



Is Your Pasture Broken? Here Is A Quick Fix for Bare Patches

Dead grass and bare patches in pastures are at risk for erosion and an open invitation for weeds and undesirable grasses to take over. To ensure pastures are dense and nutritious, bare patches should be seeded in the late winter/early spring or late summer. The basic steps of seeding bare patches are 1) controlling existing weeds, 2) preparing the seedbed, 3) seeding the right seed at the right time, and 4) maintaining a moist environment for seed germination.

Specific recommendations for getting seed in bare patches off to a good start:

1. Spot spray weeds with an herbicide; follow label directions.
2. Remove any dead grass and other debris (i.e., old uneaten hay).
3. Prepare the soil; till or rake in a starter fertilizer (10% N, 10% P₂O₅, 10% K₂O at 10 lbs/1000 sq. ft.), and then grade it level.
4. Choose a mixture of pasture grass like endophyte friendly tall fescue, Kentucky bluegrass, or annual ryegrass. Be sure to use seed recently tested and shown to have > 85% germination and less than 1% weed seed.
5. Plan to seed as soon as possible in late winter/early spring (Late February to March 15th) or late summer (August 1st – September 10th).
6. Broadcast seed at the proper rate: 2 to 3 lbs/1000 sq. ft. of tall fescue species plus 1-2 lbs/1000 sq. ft. of Kentucky bluegrass species, or 3 to 4 lbs/1000 sq. ft. of annual ryegrass species.
7. Rake in seed and firm or tamp down lightly.
8. Spread straw on top of the seeded area at a rate of 1 bale/1000 sq. ft.
9. Keep the area moist with frequent watering.
10. Control broadleaf weeds in the summer with mowing, or use an herbicide according to the label.
11. Exclude animals from seeded areas until they are established and mowed to a height of 4 inches twice prior to grazing.

For more details, see the HOW Factsheet “Seeding Small-Acreage Horse Pastures” available at: <http://www.horseboard.org/HOW>.

For more information on horse manure management and other soil conservation and water quality practices, contact your local Soil Conservation District. For more information contact your local Soil Conservation District/ Natural Resources Conservation Service/(SCD/ NRCS) office or county University of Maryland Extension office. Addresses and phone numbers can be found at www.mda.state.md.us/resource_conservation/technical_assistance/index.php, www.md.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/directory or extension.umd.edu or check the listing County Government for SCD/MCE or US Government, Department of Agriculture for NRCS of the phone book blue pages. The Horse Outreach Workgroup was established to provide information to horse owners on pasture and manure management issues. Technical assistance is available from local county Soil Conservation Districts/Natural Resource Conservation Service and the University of Maryland Extension office. The workgroup consists of representatives from local Soil Conservation Districts, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service, University of Maryland, Delaware Cooperative Extension, and the Maryland Horse Council. The Maryland Department of Agriculture’s Office of Resource Conservation provides coordination for the workgroup. January 2012