Looking after your pasture
Equine Year Planner

January
Activity
Mark 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 soft hand standing (preferably not concrete) around gateways to prevent further damage.

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

February
Activity
Grass horses over as large an area as possible in order 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 pikes 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 silage to improve soil aeration. Consider only harrowing two thirds of your land at any one time and always leave a margin around the edge for wildlife.
Lateral areas can be dealt with during the harrowing process. Some carefully sourced seed mix on bare patches. These need to be carefully tailored to your conditions (contact the New Forest Land Advice Service).

Activity
Dig out ragwort and creeping thistle as soon as it appears or spot treat rosettes with an approved herbicide as soon as growth is noted.

Rotation A and Rotation C
Maintain grass height of at least 5cm to prevent over grazing and the problems which may follow. Start to implement your grazing rotations including Rotation B.

Activity
Spring plants such as primrose and bluebells and encourage them to thrive by considering setting up a temporary exclusion zone along a hedge or field margin.
Excessive spring grass growth and weight up with horses’ needs, for example, balancing risk of lamination. Stock accordingly. Himalayan Balsam seedings; pull and compost before it seeds in June.

Activity
Harrow, if necessary, to remove dead grass and consider spiking trodden areas such as gateways. Contact the New Forest Land Advice Service if you see any non native plants. Your DEPRA Single Payment Scheme forms, fill in and send off.

Rotations
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 forage (uncut standing hay).

April
Activity
Continued 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 enclosing you erected in spring to protect flower rich margins and grasses.

Activity
Tree and hedge planting can take place using native species of British and, where possible, local provenance with the support of the New Forest Land Advice Service for advice and support and advice is required.

Activity
Take your haylage growth of the autumn flush. Acorns.

Activity
Continuing to light 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.

Activity
Continue to maintain grass at a height above 5cm 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 easily identified! Continue to control invasive plants such as ragwort, docks and creeping thistle.

Activity
Contact to the New Forest Land Advice Service about availability of back-up land elsewhere in you area.

Activity
An early summer flush of grass which can increase the risk of susceptible laminitis. 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.
Breding birds in fields, hedgerows and stables.

Activity
Continued to control invasive species and other non native plants.
Any piles of well rotted manure may be in demand by gardeners.
Lime is a natural product which is available and it has been managed well throughout the year. Balanced grazing and reduce soil compaction are key to prevent damage and loss of species.

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Activity
Shutting up areas that are species rich and/or will be used for growing hay

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Activity
Overgrazed pasture provides little feed on in situ over the autumn (standing hay which animals can help if required.

June
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