

Looking after your pasture

Equine Year Planner



New Forest Land Advice Service
Providing independent land
management advice across the
New Forest and Avon Valley

Rotation A:
Year round grazing;
adjusted stocking
through the seasons to
maintain a minimum
5cm sward height.

Rotation B:
Combination of seasonal
grazing and hay/
haylage making.

Rotation C:
Combination of seasonal
grazing and foggage
(uncut standing hay).

Poster produced by the New Forest
Land Advice Service with support from



January

Activity
Make it a New Year's Resolution
to collect droppings to
improve grazing and reduce
worm infestation and set up a
composting area.
Cut hedges a third a year
every three years when ground
conditions enable machinery to
get onto
the land without causing damage.
Consider using grass matting
or other sensitive hard standing
(preferably not concrete) around
gateways to prevent further
damage.

Look out for..
Good locations for your field
pile/composting site; ie away
from watercourses, slopes and
important wildlife areas such as
hedgerows and field margins.
Poaching around gateways,
feeders and troughs
Your DEFRA paperwork including
the Soil Protection Review; ask the
New Forest Land Advice Service for
help if required.



February

Activity
Graze horses over as large an area
as possible to minimise likelihood
of poaching and compaction.
Take horses off land in very wet
weather, use yards and stables
when necessary.
Carry out soil analysis to determine
soil nutrient requirement. pH levels
will help identify any correction
needed.
Any piles of well rotted manure
may be in demand by gardeners.

Look out for..
Redwings and Fieldfares



March

Activity
Harrow, if necessary, to remove dead grass and consider spiking
to improve soil aeration. Consider only harrowing two thirds
of your land at one time and always leave a margin around the
edge for wildlife.
Latrine areas can be dealt with during the harrowing process.
Sow carefully sourced seed mixes on bare patches. These need
to be carefully tailored to your conditions (contact the New
Forest Land Advice Service).
Fertilize but only when absolutely necessary, such as once in
three years for a hay crop or according to need. Use farmyard
manure, including well composted horse manure, in preference
to inorganic fertiliser, although this can increase acidity and so
should only be done if the need is identified through soil testing.
Exclude animals for 2 weeks after application.
Roll but only if the ground is dry enough and there will be real
benefits, for example to ensure good seed contact with the soil
if you are seeding or to encourage grasses to tiller (spread into
bare patches).
Do a spring clean before the birds start nesting in your field
shelter/stable
Plan grazing rotations
Rotation B: shut up areas for haylage by now. Can be done
from previous autumn.
Top fields if any of previous year's growth persists.

Look out for..
Too much rye-grass in your seed mix; this is not recommended
as it could cause obesity and laminitis. Also, fertiliser will
promote the growth of rye-grass species at the expense of finer
grassland species which will hold the sward together better.
Ground nesting birds, for example skylarks, lapwing getting
established
Dry enough conditions to take machinery on land without
causing damage.
Soil compaction; rolling can cause soil compaction and lead to
greater problems of waterlogging, run off and flooding.
Signs of compaction include puddles forming on the surface,
grass becoming sparse and no evidence of worm casts.

April

Activity
Dig out ragwort and creeping
thistle as soon as it appears or spot
treat rosettes with an approves
herbicide as soon as growth is
noted.
Rotation A and Rotation C:
Maintain grass height of at least
5cm to prevent overgrazing and
the problems which may follow.
Start to implement your grazing
rotations
including **Rotation B**; 'shutting
up' areas that are species rich and/
or will be used for growing hay
Look out for..
Spring plants such as primrose and
bluebell and encourage them to
thrive by considering putting up a
temporary exclusion zone along a
hedgerow or field margin.
Excessive spring grass growth
and weigh up with horse's needs,
for example, balancing risk of
laminitis. Stock accordingly.
Himalayan Balsam seedlings; pull
and compost before it seeds in
June/July. Contact the New Forest
Land Advice Service if you see any
other non native plants.
Your DEFRA Single Payment
Scheme forms, fill in and send off.



May

Activity
Continue to maintain grass at a
height above 5 cm for optimum
growth and ground cover and
to prevent damage and loss of
species.
Undertake species surveys of
your grassland over the next two
months as this is when they will be
most easy to identify!
Continue to control invasive
plants such as ragwort, docks and
creeping thistle.
Talk to the New Forest Land
Advice Service about availability
of back-up land elsewhere in your
area.

Look out for..
An early summer flush of grass
which can increase the risk of
obesity and laminitis in susceptible
horses. Restrict grazing, preferably
without over grazing pasture by
using yards, stables, increased
exercise and mixed grazing with
other livestock. If grazing is not
possible, why not take a haylage/
hay crop.
Breeding birds in fields, hedgerows
and stables.



June

Activity
Rotation B: Continue to allow
areas of species rich grassland you
may have 'shut up' to set seed as
part of the hay rotation.
Rotation A: Very light grazing at
this time will also be beneficial to
allow flowers to thrive and
seed to drop.
Repeat your pH testing and
perhaps put down
lime based products if required.
Lime is a natural product which
will adjust your pH to favour
growth.
Rotation B: take your haylage
Look out for..
The colours, smells and sounds of
species rich grassland.
Your water supply; ensure your
animals have sufficient water
throughout the summer
Maturing growth ready for your
haylage cut



July

Activity
Rotation C: shut up for foggage
(standing hay which animals can
feed on in situ over the autumn
and winter).
Cut rushes repeatedly if control is
needed. Graze the regrowth.
Continue to rest and rotate
pasture to prevent overgrazing.
Overgrazed pasture provides little
feed value, looks unsightly and will
probably require time and money
later in the year to prevent further
deterioration.
Rotation B: Hay can be cut from
mid to late July depending on
weather conditions. When grass
starts to recover, aftermath graze.

Look out for..
Biting insects and the need for
shade in hot weather
Dry weather conditions ready for
hay making
The right conditions to cut your
hay; eg. mature seed heads
Good deals on hay if you need to
buy some in for the winter

August

Activity
Collect seed from beneficial
flowering grasses and plants and
spread on bare ground. Create
areas for sowing by carrying out
local harrowing to improve species
diversity in a pasture.
Dispose of your excess manure
responsibly while it is dry and easy
to get at. Use on allotments and
gardens.

Look out for..
Compaction



September

Activity
Continue to control ragwort.
Ditch management; where possible manage alternate sides in
alternate years and ensure that profile is kept to original depth
and width.
Remove any temporary fence enclosures you erected in spring to
protect flower rich margins and graze.
If grass growth is poor, and you haven't fertilised this year, apply
fertiliser and prepare for autumn growth. Contact the New
Forest Land Advice Service for a visit if support and advice is
required.

Look out for..
Grass growth ahead of the autumn flush.
Acorns.



October

Activity
Tree and hedge planting can
take place using native species of
British and, where possible, local
provenance that are suited to the
area.
Any de-silting of in-field ponds can
be done now; but don't do it all
at once. Contact NFLAS for more
detailed advice.

Look out for..
Fungi.



November

Activity
Continue to lightly graze over the
winter to ensure that poaching
and compaction are kept to a
minimum and to remove annual
growth. Exclude stock from
very wet areas or ground that is
vulnerable to poaching.
If soil PH tests show it to be
necessary, apply lime, although
some forms can be applied all year
round.
Rotation B: Fields can be shut up
for hay or haylage for next year.
Rotation C: Start grazing standing
hay towards the end of the
month once the flush of autumn
grass growth has finished. The
abundance of vegetation will help
to prevent poaching, will provide
horses with cost effective forage,
keep them busy and encourage
them to move around.

Look out for..
Poaching - keep horses off ground
after heavy rain.

December

Activity
Rotation A and Rotation C:
Open up maximum field area for
horses to spread the load over
the wettest months and prevent
damage through poaching.
If sufficient acreage per horse is
available and it has been managed
well throughout the year it should
be possible to supply the horses'
forage needs from the grass. If
hay or haylage needs to be fed
at pasture try to feed in different
places and away from frequently
trodden areas such as gateways.

Look out for..
Grass at a minimum height of
2.5cm to protect the ground.
Your water supply; ensure your
horses have a sufficient quantity in
the winter.