



BEDDING OPTIONS

Which bedding is the best
for horses?



Regardless of how the loosebox or lying area is managed (alternating bedding on wood/ concrete or rubber flooring with reduced bedding), horse owners are faced with a wide range of options when choosing the right bedding for their horses. Various bedding options with different properties are available. In addition to actual management, the quality and type of bedding also have an impact on stable hygiene and the stable climate and, therefore, directly affect the health and well-being of your horse. Moreover, labor and cost efficiency factors also play a key role. In this article, we address the importance of the „right“ bedding for horses and provide valuable tips on how to make the best decision.

The meaning of the right bedding for horses

Most horses are kept in individual looseboxes. This is where they tend to spend most of the day, often up to 20 hours or more. Whether horses like to lie down and do so for long enough depends, among other factors, on the quality of the ground. When it comes to urinating, horses prefer soft, absorbent ground.

Bedding in horse stables is more than just flooring – it has a **direct impact on stable hygiene and the stable climate** and, therefore, **affects the health and well-being of the animals**. For instance, it absorbs urine and **reduces ammonia emissions**, which in turn reduces the risk of respiratory diseases. **Dust and mold** contamination in stables is also directly related to the bedding used.

Species-appropriate husbandry and correct bedding in the horse loosebox go hand in hand and are becoming exceedingly important for legislators: According to the **German Animal Welfare Act (Article 2)**, any person keeping, caring for or required to care for an animal „must provide the animal with food, care and housing appropriate to its species, its requirements and behavior“. The demands are defined even more precisely in Section 3.2 „Floor and bedding“ of the **German Guidelines for Good Animal Welfare Practice for the Keeping of Horses**: These guidelines expressly recommend suitable bedding for all lying areas to ensure sufficiently dry surfaces. In plain language, this means: **If you want to keep your horse in a species-appropriate manner, you should always use the right bedding!**



How much bedding does a horse need?

When it comes to ensuring an optimum amount of bedding, the common rule is: **Better too much than too little**. If too little bedding is used, there is a risk that the horse will have to sleep on a bare floor, as it eats the bedding or pushes it to the side. The amount of bedding also depends on the absorption capacity of the bedding material, the amount of excrement produced by the horse and the time it spends in the loosebox.

A considerable amount of bedding can be saved when using BELMONDO® rubber flooring. The mats guarantee a deformable, warm and slip-resistant floor at all times and offer horse-friendly comfort – no matter how much bedding is used. A minimum amount of bedding to absorb moisture is sufficient. Less bedding means less dust, and the mats can be kept clean quite easily. **Loosebox mats improve stable hygiene and the stable climate** and are not only popular with horses suffering from respiratory diseases.

Common problems and health risks associated with incorrect bedding

- **Formation of dust:** Some types of bedding can cause a lot of dust to form. This can lead to respiratory problems in sensitive horses and also make working in the stable unpleasant for humans. Adapted, dust-reduced husbandry can in turn help prevent respiratory diseases and play an important role in the treatment of such illnesses. (Besides the type of bedding, management factors, such as aeration and manure removal, also have a major impact here!)
- **Poor moisture absorption:** Bedding that fails to absorb moisture properly is generally detrimental to hygiene and makes it more difficult to keep a stable clean. The lower the absorbency rate, the more bedding material is required. Moisture promotes the development of germs, especially the spread of molds in stables, which can seriously affect the health of horses. Moreover, moisture is also bad for hooves and has a negative impact on a horse's comfort and lying behavior.
- **Poor ammonia binding capacity:** Ammonia gases damage the airways of horses. Various types of bedding offer different capacities for binding ammonia.
- **Bacterial and mold contamination:** Molds, in particular, are harmful to the health of humans and horses. Some types of bedding are naturally more prone to mold contamination, while other bedding options are specially sterilized, or germs and mold spores are already killed off during the manufacturing procedure.
- **Hard surface:** Some materials used as floor surfaces may be too hard and put unnecessary strain on a horse's joints, especially when it is lying down. Very young and very old horses, in particular, prefer a soft lying area. In such cases, BELMONDO® Trend or BELMONDO® Kingsize Duo rubber mats are the perfect flooring for especially soft and comfortable lying.
- **Allergies and skin irritations:** Sensitive horses are allergic to certain types of bedding – or to higher levels of dust and mold contamination, which can lead to skin irritations and respiratory problems.
- **Problems with the digestive tract:** Some horses tend to eat a lot of bedding – either out of boredom or to satisfy their natural instinct to search for food. If this is the case, you should look for bedding that will not be eaten to prevent digestive problems or the risk of colic or constipation.

Every horse has its individual needs. For this reason, the right bedding in the stable should always be adapted to the actual needs of the horse.



Selection criteria for the right bedding in the horse stable

Finding the appropriate bedding for a horse is not an easy task, as the requirements placed on bedding vary greatly depending on the husbandry conditions and the horse's needs. In addition to animal health aspects, other factors that need to be taken into account when choosing the right bedding include:

1. Effort for maintenance and availability:

- **Daily maintenance:** Some types of bedding require more frequent mucking out and refilling. Consider the amount of time and workload you can dedicate daily to maintaining the lying areas in the horse stable.
- **Availability:** The availability of certain types of bedding can also play a role. Regional products are often cheaper and more sustainable, as transportation costs are lower.

2. Cost considerations:

- **Purchase price:** Some types of bedding are more expensive to buy than others. However, they might be the more cost-effective option in the long term if the amount of bedding used, the maintenance required or the storage space needed for the bedding is much lower.
- **Long-term costs:** Also consider the costs of disposal (manure quantity!) and the total amount of bedding required – including the storage space needed.

3. Environmental compatibility:

- **Sustainability:** The sustainability of various types of bedding depends on several factors. For example, the effects of long-distance and regular transport play a role, as does whether the material is simply a by-product – for example, straw as „waste“ from grain production on your own farm.
- **Disposal:** Consider how used bedding can be disposed of. Compostable bedding is usually a more environmentally-friendly option.

FAQs: Frequently asked questions about bedding for horses

This section contains answers to important questions that horse owners frequently ask about bedding.

1. Can I combine various types of bedding?

Yes, some horse owners choose to combine various types of bedding to benefit from the advantages of each one. For example, a layer of saw dust under a layer of straw can help to ensure additional moisture absorption.

2. How often should the bedding be replaced?

This depends on the type of bedding and use of the stable. As a rule, feces and wet patches need to be removed from the bedding daily, and it should be completely replaced regularly.

3. Which bedding is best for horses with hoof problems?

Horses with hoof problems need soft and dry bedding. Materials such as chopped straw or specially treated saw dust are a good choice. The combination of bedding and **BELMONDO® rubber mats** offers the ideal ground for a natural hoof mechanism.

4. What effect does the bedding have on stable hygiene and the stable climate?

The choice of bedding has a direct impact on **stable hygiene** and the **stable climate**. Good quality bedding absorbs moisture and ammonia and reduces dust, odors and mold, thereby ensuring a good stable climate.



Summary: Choice of the right bedding for the horse stable has a significant impact on the well-being of animals

The „best“ bedding does not exist, as the needs of each horse and the conditions in each stable vary greatly. The advantages and disadvantages of each type of bedding need to be weighed up carefully prior to purchasing. This also includes aspects of **animal and human well-being**, the **management workload** involved, overall **costs** and **sustainability**. A well-chosen bedding with the right floor system boosts not only the health and comfort of your horses but also improves stable hygiene and the stable climate.

***BELMONDO® rubber loosebox mats** can provide the **support** you need, as they are used **with a reduced layer of bedding**. This significantly reduces the amount of bedding needed and **makes maintenance tasks easier**. They also provide **thermal insulation and slip resistance**, and the bedding is in fact only needed to absorb moisture and urine. The bedding used should, therefore, offer good absorbency.*