



U of M Horse Newsletter

Providing research-based information to Minnesota Horse Owners

Visit our Website at: www.extension.umn.edu/horse for more information and to subscribe to the newsletter.

Volume 2, Issue 8

August 2006



Fall Pasture To-Do List

By: Betsy Gilkerson, U of M

Fall is a busy and important time of year for pasture care. Here is a list of things you can do in the next few months to keep your pastures looking great, and give them a boost for next year.

Seed Pasture Grasses- August 15th to September 15th are the best time of year to see or reseed your pastures (usually adequate moisture, less weed competition, and cool, desirable weather conditions). Common grass species used are Timothy, Orchard Grass, and Smooth Brome. Turf-type lawn grasses like Kentucky bluegrass can be used for higher traffic areas and serve as a good base for your pasture. **Take Soil Samples-** See if your pastures need any nutrients. Anytime from now until the ground freezes is a good time to take samples because the soils are drier and more stable. The plants have also taken up the majority of nutrients for the season. Contact your county Extension office or the University of Minnesota Soils Lab for a sample kit. The lab's phone number is 612-625-3101. **Dispose of Manure-** If you are going to fertilize your pastures with manure, sample the manure first so you know how much you should spread. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has a list of Certified Manure Testing Labs. Only

spread manure on your pastures if you have more than 2 acres per horse. However, spreading additional manure (other than what the horse naturally leaves behind) on your pasture can result in greater chances of parasite exposure. Never the less, its nice to remove your manure pile once a year (actually its required by the MDA). If you can not spread it on your pasture, hire a local farmer or landscaper to remove the manure for you. **Fertilize-** Use compost or a commercial fertilizer and drag manure piles in your pasture. As stated above, test your soils first so you know how much you need. Often, only nitrogen is needed in pastures since manure provides quite a bit of phosphorus and Minnesota soils tend to be naturally higher in phosphorus and potassium. **Weed Control-** If you want to control perennial weeds with an herbicide, now is the time. Perennial plants are storing nutrients for winter in their roots. As the nutrients go into the roots, so will the herbicide, giving the best change for a successful kill. It is best to have mowed the perennials though out the summer so they are not so mature. Herbicides usually work best on re-growth or plants that are 4-8" in height. Mowing 3 to 4 times though out the year will help keep all weeds

in check, but never mow your pasture shorter than 4". **Check fences-** Make sure your fences are in good shape before the snow flies. Pay special attention to posts, and fix any broken posts before they are frozen into the ground. **Rest The Pasture-** If you have a pasture that is over-grazed, rest it for the remainder of the year. This will give the grass a chance to store up nutrients for next year, so the pasture will be healthier in the spring. On average, a pasture needs 30 days of rest after 1-2 weeks of grazing. However, this depends on time of year, number of horses, acreage, quantity and quality of forage, and soil fertility. Generally speaking, pasturing horses over winter causes damage to plants and offers the horse no nutrition. Keeping the horses in a sacrifice paddock where they have access to hay, water and shelter is preferred. **Get Ready to Take Animals Off During Frosts-** Hoof traffic after a frost can damage grasses. Have a sacrifice area set aside where the horses can be held until the grass thaws. **Hay Storage** -as discussed in previous newsletters, make sure your hay storage area is free from leaks and rodents.

Inside This Issue

Fall Pasture To-Do List	1
Parasite Control Options	2
Ask the Expert	2

IMPORTANT NOTE

In last months newsletter, it was suggested to "add 20 ounces of clear soda to new water". When adding soda to water, it needs to be soda that does NOT contain caffeine. Caffeine is illegal, and can possibly trigger a positive drug test under AQHA & USEF drug testing programs and in racing jurisdictions.

FUTURE PROGRAMS

Equine Center Groundbreaking

August 9 at 4:00 pm

St. Paul Campus

Follow signs off Larpenteur

RSVP to

cvmpr@umn.edu

Conservation Workshop Series

Corcoran City Hall

7:00 to 9:00 pm

August 16: Native Plants

Contact Betsy at

612-596-1175 for

more information.

Plants Poisonous and Harmful to Horses Poster Available

2' x 3' poster identifying 22 plants. Cost: \$25.00

Contact Kristi for more info

at 763-767-3837 or

marti987@umn.edu



A comprehensive parasite control program involves more than deworming your horse on a regular basis. The most important feature is the ability to reduce the number of parasites and eggs in the environment. Secondly, the program should be effective with the fewest number of treatments necessary. Finally, the program should be broad spectrum to control many different types of parasites. Preventative medication is a very important component of parasite control. The bad news is that there is no single program that works for all situations. However, there are many different programs available, these include:

Targeted Dosing: This strategy involves testing the level of parasite burdens in individual animals. Standard fecal egg counts should be performed once monthly. Also tapeworm testing via

Parasite Control Options

By: Jeremy D. Frederick, DVM, U of M

fecal testing or serology (blood testing) should be done twice yearly. All animals that are positive over a certain cut off level should be treated. A yearly treatment for "bots" should also be included during the winter. This program is only appropriate for adult horses and should be considered on a farm with a dedicated manager where good grazing management is in place.

Strategic Dosing: This strategy involves treating all pastured animals at regular intervals with an appropriate product. The interval between dosing can be determined by the egg reappearance period (ERP) of the medication, which is shorter for young animals. The ERP is the

period after medicating an animal with a dewormer until there are significant numbers of parasite eggs present again in the feces. The animals are only treated during the spring/summer season when the risk for increased egg loads is highest.

Interval Dosing: This strategy is the one most commonly used. It is similar to Strategic Dosing; however, animals are treated year round at regular intervals. As the duration of parasite kill varies from product to product and even between farms, the interval between doses should be determined by the ERP or by guidelines set by your veterinarian based upon products used. This program may be appropriate for farms where there are frequent new additions to

the group, at more casually managed (hobby) farms and in young animals.

Daily Deworming: This strategy involves the addition of a parasite control medication to the horse's daily ration. This program is appropriate for most adult grazing horses; however, additional periodic deworming with other products is usually necessary. Twice yearly treatment with ivermectin (Eqvalan, Phoenectrin, Zimectrin), ivermectin/praziquantel (Equell) or moxidectin (Quest) has been recommended. This program can select somewhat for resistant organisms since the parasites are continuously exposed to a low level of the drug. Look for more information on parasites in the next newsletter.

Q: The soils in my horse pasture have a very high level of clay. Areas that my horses use a lot get very compacted. If I want to reseed a compacted area what steps would I take so the grass will grow?

A: Compacted soil resists absorption of water, restricts movement of air around the roots, and produces a physical barrier to the development of roots. Research from Montana State University, suggests soils were not compacted by horse hooves when horses were grazed for short periods of time. Longer term changes in soil compaction may result from

Ask the Expert

By: Krishona Martinson, PhD, U of M

repeated or continuous grazing. If you are experiences compaction from horses, it should only be surface compaction and if your pasture is getting sufficient rest, the compaction should be minimal. On average, pasture areas need 30 days of rest between grazing periods of approximately 7 days. The rest period allows the pasture to rest and regrow. The rest period can also be beneficial to horse owners. It allows time to mow, fertilize (if needed), drag and chemically control

weeds (if necessary). If resting the pasture area doesn't seem to help, aerification should. Aerification relieves soil compaction and increasing water and oxygen infiltration into the soil. Aerification is best done in the cooler weather of late summer (August 15 to September 15). Aerification is done with an aerifier. An aerifier is a machine which removes plugs of soil, leaving holes about 1/2-inch in diameter and up to 3 inches deep. The cores of soil are typically left on the soil surface to gradually break down and

filter back into the grass. If you have a large pasture, aerification might not be practical. An aerifier can be rented or hired through a lawn service. When trying to establish a pasture in a compacted area, first take a soils test. Fertilize the area as needed, aerate, then drag your seed (or use a slit seeder) into the ground. If severe compaction is observed, tillage (such as plowing or disking) may be needed. Remember, that unless you change your practices (like giving the pasture rest), compaction will continue to occur.