

Pastures Clipping and Dragging...

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Maintaining productive pastures is one of the most challenging aspects of livestock keeping in Western Washington. Besides providing forage for livestock, healthy stands of grass are important for erosion control. Water quality can also be improved with good grass coverage because of the turfs' ability to uptake nutrients and reduce sedimentation.

Pastures should be clipped several times each year to reduce weeds from reaching-maturity and going to seed. If allowed to set seed, many types of weeds can out compete turf, especially if the pastures are compacted or stressed or because of poor soils. The lack of precipitation during the summer contributes to pasture grasses going dormant from heat stress and allows drought resistant weeds to grow.

Dragging pastures breaks up manure piles and promotes more uniform grazing of the pasture. The grasses benefit from the nutrients provided by increased manure coverage.

Although dragging breaks down manure faster, it is not enough to kill the worms present. Horses should be on a regular worming schedule and not fed on the ground to prevent problems.

To get the best results from clipping and dragging, a rotational grazing system should be set up. Dividing pastures into smaller units and then moving livestock from area to area allows a regrowth period and prevents overgrazing. The best time to clip and drag is right after livestock are moved from a pasture.

Regular clippings make pastures more attractive and productive than if left unmanaged. On the other hand, clipping can reduce herbicide usage and possible pollution on farms where alternative management styles may be desired.





Conservation Information Sheet

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