

UK Horse Pasture Evaluation Program

Dr. Ray Smith
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Program Coordinator

Overview:

The University of Kentucky is developing stronger ties with the state's equine industry in the areas of research, extension and teaching. Many horse farms in the Bluegrass Region are interested in UK's assistance with pasture evaluation. During the fall of 2005 a team from the UK Forage Extension Program conducted a pilot project to evaluate horse pastures on 14 Central Kentucky farms. One of the focuses of the pilot project was the evaluation of pastures for percent tall fescue and the potential of fescue stands to cause fescue toxicity in pregnant broodmares. In 2006 and 2007, the program was continued with tremendous success.

Evaluations from previous years were very positive. Mike Owens, past president of the Kentucky Thoroughbred Farm Managers Club (KTFMC) and program participant said, "UK's Pasture Evaluation project has proved to be a very useful tool in pasture management on the farm. The project identifies and gives the percentage of grasses and weeds in any given pasture, along with the ergovaline levels. Their identification and recommendations are presented in a professional package with a CD that makes for a quick reference tool." Another KTFMC former president, Steve Johnson, states that the "equine industry sorely needs the monitoring and consultation being provided with this service." Steve goes on to add that "It's very gratifying to know that UK is addressing the issues that are important on horse farms in Central Kentucky." A recent participant adds, "I cannot imagine having access to a program that will have as much overall impact on the quality of the horses that we are producing here in the Bluegrass. This program is long overdue!"



With the success of the program, we are pleased to offer an expanded pasture evaluation service to horse farms in the Central Bluegrass area in 2008. Please read through the options below. If interested in this year's program, please complete and submit the attached information form; farms will be contacted in the order in which we receive the forms. We look forward to the program this year, and plan to continue expanding the number of farms and services in coming years.

Pasture Evaluation Program Timetable:

The 2008 pasture evaluation program will begin in April and end in October.

Farm Enrollment:

Simply fill out the enclosed enrollment form and fax or mail it to Dr. Ray Smith. You may also email the requested information to tom.keene@uky.edu. If you have any questions on the program call Tom Keene at 859-257-3144 or Dr. Ray Smith at 859-257-3358 or visit the U.K. Forage Website at <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage/HorseLinks.htm>. We will first make an initial visit to your farm to explain the complete details of the

evaluation program before the actual sampling date. The basic evaluation service *includes up to 6 paddocks per farm, but no more than 80 acres* (for example, if all of your paddocks are 25 acres in size we could only sample 3 paddocks). See the following pages for additional options. For farms *less than 20 acres*, feel free to contact the program coordinator for alternate pricing.

Basic Service: 6 paddocks or 80 acres (as described above): \$750

- ❖ Assessment of pasture species composition
 - Tall fescue
 - KY Bluegrass
 - Orchardgrass
 - Clover
 - Weeds (species identified)
 - Bare Soil
- ❖ Percent of tall fescue plants infected with fungal endophyte
- ❖ Concentration of ergovaline (toxin) in tall fescue at date of sampling
- ❖ Estimate of ergovaline intake for horses grazing each paddock
- ❖ Comprehensive soil map of entire farm
 - Carrying capacity based on each soil type present on farm
 - Recommended acres per horse per year for each soil type present on farm
 - Explanation of soils on farm with total acres of each type
- ❖ We will link you with your county agent to provide consultation for soil sampling and analysis.
- ❖ Satellite photo of your farm
- ❖ GPS map of each sampled field, useful for tracking improvements in pasture management
- ❖ Printed digital photographs of individual pasture areas sampled
- ❖ “Pasture and Paddock Action Log” for keeping records in each field
- ❖ General guidelines on management of pastures, including options for: weed control, soil fertility, grazing management, pasture renovation and reestablishment, grass species and variety choices, tall fescue management, interpreting ergovaline levels, and options for removal of tall fescue from Central Kentucky pastures
- ❖ CD ROM containing all data, photographs, analysis, and an electronic version of “Pasture and Paddock action Log” in Microsoft Excel
- ❖ Complete set of University of Kentucky extension publications related to horse pastures and selected national and international publications
- ❖ *Survey* of the evaluation of your farm. Your input, suggestions and ideas are vital for our program as we try to make it as beneficial as possible and expand services in coming years.



Final delivery of comprehensive report issued to each farm:

We will have a personal follow-up consultation, lasting about one hour, with forage experts from UK to interpret and explain all of the information gathered for your farm. This will be an opportunity to discuss your farm’s pasture management in detail, and ask any questions concerning your farm.

Additional options:

- ❖ **Pilot Study Measuring Ascarid Egg Contamination** Optional pilot study. If preliminary research is successful, we will collect soil and plant samples from one pasture, examine ascarid egg contamination microscopically, and report any concerns and recommendations for that pasture. **No charge this year for the pilot study.**
- ❖ **Whole farm service or additional fields** If you would like more than 6 fields or 80 acres sampled, we will do so for **\$10 per acre.**
- ❖ **Follow-up ergovaline measurements** We will re-sample your fields at a later date and report the ergovaline levels. **Cost: \$75 for each field sampled.**

***UK Horse Pasture Evaluation Program
 Enrollment Form***

Date: _____

Farm Name: _____

Farm Owner: _____

Farm Manager: _____

Contact Person: _____

Phone: Office _____

Cellular _____

FAX: _____

Email: _____

Physical Address of the farm:

Fields to be sampled (6 fields; up to 80 acres for \$750):

	Field #	Acres/Field		Field #	Acres/Field
1			6		
2			7		
3			8		
4			9		
5			10		

Additional Options:

- Ascarid Egg Contamination Pilot Study, no charge
- Additional fields/acres (list above), \$10 per acre
- Follow-up ergovaline measurements, \$75 per field

If possible, please include a farm map with the enrollment form.

FAX this form to:

1-859-323-1952 (attn: Dr. Ray Smith)

Or mail to:

Dr. Ray Smith
 N222-D Agriculture Science North
 University of Kentucky
 Lexington, KY 40546-0091