

PASTURE MANAGEMENT

Evaluate your pasture:

- What will graze it: cattle, horses, sheep?
- How many, for how long?
- Do you need hay as well as pasture?
- What kind of soil do you have?
- Do you have irrigation or is it dryland?
- Does the soil have the nutrients and organic matter it needs?
- How much time do you have for maintenance?
- Do you have equipment, or will you be hiring someone?
- What kinds of weeds are there?
- How much money do you have to establish and maintain it?



Select your seed:

- Irrigated or Dryland grass varieties
- Grazing height and regrowth period

Control the weeds:

- Control perennial weeds before planting

Prepare Seedbed:

- Get good seed/soil contact
- Shallow planting (not deeper than ¼ inch)
- Make sure there is good soil moisture for germination



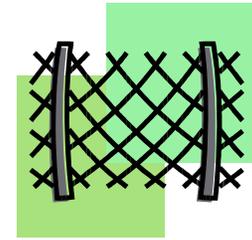
Time to plant:

- In northern Idaho spring seeded pastures generally establish better than fall seeded pastures. However, some producers have had good luck planting in the fall or even seeding into the snow.



Fertilize your pasture:

- Fertilization depends on the amount of annual precipitation in your area or whether you have the option of irrigation.
- You should take soil tests to determine a baseline of nutrients in the soil. Without a soil test, you may be applying too little or too much of the nutrients you need.



Tips for a Successful Grazing Program

- Eliminate continuous season-long grazing.
- Subdivide large pastures into smaller pastures and develop a pasture-rotation grazing system.
- Corral livestock and feed them hay until your pasture grasses are 6" to 8" high. Move livestock when 50% of the grass plant has been eaten (3" to 4" height remains).
- During winter months, continue your rotation to distribute manure and feed wastes evenly across your pastures or hold animals in a corral.
- Allow long rest periods or use a high-intensity, short-duration grazing system to rejuvenate poor condition pasture.
- Provide a water source for each pasture.
- Irrigate each pasture (if you have irrigation) immediately after grazing to get plants growing again. Do not graze on wet soils.
- Horses do not need 24-hour access to feed or forage. Their nutrition needs can be met with only a few hours of grazing on good pasture each day. Corral animals for the remainder of the day to prevent overgrazing of plants and extend the forage available in your pastures.
- On limited acreage, you may have only enough pasture to exercise your animals and will need to feed year-round.

Tips for a Longer Pasture Life

Never graze more than half of the forage and never graze lower than three inches!

If the grass is 24 inches tall, graze it to 12 inches and then let it rest for 3-4 weeks.

This allows the top to regrow, if grazed shorter the plant starts putting all of its energy into top growth and this will eventually weaken the root system.

Fertilize on a regular basis.

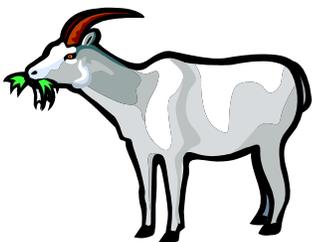
Early spring is the best time to fertilize. Fall fertilizing will aid in growth in late fall and early spring.

Control weeds.

Weeds compete for moisture and nutrients robbing the grasses. Maintaining a healthy pasture is the best weed control.

Manage grazing.

Graze horses only in evenings. Rotate pasture, supplement with hay if necessary.

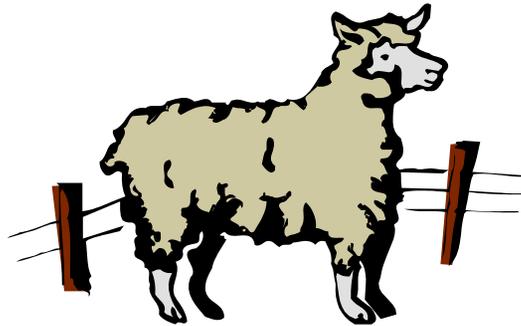


Undergrazing Pitfalls

- ▲ Shades low-growing forage species
- ▲ Produces stems of low quality
- ▲ Reduces forage production with soil capping
- ▲ Overgrown, over-mature unpalatable plants

Overgrazing Pitfalls

- ▲ Lowers carrying capacity
- ▲ Slows root growth
- ▲ Reduces drought tolerance
- ▲ Weeds increase



Noxious Weed Control

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