



LEPS

Langley Environmental Partners Society



Horse Manure Composting Program

Complete Vs. Partial Pasture Renovation

Maintaining a healthy pasture for your horses can be achieved in one of two ways, partial or complete pasture renovation, depending on the current conditions of your grass crop. Keeping your pastures healthy will help to keep your horses in good body condition, free of disease, and well nourished. The following discussion outlines the differences between partial and complete pasture renovation in order for you to decide the best strategies to manage your pasture.

Partial Pasture Renovation

Most pastures in the Fraser Valley are in need of some repair. Our wet climate with acidic soil conditions causes weeds to flourish and out-compete grasses. If your grasses appear to be lacking in density and somewhat overgrown with weeds then partial pasture renovation may be your best option.

Some management strategies include:

- Improving pasture drainage to eliminate the ideal growing conditions for weeds
- Spot spraying a broadleaf herbicide such as Grazon to kill the buttercup or other broadleaf weeds before the grasses establish
- Liming to eliminate the acidic conditions with dolomite lime
- Aerating the soil to improve soil structure and drainage
- Spreading your finished compost after doing a soil test to determine nutrient requirements
- Harrowing using a chain harrow to break up clumps of compost and work it into the soil
- Reseeding with a different seed mixture tailored to your growing conditions

Make sure that you discuss with your dealer the appropriate spreading and application rates for seed mixtures, herbicides, and fertilizer.

Complete Pasture Renovation

Complete renovation should be used as a last resort due to the fact that it can be costly and you will have to keep your horses off the pastures for some time to allow the grasses to re-establish. However, if less than 25% of your pasture growth is composed of desirable plants then complete renovation is something you may want to consider.

Complete Vs. Partial Pasture Renovation Continued...

The above management strategies apply in this case as well, but you may find that you need to cultivate or rototill the existing grass in order to develop a sufficient seed bed. Another consideration is the matching of plant species to specific soil and microclimate environments in your pastures. Take note if your fields have low points that could be boggy or if there are forested areas that may be more acidic. The topography in a single field may vary substantially and knowing the lay of the land is important in choosing the most appropriate seed mixtures for your property.

Selecting high quality seed and using proven seeding methods will also give you a good headstart in weed management. Ensuring that grasses are growing at a high density with no bare soil showing won't allow weeds the opportunity to establish. Keeping horses off the field until grasses are at a height of at least 15 to 20cm (6 to 8 in) will ensure that they retain their density and rejuvenate quickly when left ungrazed.

If you have questions, concerns, or just would like more information on manure and pasture management feel free to contact us anytime.

Good luck and happy composting!

www.manuremaiden.com