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[www.GettyEquineNutrition.com](http://www.GettyEquineNutrition.com)

*Nutrition services for all life stages*

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## **A SERVING OF PATIENCE TO BALANCE SPRING GRAZING**

“Now that spring is here, we need to take it slowly when transitioning any of our horses from hay to pasture,” says equine nutritionist Juliet M. Getty, Ph.D. “And for those of us with insulin resistant horses,” she adds, “we may also need a dose of patience.”

The first spring sprouts are actually lower in sugars and starch (non-structural carbohydrates—NSC) because they use all that energy to promote their own rapid growth. But horses crave fresh grass and will eat volumes of it, making their overall NSC consumption really high—dangerously high for horses who are overweight, cushingoid, or who have experienced insulin-related laminitis.

Once the grass has grown a few inches, it is able to synthesize NSC (via photosynthesis), increasing NSC concentration and slowing growth. With changes in temperature, rainfall, grazing (or mowing), and sunlight exposure, the NSC levels ebb and flow so there is no way to specifically know how much NSC is present. Therefore, the proper management of laminitic horses is to limit the amount of grazing time, so the overall consumption of NSC is controlled.

To be safe, here are the rules:

- When the night temperature is below 40 degrees F, the grass is too high in NSC day or night.

Once the night time temps are above 40 degrees:

- The lowest NSC level is before the sun rises.
- The highest NSC level is in late afternoon, after a sunny day.

## Hoofcare Essentials®

There is no exact “best time” to turn out your horses on pasture. Generally speaking once the night time temps are above 40 degrees, it’s safest before dawn, until approximately 10:00 am, and then again at night, starting at around 11:00 pm. Start slowly, offering hay when horses are not on fresh grass.

Finally, test your pasture! Yes, testing is not only for hay. It will take some of the guesswork out of knowing which times are best.

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