

Keeping Your Pastures Green



Paddocks, riding rings, trails and pastures are continuously disturbed areas, under constant physical stress from horses' hooves. Overgrazed pastures, in particular, lead to exposed bare soil that can easily erode. Here are several best management practices that can help minimize overgrazing in your pasture and reduce soil erosion.



Select Pasture Sites Carefully

If you are establishing a new pasture, select a site that is well drained and located on high ground. Avoid flood plains, drainage areas, and tracts with long, steep slopes. *Remember, it is illegal to alter wetlands or streams in any way without proper authorization.*

Inspect Established Pastures for Problems

There are many ways to improve the performance of established pastures. Conduct a visual inspection to pinpoint any existing or potential problems. Correcting erosion problems can sometimes be as simple as stabilizing a hillside with railroad ties or moving a gate. Here are some common problems to look for:

- Areas of bare ground
- Small rills and gullies
- Sediment accumulations at the bottom of a slope

Test Your Soil

Establishing and maintaining a dense, vigorous pasture/grass that will withstand the constant trampling of horses is no easy task. An inexpensive soil test can help you determine the type and amount of fertilizer needed for good pasture growth. This will also help prevent nutrient runoff from over-fertilized pastures and can improve your horse's nutrition. Soil should be tested a minimum of once every three years to determine fertilizer and lime needs. With the results of a soil test in hand, a comprehensive fertilizer program can be developed to encourage growth.

Reseed Bare Ground, Rills and Gullies

Bare areas are usually sites that have been damaged by heavy animal traffic, surface water runoff or both. These areas should be leveled and smoothed before seeding.

Minimize Spotty Growth

Manure clumps are a major cause of spotty pasture growth. Horses will not graze in areas where manure is present. On small parcels, manure should be picked up and removed daily. Manure can also be broken up by dragging. In addition to helping your pasture, breaking up manure piles on a regular basis can reduce parasite problems.



Switch to Rotational Grazing

Heavily overgrazed pastures offer little feed for horses and may cause colic if soil is ingested while grazing. Moving horses from one pasture to another during the growing season can help reduce overgrazing and

increase pasture productivity. In small pastures, horses should be rotated to another pasture or paddock about every two weeks or when growth is three inches or less. As a rule, one or two acres of well-managed pasture can support one mature horse during the grazing season with rotation, while four or five acres without rotation will support only one mature horse for the entire grazing season.

Managing Manure and Protecting Water Quality



Manure storage structure

Store Your Manure Properly

Do not store piles of manure in places where runoff may enter streams or floodwaters may wash away the manure. Place a cover or tarp over the pile to keep out rainwater. Consider building a manure storage structure. These structures protect stockpiled manure from rainwater runoff until it can be used safely as a fertilizer. Manure storage structures usually consist of a concrete pad to protect groundwater and a short wall on three sides to make manure handling easier.

Compost Manure

There are many benefits to setting up a small composting facility for your horse manure. Composted manure makes an excellent pasture and garden fertilizer as long as it's not spread too heavily. What's more, it can be combined with yard wastes and non-meat kitchen scraps. Horse owners should have no trouble giving away or selling properly composted horse manure

Establish Vegetative Covers

A vegetative cover placed around buildings or on steeper slopes can help minimize erosion and absorb nutrients while improving the appearance of your property.

Keep Horses Out of Streams

Crossings provide a safe, easy way for horses to ford streams. Fencing encourages horses to use the crossing instead of the streambed to navigate the water. This allows vegetation to stabilize stream banks and reduces sediment pollution.

Manage Water Carefully

Manage water within your pasture to control potential nutrient losses. This may require diverting surface and roof runoff water away from pastures or paddocks. Also, take care to conserve water. Use a bucket of water rather than a hose to wash horses.



Aiken County Storm Water Best Management Practices for Greener Pastures & Cleaner Streams



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**Best Managements Practices
That You Can Use**