feed, the lower the price of the product. Many horse feeds labelled as "cool feeds" contain a high percentage of mill run and are therefore high in starch. For horses who are sensitive to grain starch they are far from "cool".

Because of its complexity, a feed mill is a slow-moving beast. It can be difficult and expensive to make changes to products or to bring new raw materials into a feedmill. Each raw material must be received, stored in silos, and conveyed around the mill before being incorporated into a feed. Many mills do not have the capacity to do this without replacing another raw material or committing to considerable capital investment.

While existing products can have their ingredients tweaked any real change demands that new products are developed. This not only adds complexity in the feedmill but for those feed companies who already have a bloated range of feeds on offer it simply means that sales are likely to be cannibalised within their range. If there is little or no prospect of increased sales, there is little appetite for real change.

Over the past few years, the educated horse owner has increasingly demanded feeds that are less reliant on grain starch and are more in tune with a horse's natural digestive processes. Horses are fibre fermenters and naturally derive their energy from the production of Volatile Fatty Acids (VFAs) in the hindgut (Microbiome). These fats provide energy for all bodily functions. There is no disputing the role of starch in an equine diet. It plays a vital role in high-intensity activities such as racing or polo cross where fast release energy is required, but like everything, it must be provided in the right balance and the feed must be fit for purpose.

Breeding feeds for example require the inclusion of grains to support the development of the foal in utero, particularly in the final trimester. This said, research has shown that high levels of sugars are one of the main causes of leg issues in foals. When fed in high concentrations to the mares, foals are more likely to experience long-term health issues. Giving foals and weanlings access to high starch/high sugar feeds can have a detrimental effect on bone and joint health.

GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT IS PARAMOUNT.

**Benchmark's fully steam extruded feed **Invest®** is new and innovative.**

By using highly fermentable soy hulls as the hero ingredient **Invest®** stimulates the production of Volatile Fatty Acids in the hindgut and minimises the fluctuations in blood sugar associated with high starch feeds. While extruded barley contributes to the energy profile the starch level remains a low 11.2%.

Importantly **Invest®** has a nutrient-dense specification and a balanced amino acid profile to support balanced bone and muscle development in youngstock.

You can access more information about our Benchmark Horse Feeds on our website [www.benchmarkfeeds.com.au](http://www.benchmarkfeeds.com.au)

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