

# Making It Through the Tough Times

Reprinted from my blog post of May 05, 2009

<http://desertequinebalance.blogspot.com/2009/05/time-are-tough.html>

I work with a few people who simply can't afford a basic commercial supplement, even the very cost-effective [HorseTech](#) flax-based supplements (including AZ Regional Mix or Rod's standard products).

A healthy horse doesn't *need* all the extras included in many supplements, such as biotin, methionine, probiotics, etc. As long as requirements are met, pasture or good quality hay with some supporting trace minerals and salt will provide what most horses not in intense work need.

Horses on hay only (often the case in the Southwest) should receive a source of Omega-3 fatty acids (flax) and vitamin E. Horses on good pasture usually are well supplied with these during grazing season.

If you are willing to trade off some convenience, this is what I suggest when money is tight:

- Buy the best hay you can find - this is not the area to skimp in.
- Fresh ground flax - 4 oz/day (one full cup). Purchase 50 lb bags, grind once a week and store in freezer or refrigerator.
- Poly copper and poly zinc - 1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon/day. (Available from [HorseTech](#) or [Uckele](#))
- Vitamin E - 2,000 IU. Use human gel caps - the 400 IU size are usually barely noticed and most horses just eat them right down when mixed in their feed. The oil base improves absorption - this is more important than whether the vitamin E is "natural" or synthetic.
- Iodized table salt - minimum 1 ounce, up to 3 ounces for idle horses and more for working horses.
- Selenium - generally 2 mg/day if not in a high selenium area. If in doubt about your horse's selenium status, ask your vet to check whole blood levels. (Selenium yeast from [Platinum](#))
- Chromium - only if hay is grown in arid conditions where it is likely deficient. 2 mg/day for working horses, more for an IR horse, none for idle horses. (Chromium yeast from [Platinum](#))

Along with quality hay, the best thing you can give your horse is exercise. When we confine our horses, it is our obligation to provide them with as much turn out and movement as possible. Lack of exercise can not be fixed with a "supplement".

The best treat? A good grooming. Besides being inexpensive, it provides exercise for you and an opportunity to bond with your horse. But a healthy inexpensive "food" treat is split peas from your grocery store. Crunchy, yummy and they have a complete amino acid profile.

Does your working horse need a little more in the way of protein, calories and energy? Use a 50/50 mix- by weight - of beet pulp and oats (or alfalfa and oats). This is pretty well balanced for major minerals - and most horses will enjoy a beet pulp/oat mash after a workout. Don't forget the extra salt to replace sodium and chloride losses Unless you're doing intense work, there's no need for commercial electrolytes - many don't supply enough sodium and chloride and the feed will replace potassium and calcium.

You can give your horse what he needs without breaking the bank. Of course, basic hay/forage testing will help you do this more precisely - and is usually the most cost effective method, but the suggestions above will ensure your horse is getting the basics. If your horse has special needs (pregnant, nursing, growth, high level intense work, illness) they may require other additions - but this also can usually be done without costing a small fortune.

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See my website [www.Desertequinebalance.com](http://www.Desertequinebalance.com) for a list of resources and reading.