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**MARYLAND
COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION**

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK • EASTERN SHORE

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APRIL EXTENSION HAPPENINGS

CALL THE EXTENSION OFFICE TO REGISTER

QuickBooks for Horse Operations

April 6 & 7, 10 am-3 pm, Talbot County (410-822-1244)

Maryland Day

The University of Maryland, College Park, opens its doors every year on the last Saturday in April to alumni and their families, parents, prospective students, the business community and residents of the surrounding Baltimore-Washington Metro area. Join us on Saturday, April 30th, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm; our beautiful campus will buzz with activity as visitors join students, faculty, staff and their families for a day of learning, exploration and fun for the entire community.

Be sure to visit the Campus farm for a horse show with equitation demonstrated by University of Maryland Equestrian Club (UMEC) members. The show will highlight in-hand showing and jumping as well as a fun Faculty/Staff class and special demonstrations. Fun crafts for kids include horseshoe painting and having your picture taken with a horse.

Cross the street to the Animal & Avian Sciences Courtyard for a free taste of World Famous University of Maryland Ice Cream. Either way, you don't want to miss Maryland Day!

Q I renovated and reseeded my pasture late last summer to a mixture of orchardgrass and bluegrass. It looks good now and I'd like to keep it that way. How should I manage this pasture to keep the grass in and the weeds down?

A Now that you have achieved that good, thick stand of grass, fertilization and grazing management will be key practices to keep it that way. The two mismanagement practices that lead to loss of productive pastures and invasion of weeds are lack of fertilization and overgrazing.

Predominantly grass pastures (pastures with less than 25 percent clover or other legumes) should have 150 lb/acre of actual nitrogen applied annually in three split applications to keep the orchardgrass and bluegrass healthy and productive. The first application of 50 lb/acre should be made in early to mid-March, about the time orchardgrass and bluegrass are breaking dormancy and beginning to green up (start spring growth). A second application of 50 lb/acre should be made early to mid-May and the third application of 50 lb/acre in late August to early September. The amount of fertilizer material to be applied depends upon the type of fertilizer used. For example, ammonium nitrate contains 34% nitrogen (34-0-0), thus 150 lb of material would be applied to obtain the 50 lb of actual nitrogen.

Overgrazing is the primary reason for loss of grasses such as orchardgrass, tall fescue and timothy from pastures. These grasses should not be grazed closer than 2 to 3 inches. Many horse pastures are grazed to a half inch or less. When these grasses are grazed lower than 2 to 3 inches, almost all of the leaf tissue is removed and the "photosynthetic factory" to provide energy for growth is removed. Also, these grasses store energy reserves in the lower stem bases and crowns. When grazed too short, energy reserves for regrowth have also been removed and the plants "starve to death" as a result of the loss of energy reserves and lack of leaf area for photosynthesis.

The combination of overgrazing and low soil fertility leads to weedy pastures. A healthy, dense, stand of grasses or grasses/legumes will help to keep weeds suppressed. Overgrazing weakens the desired grasses and legumes, removes competition and enables weed seeds to germinate and grow. So, overgrazing and lack of fertilization lead to weedy pastures.

Les Vough

Forage Crops Extension Specialist

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