

WINTER/SPRING 2023 - ISSUE 6

# BENCHMARK NEWS



## GREETINGS

Welcome to this winter/spring edition of the Benchmark newsletter.

We have just wrapped up our third year of trading which is a good time to take a pause and look at what has been achieved over the past year and lock in goals and plans for the coming year. Thanks to Benchmarkers like you we have enjoyed incredible sales growth and we are seeing more retail stockists coming on board every month, motivated to do so by the demand from their customers. We now have over 600 Benchmark stockists throughout Australia, which is a mighty achievement considering that when we launched in May 2020, right at the beginning of COVID restrictions, we had none.

Making our feeds readily available has been a key platform in our business and with the help of our fabulous distributor Australian Independent Rural Retailers (AIRR), we have well and truly exceeded our expectations. AIRR, has an impressive 9 state of the art warehouses, servicing every Australian State. They supply a vast array of products to over 1300 retail stores, half of which stock Benchmark. Their mantra is to encourage retailers to buy little and

often which not only helps their cashflow, but it means that new Benchmark stockists can buy a few bags rather than a pallet. This has helped us bring new stockist on board, many of whom started with a few bags and are now buying Benchmark in full pallet quantities as the demand from their customers has grown.

Another step that gives me immense satisfaction is the introduction of our full product range into New Zealand.

We have been making both Perfect Mash and Super Fibre Mash in New Zealand for some time now but our extruded and micronised products must be manufactured in Australia.

Our full range is now available throughout the North Island and we expect to have stock in the South Island soon.

**Exciting times.**

## Price increases and cost of living pressure

Maintaining our lifestyles has never been more challenging, and even more so when horses are involved. Like all businesses, we have been impacted by a series of raw materials, freight, energy and manufacturing price increases over the past year. We have managed to absorb these up until now, but sadly we are unable to continue to do this without compromising the long-term viability of Benchmark.

We have done our best to keep the increases to a minimum. While we understand this impact for Benchmarkers, we thought it is only fair to let you know in advance. The new pricing will come into effect on stock delivered to our distributor from November 1st 2023.

Kind regards,  
Colin Price



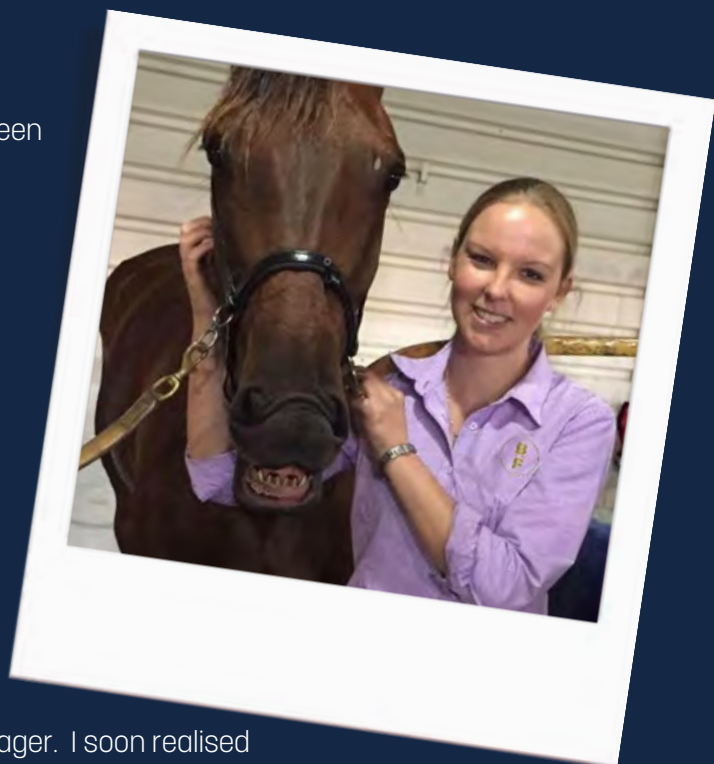
## Renee Margetts - WA Territory Manager & Team Leader Nutrition

Based in Western Australia, Renee has been a pillar of our business virtually since we began. Many of you who have emailed or messaged us for support and advice will have been helped by Renee.

Renee has been instrumental in building the Benchmark business in WA, where it is a major brand and holds a significant share of the equine feed market, more than holding its own against local and eastern state feeds.

Renee is a qualified Vet Nurse and has completed an Equine Nutrition course to further her skill set. Renee is smart, cheerful and incredibly helpful. She is also very persistent which I first experienced back in about 2007 when I was National Sales Manager for Mitavite. Renee had decided that she was going to work for Mitavite and set about convincing me that she was just the person we needed, even though we weren't looking for anyone at the time. Over about two years she worked her magic, and eventually Renee became WA State Sales Manager. I soon realised the benefit of working with Renee, so it was an easy transition to Benchmark.

Renee is a friend and colleague I am delighted that she has accepted the position of Team Leader - Nutrition for Benchmark. This role will dovetail with her Territory Manager responsibilities in WA.







# PERFECT FEED IS IN THE BAG

By Sunday McKay - Editor EQLife

Equestrianlife

**After a long career in the horse feed business, Colin Price knew there was room for innovation and a shake-up of what equestrian horses really want in their feed bins.**

Instead of retiring at 65, Colin Price wanted to draw on his experience and give back to the equestrian community a radically different concept of what horses really need to perform at their natural best.

"I thought, do I take out a Jim's Mowing franchise or do I stick in the business that I know so well and in which I've developed so many brilliant relationships? I had some ideas that I wanted to pursue which I couldn't do previously, so it was an opportunity, really. I didn't jump into it," says Colin. "I sounded out the people that I thought would be valuable partners in a new business and they were all very supportive, so that drove my decision."

With wife Suzie and a small but enthusiastic staff, Benchmark Feeds is quietly making inroads into the market by word of mouth. Benchmark's belief that feed should deliver fibre fermentation without the traditional starch and sugar loading is aimed at producing a healthier and happier horse. Colin tells us how it all began - and why their paper packaging is also proving a big hit!

**EQ LIFE: Why did you create Benchmark Feeds and what gaps in the market does it cover?**

COLIN: Our goal was to create a range of equestrian feeds primarily that got rid of the starch and sugar. The Australian horse feed industry, rightly or wrongly, is driven by grain starch.

And the biggest ingredient in most feed mills that create equestrian feed is millrun, which is a byproduct of flour milling. It's 20% starch which makes most feeds quite starchy and it's a fairly inexpensive material to add.

Generally speaking, the lower cost products have more millrun. They are higher in starch - even though they may be labelled "cool" and put in a blue bag, they still are quite starchy. And to some horses that impacts temperament and behaviour and health because horses are not natural grain starch digesters, they are fibre digesters or fibre fermenters. We wanted to head down that path and worked out a strategy to create a range of feeds that allowed us to do that.

**EQ LIFE: Do you feel that that's what sets Benchmark Feeds apart from other products in the market?**

COLIN: Absolutely. I've had quite a lot of experience with using highly fermentable fibres - or "super fibres" as they're generally known - and there's only a small bunch of those that are used in the horse feed industry. The most successful is probably beet pulp over the years with some great products. And there are others that are based on soy or lupin hulls. These are highly fermentable fibres that digest quickly and efficiently and create more energy per kilo than long-stem fibre.

**"We use fermentable fibre for the energy source... rather than relying on grain starch."**





The first load bound for NZ earlier this year.



Receiving a 'Feed Innovation Award' for Perfect Mash at Equitana .

So, very different to hay and pasture and chaff, which are also clearly important to a horse's digestive system and health. Horses need long-stem fibre for a whole lot of reasons, but the fermentation of that fibre is quite inefficient and they have to eat a lot of it, which is why horses eat 22 hours out of 24. They've got to eat a lot of it to get sufficient energy for all bodily functions. It's a high-volume, low-energy intake and a slow fermentation process. Using a highly fermentable fibre accelerates that natural process and creates more energy per kilo and a lot faster. Basically, the energy from fermentable fibre is the same as grain starch, but it's obviously fat-based and not glycogen type energy, so it's a very natural process.

What set us apart was that we took this concept of highly fermentable fibre, which has been used as a topper for a variety of rations, and we've bought that ingredient - mainly soy hulls - into being an integral part of every feed that we make. We use that fermentable fibre for the energy source in our extruded feed, for example, rather than relying on grain starch. The energy that is provided is natural fat-based volatile fatty acids rather than short-term, high-starch glycogen type energy.

**EQ LIFE:** You're also focused on pre and probiotics. Why are these so important?

**COLIN:** Probiotics are critical and gut health is critical to horse health. In a more natural environment horses eat mostly fibre and their guts are normally well balanced because they're not being disturbed with other ingredients like grain starch. Obviously, there's other factors involved in health, but as far as gut health goes, normally a high-fibre, low-starch diet will encourage a good, healthy microbiome. So very good health internally.

What we discovered was that when we add high-quality probiotics to a fermentable fibre a couple of things happen. It provides an express delivery service to the hindgut, so it doesn't destroy or break down the efficacy of the probiotic as you would when you're adding it with a grain starch-based diet or feed. Putting it with a fermentable fibre enhances the efficacy and the activity of the probiotic, and the results are dramatic. We get tremendous feedback on our feeds where they make a rapid change to coat and condition with horses.



## “We get tremendous feedback on our feeds...”

And I really think it's more the fermentable fibre probiotic effect than the vitamins and minerals which are there because they would take longer to work. Gut health can turn quite quickly when you can build the population of beneficial gut flora. I think this is what has made such a difference in our feeds, it's that combination of highly fermentable fibre and probiotic, and we're developing that premise as we go forward.

### **EQ LIFE: Talking about expanding, what are the next steps in this journey for Benchmark Feeds?**

COLIN: Our main area of activity has been the equestrian sector because we find them fabulous to engage with and horse health is paramount to those people; equestrian people love their horses and love what they do and love their sport. We've created a range of feeds in that market largely staying away from the commercial end of the horse feed market.

**People think horse feed is horse feed, but in fact it's really segmented. You know, talking to a pony club kid or a pleasure rider or a western pleasure or an event rider, showjumper or dressage person is totally different from one to the other; but when you consider the commercial end of the market, talking to a thoroughbred stud manager, they're a very different proposition.**

So, we've stayed away from the commercial end of the market to a degree; our feeds really fit into that equestrian market. But what we offer is just as applicable in those commercial markets as far as the fibre story goes, because we know from history that thoroughbred horses are also prone to gut issues because of their lifestyle, the way they are managed, and their limited access to fibre. There's a huge amount of ulcer treatment sold for daily treatment in thoroughbred stables in Australia to counter the effects of poor feed management and lack of fibre intake.

We've created a product for that market which adds more energy derived from highly fermentable fibre but reduces the overall starch loading of a race ration without changing the race feed that they feed. The race feeds normally would be 20 to 30% starch and they may be feeding 4 to 6 kilos a day, so it's a huge starch burden. We can provide them with a product that not only adds more energy

to the overall ration by stimulating volatile fatty acids, but it reduces the overall starch and sugar level because we're offering 1% starch and not 20 to 30%. So, doing the math, you can actually pull back the starch loading but increase the energy - and also deliver fabulous probiotics to the hindgut with the fibre, which will help the ulcer situation as well and certainly alleviate a lot of those issues. It's a natural progression for us to make that type of product available into that market.

### **EQ LIFE: What are your most popular products?**

COLIN: Our flagship product is Perfect Mash. It is based on highly fermentable fibres - there's no grain in it, it's 1% starch and less than 5% sugar. It's what we call a complete feed - it provides a great majority of the nutrients required to make a complete balanced ration. So we call it a complete feed in that context; it contains vitamins, minerals, electrolytes, pre and probiotics and antioxidants. We've found Perfect suits probably 60 or 70% of the equestrian horse market because the energy you get from it not only helps with conditioning, it helps support workload.

It's very good for horses with any metabolic issues - and a lot have, you know, a pony that's prone to laminitis, for example, you want to keep away from starch and sugar. This is the perfect solution to that. Old horses with dental issues that can't chew hard feed, it's perfect for that. There's a wide range of horses that suit this product.

To read the full article >

<https://eqlifemag.com.au/issues/issue-93/perfect-feed-is-in-the-bag/>





# #feedforthe future

## EQUIFEST TAUPO

Friday 13th October - Sunday 15th October  
Stand A43

### WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU AT EQUIFEST, Taupo!

We have a stand booked and we look forward to seeing you all there!

With a focus on creating a festival of all things equine, Equifest combines education, competitions, shopping and entertainment - over three days.

Inspiring crowds with educational seminars from industry experts to fierce competition and spectacular Nightshows.

Visitors to the event can also shop till they drop with avenues of exhibitors selling everything from horse tack and horse floats to lifestyle products. Equifest is a "must see" event.

<https://www.equifest.co.nz>







# SPRING FEEDING

Spring feeding is challenging at the best of times, especially if you have horses or ponies that are at risk of, or suffer from laminitis and other metabolic issues.

Our mashes are ideal for horses and ponies at risk of laminitis, Cushings, IR, PSSM or EMS and for horses and ponies that cannot tolerate grass and who react to feeds high in starch and sugar.

Our three mashes contain highly fermentable super fibres (super fibres stimulate fermentation, helping to protect the delicate micro flora balance in the hind gut).

- All of our mashes have Agrimos® pre-biotic and Yea-Sacc® pro-biotic.
- Low starch and sugar
- No added molasses
- Grain free and genuinely non heating
- Contain natural antioxidants

## PICK A MASH TO SUIT YOUR HORSE'S REQUIREMENTS

- Perfect Mash is a low carb complete cool feed
- Balancer Mash is a concentrated, low carb nutritional supplement
- Super Fibre Mash is an excellent fibre addition to any of our complete feeds and pairs exceptionally well with Balancer Mash.

You can find meal plans on our website along with the full nutritional and product information. Or you can contact us via messenger or email [support@benchmarkfeeds.com.au](mailto:support@benchmarkfeeds.com.au)

[www.benchmarkfeeds.com.au](http://www.benchmarkfeeds.com.au)



# MANUKA HAYLAGE

## Health Food for Horses

Lucerne Haylage is made from 100% premium lucerne and is 100% dust-free.

### Premium Nutrient Value

Haylage is a health food for horses ensiled 2 days after harvest before nutrients are lost through evaporation.

### Low Non-Structural Carbohydrate (NSC) Level

Haylage contains just 2.5% NSC on an as fed basis, making it perfect for horses that are prone to laminitis.

### High Moisture Content

It resembles a horse's natural diet of moist pasture, making it excellent for endurance and performance horses.

### Long Fibre Length

Encourages more chewing to produce saliva which in turn helps to maintain normal gut health function.

### Aussie Grown

Manuka Haylage is an Australian grown product and not subject to the supply issues faced by similar imported products.



100% DUST  
& WEED FREE



LAMINITIS  
FRIENDLY



LOW SUGAR  
NSC 2.5%



TRACEABILITY  
BACK TO  
PADDOCK

Manuka Haylage is an excellent fibre source and a great companion feed to any of our Benchmark Horse Feeds. #haylage

Manuka Haylage is great for every horse, especially:

- Thin or old horses and breeding mares with high nutrition needs.
- Horses with dust allergies or respiratory disease.
- Horses prone to laminitis that need to be fed a low NSC (sugar) diet.
- Horses travelling or not drinking well when away from home.
- Endurance and performance horses needing calcium and hydration during competitive rides.



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#healthfoodforhorses



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Head to our website and use our handy store locator to find a stockist near you  
<https://www.benchmarkfeeds.com.au/stockist-locator-aus/>



## CONTACT US

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