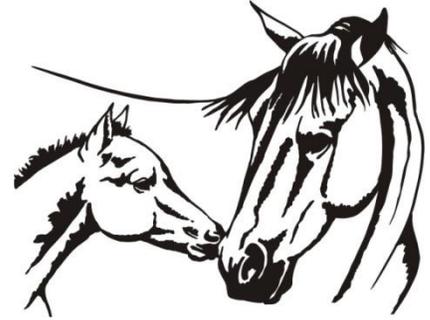


# Horse Pasture Management Tips

Lauren Langley  
Livestock Extension Agent  
Alamance County

## Actions to Consider:

- Soil Test
- Fertilize and/or Lime Based on Soil Test Results
- Apply Herbicide for Weed Control
- Check and Repair Fences
- Determine Planting Dates (Warm Season vs. Cool Season)



## Management Tips:

- Plan Grazing System
- Let the Grass Grow
- Use a Sacrifice Lot- Wet/Drought Weather and/or Summer/Winter

Spring and fall is an important time of year for pasture care. Here is a list of things you can do to get your pastures looking great.

**Plant Seed** The best time of year to seed/overseed a pasture is fall for cool-season forages. However, spring is an acceptable time of year if you missed the fall deadline (just note that you may not have the same success if you plant in the spring vs. fall). If you see a new pasture, be prepared to let the pasture rest for about a year. The newly planted forage needs to be able to develop strong roots in order to withstand grazing. It is also the most appetizing grass and will have a hard time developing under grazing pressure. Planting Guide for NC:

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/A.-Planting-Guide-for-Forage-Crops-in-NC.pdf>

**Plan Summer Pastures** Spring is the time to think about your warm-season perennials or annuals for summer grazing. Refer to the planting guide for the best dates for planting those summer pastures.

**Take Soil Samples** See if your pastures need any nutrients and/or lime. Contact your county Extension office for more information and to obtain soil sampling forms and boxes. **\*There is a \$4 fee/sample in place from Thanksgiving through March.\***

**Fertilize** As stated above, test your soils first, so you know how much you need. Don't guess, soil test!

**Spray Herbicides** Spring is a good time to spray weeds as it prevents them from getting established. However, mowing is usually sufficient for weed control unless weed densities are high. **\*Always read the label before spraying for sensitive crops that may be nearby, and withdrawal times. Consider a non-residual herbicide if composting manure.**

**Check fences** Snow/ice and deer can be hard on fences. Check them before you turn out any horses.

**Plan your grazing system** Think back to last year and whether you had enough grass or if the pasture turned into a putting green or mud pit. You may need to supplement your horses with hay during certain times of the grazing season and set aside a sacrifice area when the pasture needs a rest.

**Let the grass grow** Start rotationally grazing once grass starts growing and is at least 6 inches tall. Don't let horses chase green grass over the entire farm since that will delay significant growth and sustained grazing even longer.

## Horse Feeding Basics & Stocking Rates (Source: Rutgers Equine Science Center)

- Horses should consume at least 1% of their body weight in pasture forages or hay each day.
- A 1,000 lb. horse requires approximately 2-3 acres of pasture to meet its nutrient requirements for maintenance during the grazing season.
- Pasture plants contain protein, carbohydrate, fat, minerals, vitamins, and water. Average pasture is 15% protein.
- To maintain at least a 70% vegetative cover on pastures, one horse can be maintained on:
  - ½ acre of pasture if turnout time is less than 3 hours/day
  - 1 acre of pasture if turnout time equals 3-8 hours/day
  - 1.5 acres of pasture if turnout time equals 8-12 hours/day
  - 2+ acres of pasture if turnout time is unlimited