



# STRAW FOR BEDDING

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Straw is the fibrous crop residue from plants that are harvested for their seed. In the case of Standlee, the straw is the residue of wheat or barley production. The wheat or barley is harvested for grain with the straw baled and removed from the field. Straw is then utilized for a number of purposes with the primary purpose being livestock bedding.

The question then becomes ... Is straw dangerous for use as horse bedding? The two ways that straw can be dangerous for horses is if the straw is moldy or dusty or if the horse eats a large volume of straw. Mold and dust will result in respiratory issues with horses. Moldy or dusty straw should never be used as horse bedding. The other potential problem with straw bedding is if the horse consumes a large amount of straw. Plants that are grown for seed (grain) production are very mature at the time of harvest. This means that straw is very fibrous and it has high lignin content. The lignin fiber is the type of fiber that give plants their rigidity so they stand up right in the field. If we compare normal maturity grass hay to



very mature straw, we find that grass hay has a NDF (fiber) content of 62% with a lignin content of 5.8% while straw has a NDF content of 73% and a lignin content of 7.5%. Lignin fiber is completely non-digestible in the digestive system of horses. If horses eat a large volume of straw, this lignin fiber accumulates in the digestive system and it can plug (impact) the digestive system. This results in severe colic and even death if not properly treated. Horses that are well-fed normally do not eat large volumes of straw bedding. In situations when horse owners notice that horses are consuming straw, they should remove the straw bedding and choose a different bedding material.

**Please Note:**

While straw is commonly used for equine bedding, Standlee does not recommend straw for bedding if an animal has the tendency to consume the straw.

For such animals, Standlee recommends removing straw bedding to avoid potential health issues and replacing straw with an alternate bedding source. IE: clean, dust-free shavings.

Straw is a safe and ideal all-natural option for small animal bedding (IE: chickens, rabbits, dogs, etc.), erosion control and as a composting material.

