

Weight loss in horses can be either intentional or unintentional and must be managed year-round.

“Good doers” tend to gain weight easily, so owners often promote weight loss during winter through restricted grazing, grazing muzzles, soaked hay, and increased exercise, to prepare for spring grass growth and likely weight gain.

In contrast, horses that struggle to maintain weight need extra feeding and careful management, with spring and summer grazing helping them gain condition before winter.

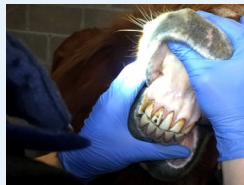
Regardless of type, any unexpected weight loss should be investigated and addressed immediately.

Weight loss in horses can be caused by a variety of factors, including medical issues, dietary deficiencies, environmental conditions, and social dynamics. Lets look at these a little closer.

## MEDICAL ISSUES

### Dental Problems:

Dental issues, such as sharp enamel points or missing teeth, can make it difficult for horses to chew their food properly, leading to reduced feed intake and weight loss. Regular dental check-ups are essential to ensure proper chewing and digestion.



### Parasites:

A heavy parasite load can cause significant weight loss by affecting nutrient absorption and overall health.

### Gastric Ulcers:

The exact cause of weight loss in horses with EGUS is related to the ulceration and damage to the stomach lining, which can lead to poor appetite, reduced food intake, and subsequent weight loss. It is important to note that weight loss can also be a symptom of other health issues, so a thorough veterinary examination is necessary to diagnose EGUS accurately.

## DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

### Inadequate Nutrition:

Horses may not be receiving enough calories or nutrients from their diet. Poor-quality hay or overgrazed pastures can lead to insufficient energy intake.



### Feed Quality:

Even if a horse appears to eat well, the quality of the feed matters. Low-quality forage can result in inadequate nutrition, leading to weight loss.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

### Extreme Weather:

Horses may lose weight during cold winters as they expend more energy to stay warm, or during hot summers when their appetite may decrease due to heat.



### Social Dynamics:

In a herd, a lower-ranking horse may be bullied or pushed away from food, leading to inadequate intake and weight loss.

## MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

### Increased Exercise:

If a horse's activity level increases without a corresponding increase in feed, it may lead to weight loss.



### Age:

Older horses often experience weight loss due to a combination of factors, including dental issues and decreased metabolic efficiency.

If a horse is losing weight, it is crucial to conduct a thorough evaluation, including a veterinary examination, to identify the underlying cause. Addressing the issue may involve dietary adjustments, improved management practices, and medical treatment as necessary. Regular monitoring of body condition can help maintain a healthy weight in horses. Your veterinary surgeon will be able to assist with a suitable plan specific for your horse.

