

Horses choose multiple forages in different locations.



Not only do horses like a choice of forage; it appears that they prefer to find their food in different places.

Results of a recent study suggests that providing multiple and single forages in several places may benefit the horses behaviour.

Most stabled horses are provided with hay in only one place. This limits their natural patchgrazing behaviour. How would they behave if they had a choice of locations?

Dr Debbie Goodwin and colleagues conducted a small series of trials to evaluate the behavioural responses of stabled horses given the opportunity to choose between two locations providing either single or multiple forages.

Horses were given the opportunity to choose between stables containing the single or multiple forages. Overall, they tended to spend more time in the stable with the multiple forages. Some horses moved between the stables several times.

The trial was repeated, this time using the horses' preferred forage as the single forage. Even though their favourite forage was available, horses still moved from one stable to the other.

The researchers suggest that this may indicate that horses are motivated to move between foraging locations regardless of the palatability of the forage. So, it may be beneficial for the horses' behaviour to provide them with multiple and single forages in different places.

To find out more go to
<http://www.equinescienceupdate.co.uk/multfor.htm>

*Source: Equine Science Update e-news
Reports from the world of equine science. April 2007*