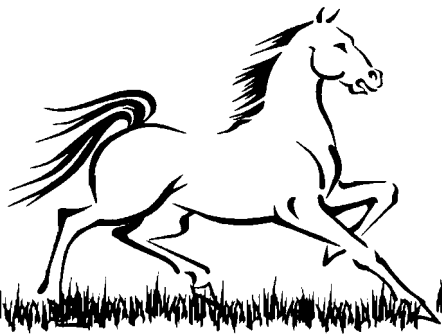
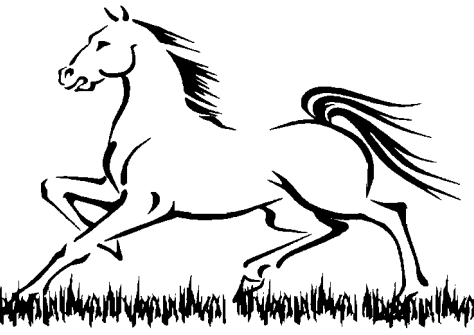


Horsing around!



Pasture Acre Management



Good Pasture

The average horse (1,000-lbs) needs a good two acres of good pasture for grazing. The average goes through about 17-lbs of forage per day, or over 6,000-lbs per year. On a poor pasture (short and thin grass) it may take 12 to 15 acres to produce this much forage or hay.



Most horse pastures are far less than lush. There are common problems in maintaining a high quality pasture; soil compaction, incorrect choice of pasture seed, over-grazing and weed control.

Heavy soils, equipment traffic, standing water and thousands of hoof steps all contribute to the problem. Low spots, grass clumps, broadleaf weeds and dominate clover stands are all sure signs of soil compaction.

The best time to over-seed is either fall or spring. Fall is preferable because the weed pressure is less. Since fall is behind us, let's talk pre-spring.

Frost Seed

In our part of the country where the ground freezes, and has been frozen for a while now, a simple way to add new plants (seed) in your pasture is to frost seed. Frost seeding is an opportunity to over-seed, between the freezing and thawing cycle, before the spring rains. It is a low cost method to over-seed the thin grass stands in the pasture or to introduce new forage species into an existing pasture turf. All you need is a broadcast spreader and seed.

Frost seeding can be done in late-February through mid-March. It is a good time to over-seed thin pastures, or thin spots in your pasture. Frost seeding should be given serious consideration as there are times when spring conditions are too wet and muddy to work the ground for seeding.

Once you have done the frost seed allow the horses to hoof the seed into the pasture surface. When the seed begins to germinate rotate the horses to another pasture.

For best results allow the new plants to get well established before heavy grazing. Once plants have reached 6-8", it can be grazed down to 3-4". Continue to rotate pastures, don't over-graze the first year.

Forage Seed

The primary characteristics needed in pasture grass are wear tolerance and the ability to tolerate soil compaction. Pasture turf cover must grow aggressively during all the seasons the pasture is in use. Healthy grass is essential in providing forage for grazing and producing hay.

In the wild, grass species adapted to our area form their seed heads in summer and naturally re-seed themselves every fall. Continuous grazing and mowing prevents this natural cycle of rejuvenation. Over-seeding is an opportunity to imitate nature. Fresh seed introduces vigorous young plants into an existing turf stand. These young introductions replace diseased and damaged grass plants and fill in bare spots caused by summer drought stress, insect pests and over-grazing.

Seed research programs select new grass plant varieties for improved characteristics of appearance, color, drought and disease tolerance, insect resistance, and durability. These special proprietary varieties should be chosen for their improved performance over older common species. Poor quality pasture can be upgraded by choosing improved varieties. These varieties have improved palatability, feed value, digestibility and yield.

Pasture Perfect - The Brand of Choice

Renovator Special Mix is specially designed for renovating existing pastures, providing superior feed value, season long grazing, endophyte-free forage, and high yield. It is easily established by frost seed, broadcast or drilled.

The Renovator formulation:

50% DUO Festulolium - adds excellent forage production for many years, highly palatable and digestible - a cross between a perennial tetraploid ryegrass and Meadow Fescue - heat and drought tolerant - looks similar to fescue with the taste of ryegrass.

25% Tonga Tetraploid Perennial Rye - adds aggressive growth, top feed value and great grazing ability - performs especially well in spring & fall

25% Rival Brand Annual Ryegrass - establishes very quickly and provides high quality pasture in the first year.

Crude protein runs from 12% to 20%; in a lush pasture the protein runs in the low 20's. The seeding rate for pastures or hay field renovation varies; 20-lbs per acre if good, 40-lbs per acre if poor

Feed the Grass - Fertilizer

A pasture can become very productive if the plants are fed. When comparing feed costs to maintaining a fertile, productive pasture, a few dollars spent on soil nutrients is a wise investment. The cheapest feed is under your horse's hooves.

Give your pasture three meals per year to keep it healthy (you eat 3-times a day for the same reason). Replace the vital nutrients the grasses need to help them combat weeds and repair damage.

An accepted rule is to apply up to 150-lbs of nitrogen per acre each year. Instead of one application, split it up and help the budget in the process.

Apply Grass Pad's commercial bag of 30-3-5 (with slow release) at the rate of 50-lbs per acre. Do the applications in 1) February-March, 2) mid to late May, and 3) September. Early December is an excellent time for a late fall application to stimulate tillering (this is one of the best treatments for over-grazed pastures).

Soil Samples

Consider having a soil sample taken to determine the pH of the soil and the levels of phosphorous and potassium, if you have not done so in the past three years. It is best to take the sample in the winter when the grass is dormant. Taking a soil test about every three years is usually sufficient - test at the same time of year. (Note: Some horses are prone to a genetic condition called HYPP, which is triggered by potassium excess. Other conditions may be caused by soil imbalances).

Weed Control

The best and least expensive way to control weeds is to develop a healthy and dense pasture turf. (More on weed control to come next month).

Ben Franklin had it right; the time to start is RIGHT NOW!

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