



# Information Sheet

## Whole Flax Seed

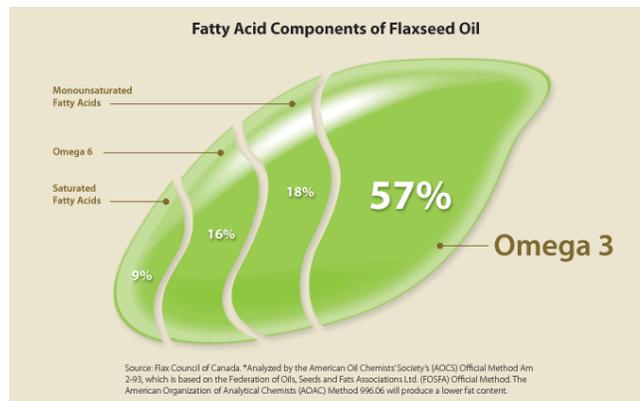


### Feeding recommendations for feeding whole flax seed to horses.

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- Whole flax seed can be fed to horses either whole, ground, or boiled.
- Feed at the rate of ¼ to 1 cup / horse / day. Flax seed can be fed less than every day, adjust as needed. Introduce in small increments over 5 – 7 days. Do not exceed 2 cups / horse / day.
- Ranch-way's recommendation for feeding whole flax seed to horses is either whole or ground.
- Ground flax seed can be accomplished by weighing the amount to be fed for each horse and then grinding in a coffee grinder until it is in a meal-like consistency. Once ground, it should be immediately feed it to your horse. Do not retain flax seed that you have ground, it will become rancid. Ground flax seed that can be purchased at a retail store or on-line has been preserved so as to prevent the ground product from spoiling, so it has a longer shelf-life than when you grind it yourself. Grinding whole flax seed will likely also increase the palatability and digestibility of the product.
- A common practice is to soak the flax seed before boiling it. **CAUTION:** soaking flax seed alone (without boiling it) is more likely to release and concentrate the cyanide toxins inherent in flax seed, which can be toxic to horses (see side bar). Heat treating the flax seed (by boiling it) will denature the cyanide. Consequently, we recommend that if flax seed is soaked, to follow the soaking with 10 - 30 minutes of boiling. However, note that boiling flax seed may also damage the omega-3 fatty acids, which is why Ranch-way recommends grinding instead of boiling whole flax seed.

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### Supplemental Information:

Flax seed, also referred to as linseed, contains high levels of omega-3 fatty acids, which can be fed to enhance the skin, coat, and hoof health of horses. Because flax seed is high in  $\alpha$ -linolenic acid content, it may also offer antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits to the horse as well. However, there is some concern that flax seed should be processed in some way to prevent cyanide poisoning in horses. Research indicates that the acidic nature of the horse's stomach is able to denature the toxins, enabling the horse to handle whole flax seed quite well without any additional processing.

### Nutrient Content\*:

Crude Protein	22.8%
Crude Fat	38%
Crude Fiber	6.5%

\*Percent on dry-matter basis.

### References:

L. D. Lewis, DVM, PhD. 1996. Feeding and Care of the Horse, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

C. A. Williams, PhD. 2008. The efficacy of some commonly supplemented herbs in equine nutrition. Proc. 2008 MANC.

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