

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:

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

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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.

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.