Selected Pastures for Horses on Small Rural Properties
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General Information:
Planning is critical to achieving pastures that meet you and your horse’s requirements.
The number of horses on the area will influence how well a pasture performs.
Choosing the wrong species may result in pastures that are rejected by horses or grazed out resulting in weedy unproductive paddocks.

The benefits of sowing an improved pasture:
- Better horse nutrition and health.
- Reduced feed costs.
- Better protection of soil and less weeds.
- Improved aesthetics and property values.
- Opportunity to produce hay.

But think carefully about:
- Your location, soil type and drainage.
- The pasture you intend to sow and whether horses will eat it.
- The cost and availability of seeds, planting material and machinery.
- Effect of pasture on other activities (ie: horticulture, haymaking etc).

Legumes versus Grasses:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Legumes*</th>
<th>Grasses*</th>
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<td>Plants which fix nitrogen and produce seed in pods such as peas, beans and clovers.</td>
<td>Are narrow leaved plants, do not have pods and do not fix nitrogen.</td>
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<td>Improve soil fertility, are nutritious and high in protein.</td>
<td>Require a source of nitrogen for good growth.</td>
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<td>Are generally poor competitors with weeds.</td>
<td>Are generally less nutritious than legumes.</td>
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<td>Are less tolerant to grazing and harder to manage than grasses.</td>
<td>Persist better, produce more feed and are easier to manage than legumes.</td>
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* Refers to palatable pasture species. Generally, the best pastures will consist of a strong perennial grass, mixed with one or more palatable legumes.
Note:

Some improved pasture species are not recommended for horse paddocks due to issues such as induced deficiencies, toxic compounds or low palatability.

For example **Wynn Cassia and Signal grass are two species which many horses find unpalatable and do not accept.

Seek advice before sowing a horse pasture to make sure you are sowing the right one for your situation.

Remember when buying seed, ask for clean seed which has a seed analysis certificate.

Refer to Agnotes on specific pastures, available from DRDPIFR Publications, phone 8999 2313.

References:

www.primaryindustry.nt.gov.au

www.ntaga.org.au

Some Popular Legume Pastures:

- **Cavalcade/Bundey** - high quality legume, difficult to maintain under heavy grazing.
- **Amiga/Verano stylo** - palatable plant, will improve pasture quality, should persist longer.
- **Blue Pea** - high protein plant, difficult to maintain under heavy grazing.
- **Centro** - useful legume to have in the mix.
- **Wynn Cassia** - unpalatable to most horses, should not be planted in horse paddocks.
- **Amiga/Verano stylo** - palatable plant, will improve pasture quality, should persist longer.

Some Popular Grass Pastures:

- **Sabi Grass** - palatable and suited to dry fertile areas.
- **Rhodes grass** - palatable but requires irrigation to persist.
- **Pangola** - the most popular horse pasture but must be planted by runners.
- **Tully/Humidicola** - tough persistent grass, suited to wetter areas.
- **Jarra Grass / Strickland** - palatable grass, related to Pangola but can be planted by seed.