



MARYLAND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK • EASTERN SHORE

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JANUARY EXTENSION HAPPENINGS

Central Maryland Grazing Conference, January 24 in Westminster – including discussions on weed control and forage testing – \$15 registration fee. Call Bryan Butler of the Carroll County Extension Office (410-386-2760, 888-326-9645) for more information or to register by January 10. Discussions address cattle, but several areas also apply to horses!

New Pesticide Applicator Training:

- Anne Arundel County – January 9, 7-9 pm (410-222-6759 or 301-970-8250, ext. 6759)

Pesticide Private Applicator Test Review:

- Garrett County – January 10, 7-9 pm (301-334-6960)

Pesticide Private Applicator Exam:

- Garrett County – January 17, time TBA (301-334-6960)
- Anne Arundel County – January 23, 7-9 pm (410-222-6759 or 301-970-8250, ext. 6759)

land that was unfit for farming. The poor or erosive soils, steep slopes, limited access or other factors that prevented the farmer from working the land are the same obstacles a horse owner will face in trying to convert the land into pasture. Understanding this and the added environmental benefits provided by the forest will help the horse owner critically consider the effort involved and appreciate the potential impacts that can result from clearing forest.

The land clearing process is no longer “slash and burn,” as our ancestors did over 400 years ago. If a landowner determines that removal of the forest cover is the only option, then he or she must consider a number of factors. These considerations include: survey of property boundaries; wetlands and soil delineation and limitations; expense of clearing; stump removal; debris disposal and grading; plans for storm water management and sediment control; pasture establishment and maintenance costs; and permits for clearing, grading, etc.

These factors will vary from county to county, but should be considered as part of a comprehensive plan for clearing forest. A complete description of the proposed land clearing work is required. This includes areas to be cleared, county permits, sediment control, any fill or grade adjustment, and disposal of waste material (trees and tree stumps). Provide a site map showing property boundaries, work area boundaries, adjacent streets, existing grades, existing drainage, proposed new grades and drainage paths, any wetlands and/or poor soil conditions (steep slopes, unstable soils, etc.).

Not only will the land clearing and pasture establishment processes take about two years to complete, the monetary investment will be high.

Ask the Experts

Q I am hoping to buy a small farm so I can bring my horses home. But with this crazy real estate market, I’m finding I can’t afford anything but wooded land. What steps do I need to take in order to turn the woods into pasture for my horses?

A First, you need to ask, “Why is this land wooded?” Most wooded properties have steep slopes and/or low soil productivity factors such as wet or poorly drained areas, rock outcrop or shallow depth to bedrock. To turn woodland into pasture, you have to clear the land. Land clearing means a high capital investment (starting at about \$18,000/acre) and the end result may return limited success or possibly a complete failure in terms of having a productive pasture. There is a reason this land was not farmed before, and the forest that is present has a variety of benefits for soil protection, water quality, wildlife habitat and other natural resources.

There are a number of factors that limit the success of converting forestland to pasture fields. Traditionally, forests flourish on

Pasture Lot	Wooded Lot
Higher price to purchase, but lower price to convert field into pasture	Lower price to purchase, but higher price to convert field into pasture
Ready to be used for pasture fields	Permits to remove trees, site preparation and grading; two years before pasture fields can be used
Within a year, a well-established pasture can be achieved (75% of desirable forages)	Within two years, a poorly-established pasture can be achieved (40% of desirable forages)
Lower yearly maintenance on pasture	Higher yearly maintenance on pasture
Fewer sink holes	Yearly tree stump removal, sink hole repairs
Better footing conditions due to forage quality	Muddy areas due to poor soil conditions

For more information, stop by Expo booths #220-221, the Maryland Department of Agriculture