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FEEDING AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR RACEHORSES IN TURKEY

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to gather information on feeding practices, and to identify nutrient imbalances of racehorses in Turkey. 134 racehorses who visited the TJK (Turkish Jockey Club) Racecourse Equine Hospital in Istanbul were referred for professional nutritional advice in 2013. Each horse was examined and body weight (BW), body condition score, exercise level, feeding practices, reasons for the veterinary visit as well as feed and supplement intake were recorded. Intakes of energy, starch, crude nutrients, and minerals were calculated and compared with NRC [15] recommendations. Descriptive data were calculated using commercial statistical software (IBM SPSS Statistics 24, Chicago, IL). The median age of the population was 3 years. The mean BW of the horses was 423.7 ± 38.4 kg and BCS was $4.4/9 \pm 0.7$. Nearly all (99.2 %) horses were fed grass hay and 61 % of the horses received alfalfa as well. The average forage intake was 1.08 ± 0.42 % of BW/d. The average intake of concentrate was 1.2 ± 0.46 % of BW. Forty nine percent of the horses were fed supplements and only 12 % received oil. The mean DE intake was 1.03 ± 0.26 MJ DE/kg BW^{0.75} for thoroughbreds and 0.97 ± 0.19 MJ DE/kg BW^{0.75} for Arabians. The calculated mean starch intake was 5.0 ± 2.2 g/kg BW and the sugar intake was 1.2 ± 0.4 g/kg BW. Communication between horse owners/trainers and the equine nutritionists is needed with regard to formulating a proper diet for each horse.

Keywords

Race horse; Equine Nutrition; Feeding Practices; Survey

Introduction

Nutrition is an important aspect of health in all species. In horses, nutritional imbalances can contribute to various disease conditions such as gastric ulcer, colic, musculoskeletal problems and obesity [9].

A number of studies have been published related to feeding and management practices of horses in other countries [4,5,7,9,11,16,17]. Common feeding practices range from feeding traditional home cereal-based mixes to various forms of manufactured feeds. Common additions include various types of vegetable oil, succulents, one or more vitamin and mineral mixes, herbal mixes, joint supplements and certain ergogenic agents with performance-enhancing claims. Many horse products are available on the market, with promises ranging from behavioral modification to increasing athletic performance. Dietary supplementation information also is available from several studies [2,3,10] and overall it

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