



Pasture Walks

Just as, *A picture is worth a thousand words,
A pasture walk is worth a thousand pictures*

Pasture walks provide opportunities to ...

- *See how other horse owners manage their pastures and to share experiences of various management practices that have worked and not worked on their farms.*

A pasture walk is like a realtor open house, only in this case you walk through the pastures and observe what is there and how the pastures are managed. The landowner, usually in cooperation with an organization such as the local cooperative extension office or Soil Conservation District, opens their farm for a tour or “walk” of the operation and pastures, welcoming all who are interested. In addition to the landowner or operator telling of their experience, others who have assisted them, including specialists, both public and private, come to share their insight and expertise of what is being done. This is an open forum for discussion and comments, both positive and negative, by everyone in attendance, which is crucial to a pasture walk’s success.

During a pasture walk, you are able to see how someone else is managing their pastures, what has worked for them and what has not. This individual can share their first hand experiences including ideas that you may be considering. Or they may provide a possible solution to a problem you are trying to solve.

- *See new developments in pasture production and management, such as new grass and legume varieties, rotational grazing, construction of special heavy use areas to reduce pasture damage, etc.*

During a pasture walk you may see a planting of a new pasture grass, have an opportunity to hear how the landowner seeded it and find out what equipment was used. You will learn why the grass species was chosen and discuss what if anything, they would do differently. This can help you save time and money should you decide to develop a similar planting. You might see how a rotational grazing system is set up and how pasture production was increased by using rotational grazing, how installing a sacrifice or heavy use area has reduced damage to the pastures and prolonged the life of the pasture. You have an opportunity to see pasture improvement practices and ask questions to the person implementing them.

- *See new pasture management ideas implemented on other farms before you spend lots of money possibly implementing them incorrectly on your farm.*

You are able to see and learn about a complete pasture management system from the person who actually does the work, including the management of fencing to the behaviors of the livestock using the grazing system. You could save money by not buying that fencing system that looks good on paper, but doesn't suit your operation or hold up to the animals you have.

- *The opportunity for further action.*

Contact you local Soil Conservation District or extension office to find out about the next pasture walk in your area. If you are interested in hosting a pasture walk on your property, these same people would like to help. Don't worry if you don't have all the answers, that is part of the fun. You never know who might have a great idea that could help you or someone else.

Maryland Forages Web site: <http://www.mdforages.umd.edu>

For more information on horse manure management and other soil conservation and water quality practices, contact you local Soil Conservation District. For more information contact your local Soil Conservation District/ Natural Resources Conservation Service/ (SCD/ NRCS) office or county Maryland Cooperative Extension (MCE) office. Addresses and phone numbers can be found at http://www.mda.state.md.us/resource_conservation/technical_assistance/index.php, <http://www.md.nrcs.usda.gov/contact/directory> or <http://extension.umd.edu> or check the listing County Government for SCD/MCE or US Government, Department of Agriculture for NRCS of the phone book blue pages. The Horse Outreach Workgroup was established to provide information to horse owners on pasture and manure management issues. Technical assistance is available from local county Soil Conservation Districts/Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Maryland Cooperative Extension office. The workgroup consists of representatives from local Soil Conservation Districts, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Cooperative Extension, University of Maryland, the Equiery, and the Maryland Horse Council. The Maryland Department of Agriculture's Office of Resource Conservation provides coordination for the workgroup. January 2006, revised January 2007