



## The Vet's Corner

Sabine Straka talks with local vets, and other specialists, to find out how best to help pets through food and nutrition. They were glad to share their expertise and experience through a common love of animals and openness to their needs.

- **Interview partner: Madeleine Bader - The graduate pharmacist works in quality management at Kräuter Mix GmbH, Abtswind, Germany. She has over 25 years of experience with horses and is a horse owner herself. Kräuter Mix specializes in the production of air-dried herbs, vegetables and spices. The company also supplies the herbal products in various processing forms as individual ingredients and mixtures to the pet food industry.**



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### What do you consider to be particularly important in animal nutrition?

It should be balanced, as natural as possible and free of additives. A plant-based diet, for example using medicinal herbs as medicinal and supplementary feed, can make a valuable contribution to prevent diseases and to remedy illness.

### What should high quality plant-based horse feed be like?

It is characterized by a high roughage content, is free of toxic plants and does not smell moldy or musty and looks correspondingly impeccable. The differences can also be seen in microbiological tests. Apart from this, the diet should be tailored to the horse's life situation, age, breed, state of health and use, for example as a sport horse, leisure horse or broodmare. The composition of the feed and its ingredients are based on this.

### What does "complete" nutrition mean for horses?

In 1955, the German Society for Nutrition stated that a complete diet in the scientific sense is a diet in which all necessary components are contained in sufficient quantities and through which the energy requirement is adequately covered. Although this definition refers to humans, in my view it can be transferred to horses and means that the feeding of supplements is not absolutely necessary.



### What should be fed additionally in certain intervals?

This cannot be answered in a general way and depends on the condition of the horse. In the case of deficiency symptoms, it makes sense to supplement the feed. If, for example, hay or grass grows on soil that contains little selenium, it can be beneficial to specifically counteract and administer this trace element. The prerequisite is a prior blood analysis of the horse and that the selenium administration is not overdosed. Magnesium can also be a useful supplement, preferably with valerian, lemon balm or hops for calming and muscle relaxation, either individually or in combination with the feed.

### Do you think herbal supplements are useful for horses?

Under certain circumstances, feeding with it can be quite useful. For an old horse suffering from osteoarthritis, devil's claw is a good choice. Also

meadowsweet, turmeric, frankincense and willow bark have proven to treat orthopedic pain.

### Which medicinal plants are particularly important for the health of horses?

There is no specific recommendation for a healthy horse. The administration of medicinal herbs always depends on the individual case. For example, thyme, which also has a prophylactic expectorant effect, helps against respiratory complaints, which are often chronic.

### Which diseases can be prevented with medicinal herbs or achieved relatively much prophylactically?

There are several, for example, pain relief for osteoarthritis in old age, gastrointestinal problems and stress. For sport horses, however, care must be taken that no doping substances are administered through medicinal herbs.

### Have you observed any changes in plant-based diets for horses in recent years. If so, which ones?

In the past, there was simply hay, oats and water. Today, horse owners are increasingly concerned about sensible nutrition and have higher demands, which are also covered by the manufacturers in many ways. In the meantime, a feed is created for every purpose and every area of application. In my view, this development will continue in the coming years.

### Which herbal active ingredients or vital substances are suitable for prevention and treatment in horses, e.g. for joints, coat, bones?

For joint problems, for example, devil's claw and willow bark are suitable and are generally used to relieve pain. Turmeric, on the other hand, can be helpful for existing problems. For the coat, for example, calendula can be administered.

### How can diseases in horses be cured or prevented with herbal agents?

Through targeted selection and sensible dosage, ideally in consultation with a veterinarian.

### What would you like to see from pet food manufacturers?

Since there is a large, almost unmanageable range of pet food in these days, I would like to see manufacturers expand their personal buying advice, especially via telephone hotlines, so that it is easier for customers to keep track of things. In addition, I am always surprised which products are declared as animal feed and which are declared as pharmaceuticals. For pharmaceuticals, there are usually stricter requirements for the content of ingredients; this is usually not the case for animal feed. 🐾

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