


HORSE PASTURE MANAGEMENT CALENDAR

The Chiltern Hills were designated an Area of Outstanding Natural beauty (AONB) in 1965. This is in recognition that the Chilterns countryside is amongst the finest in England and Wales. Horses and ponies can have an effect on wildlife and the landscape; therefore their owners/keepers determine whether or not this effect is a positive or a negative one. This brief guide, part of the Chilterns Landowners' Guide is intended to provide some basic information on grassland operations to be carried out through the year. It complements 'Grass Management for Horse Owners', also available from the AONB website, details overleaf.

Time of year	Action	Reason
Late Winter 	<p>Soil test to establish pH and other nutrient levels</p> <p>Trim hedges (if required) as late as possible but before mid February</p> <p>Plan approximate grazing rotations and management.</p> <p>Make a resolution to collect droppings</p>	<p>Early testing allows for forward planning</p> <p>To leave food for birds during winter without interfering with nesting</p> <p>Allows you to find/let extra land and source contractors to carry out work</p> <p>Will improve your grazing and reduce worm infestation</p>

Early Spring



<p>Harrow pasture</p> <p>Roll pasture (only if ground dry and soil is not heavy clay)</p> <p>Avoid above if evidence of ground nesting birds.</p> <p>Be aware of too much grass</p> <p>If you are likely to have an excess of grass consider shutting up areas for hay.</p>	<p>Harrowing pulls up dead 'thatch' from grassland</p> <p>Rolling repairs damage from hooves and firms soil to maximise root contact with available nutrients</p> <p>High risk period of laminitis in ponies (and horses)</p> <p>Can be more economical than buying hay and you can ensure its ragwort free.</p>
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IMPORTANT NOTE

If any of the land you graze is rich in flowers and different grasses, for example an old hay meadow, it will benefit from being managed slightly differently than normal grassland. 'Species rich' grassland is very rare in the Chilterns and the UK and is very important for wildlife. It hasn't had much fertiliser or chemical sprays applied to it and for that reason is often referred to as being 'unimproved'. Horse and pony owners and keepers can play a role in maintaining any existing 'unimproved' grassland they control, and ensuring that

other grassland rich on flowers and grasses ('species rich') is not unnecessarily 'improved'. Such improvement includes activities like spraying with chemicals, drainage and artificial fertiliser application. It is not always necessary to carry out these operations, and consideration should be given to any existing wildlife and the landscape setting before they are undertaken.

Please contact us for more details.

Time of year

Action

Reason

Late Spring / Early Summer



Apply nitrogen, phosphates or potash fertilisers where necessary.

Results of soil test will establish whether fertilisers are necessary. Application timing is crucial to ensure the conditions are right for nutrient uptake, and to prevent nutrients being washed out of the soil by heavy rainfall.

Keep grass length to 5cm (2-3")

Not only is grass more able to make its own nutrients if it is kept at this length, but it is also able to withstand the actions of hooves better.

Target invasive weeds such as docks and ragwort

Hand-pulling of weeds early in the year is far easier than when they have become established

Summer

Continue topping/mowing to keep grass length to 5cm

This also stops weeds from flowering and/or setting seed

Autumn



Continue with mowing

Promotes grass growth & discourages weeds.

Watch out for an autumn flush of grass

Can cause laminitis.

Winter

Rotate paddocks

To minimise serious damage to grassland or consider stabling.

Remember all year round



Pick up droppings as often as possible

Reduces the number of harmful parasites and encourages horses and ponies to eat all the grass in the field

Dispose of droppings responsibly i.e. not over the hedge/in a ditch

To prevent damage to wild flowers (potentially rare), in hedge bottoms and ditches and also prevent pollution of watercourses.

Grass will continue to grow whenever the soil temperature is over 6 degrees C

Consider the impact your actions have on the surrounding landscape and wildlife. If in doubt seek advice from address below.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT**

Tracy Adams
Farming and Land Use Officer
Chilterns Conservation Board
The Lodge 90 Station Road
Chinnor Oxon OX39 4HA
Tel: 01844 355523
email: tadams@chilternsaonb.org
website: www.chilternsaonb.org