



September 2009

## **LSU AgCenter offers Master Horseman Video**

There are many horse training videos on the market today. Now there is a horse training video series produced by the LSU AgCenter. This series is in conjunction with the Master Horseman course taught by the LSU AgCenter. The instructional video is taught, for the most part, by Dr. Clint Depew, LSU AgCenter Equine Specialist (retired), with the help of Howard Cormier and Cleve Weisgerber, LSU AgCenter Regional Equine Agents, and Judy Weisgerber, Master Horseman graduate.

The two videos are designed to be an instructional course on training from the ground up. It begins with basic ground work and continues to lead changes. For those people that have participated in the Master Horseman program, these videos will serve as a refresher course. These videos will make a great addition to your horse training library.

The cost of the two videos is \$30.00. You can use the attached order form to order the videos directly from the LSU AgCenter.

## **Ryegrass Planting for Horses**

By Howard J. Cormier  
Southwest Region Equine Agent  
LSU AgCenter

Ryegrass provides high quality forage from late November through late May. It is self fed, inexpensive, convenient, and provides excellent nutrition and exercise for horses that do not have to be kept in a stall. However, it can be expensive to fertilize if it is not managed for maximum grazing. (I am a big believer in preparing a seedbed. Most of my comments apply to doing it that way. Throwing seed over an existing pasture will help, but will not give the quality or quantity of ryegrass that planting on a prepared seedbed will.)

First of all, why is ryegrass for horses different than for cattle? It isn't, except that most cattlemen plant larger acreages, and many times the horse owners do not have the tractors and equipment that full time farmers or cattlemen have to manage their horse operations. On the positive side, because horse operations tend to be smaller, the horse owner can devote more time and attention to detail to do everything needed to get a good stand on a few acres. The first thing needed is a soil sample to see what fertilizer is needed. Then, get the grass removed so that you can do a good job disking. Now let's get to the nuts and bolts of planting.

When is it planted?

Annual ryegrass is planted on a prepared seedbed from Sept. 20-Oct. 15. (For planting into established grass, overseed approx. Oct. 15.) When you plant is important, but ryegrass will not usually come up unless it gets a rain of at least a half inch or more. Even though the ground is dry, throw the seed out. When it rains, the ryegrass will germinate and start growing. Do not wait until it rains to plant, as that can delay you several weeks, and the ryegrass will still not germinate until the next good rain. Don't plant too early. We have a problem with armyworms that will eat the seedlings after they come up, so delay planting until the recommended time.

How much do you plant?

Due to the cost, I try to plant one acre per two horses, and I limit grazing to about two hours per day, at least until the weather warms in the spring. I regulate grazing to allow more grazing time when the grass is getting ahead of the horses. You can plant 1 acre per horse, if you have the space. This will require less management in order to save the grass. Separating the pasture into small plots that can be rotated will make a tremendous difference in how much grazing you will get. Horses tend to eat the grass so short that it does not regrow quickly, so rotate when it gets no shorter than four inches or so.

How do you actually prepare the soil?

Prepare the soil by disking to remove the old grass. Tall grass will be hard to manage, and will interfere with the whole process. After you disk, try to cultipack, harrow, or drag an old gate or corral panel to level the soil and break up clods. Don't disk deeply—just enough to remove the old grass so the seed makes good soil contact. Deep plowing will cause bogging and trampling. Plan to ditch well so you have no standing water.

How much seed is needed?

Use 30 lbs. of seed per acre on a prepared seedbed (use 20 lbs. when over seeding into a sod). I like the variety, Prine. It has done well for me the last few years, and is resistant to rust and blast. Research supports this variety in south Louisiana due to high yields. Other top yielding varieties include Big Boss, TAMTBO, Marshall, and Maximus. (Go to [lsuagcenter.com/en/crops\\_livestock/livestock/pasture\\_forage/Cultivar+Evaluations/Coolseason+Pasture+and+Forage+Varieties.htm](http://lsuagcenter.com/en/crops_livestock/livestock/pasture_forage/Cultivar+Evaluations/Coolseason+Pasture+and+Forage+Varieties.htm) for details about your area of the state.)

A hand seeder will work for a couple of acres, or you can use a small electric seeder mounted on the back of a 4- wheeler for bigger pastures. Tractor mounted seeders usually use a PTO driven seeder. Plant half of what is recommended, then crisscross the field in the opposite direction with the remaining half of the seed. This will insure that you do not run out of seed before the job is done. You can cover the seed lightly with a harrow, or simply leave it on top of the ground. Don't plow it in again, as it will be put too deep to come through the soil cover.

How much fertilizer is needed?

Take a soil test to see what fertilizer you needed. You can bring the soil test results to some fertilizer dealers and they can make a blend of what you need. You will find that fertilizer is expensive, hence the value of a soil test to know exactly what you need, and not put anything you don't need. Shop around. In the absence of a soil test, put 200 lbs. per acre of 6-24-24 fertilizer, or 8-24-24, at planting. This will cost about \$20-25 per 50 lbs., or \$80-100 per acre. This will give you what is needed for germination, root development, and early growth. If you can disk it in, that is better. If not, just spread it on top of the soil. The rain will carry it down. Disking it in after planting the ryegrass might bury the seed too deeply.

(When overseeding, delay fertilization until the warm season grass goes dormant in cool weather. Fertilizing too soon will stimulate the warm season grasses, at the expense of the ryegrass.)

When it rains and the ryegrass seedlings just come up, they will be like hair- very fine. When they get about 3 inches tall, fertilize with 200 lbs. of 33% (ammonium nitrate or blend of nitrogen) per acre. For small plots, 33% nitrogen in 50 lb. bags will cost about \$13-16 per 50 lb. bag. Urea also provides nitrogen (46%) and costs \$9 per 50 lbs., but is usually sold only in bulk (half ton bags) for larger acreage. Use about 150

lbs. per acre if urea is your nitrogen source. A fertilizer spreader cart can be loaned or rented for larger operations. If you have to wait until the ground is firm enough to support a fertilizer cart, just wait. Don't track the field up while it's muddy, or you'll hurt the stand for later. We paid \$80-100 per acre for the complete fertilizer- 8-24-24, and another \$40-\$50 per acre for the nitrogen. The cost of seed is about \$15 per acre, so we're close to \$150 per acre, without the cost of labor, fuel, and equipment. This is why it's important to use all the ryegrass you grow.

It is critical that you fertilize with nitrogen (ammonium nitrate, urea, or a nitrogen blend) as soon as the ryegrass comes up. Ryegrass makes little or no growth at temperatures below 55 degrees. You must fertilize early so the grass can grow while temps are warm. After it gets cold, fertilizer won't help, until it warms up again. You can apply more nitrogen if it is needed in early spring, but you might be able to get by without it, if conditions are right, and you have a good rotation set up.

About a month after you fertilize with nitrogen, if you have had enough rain, you should have 6 inch tall ryegrass, ready to graze. That will be about mid- November to Thanksgiving. Graze as soon as you can without hurting the grass. When ryegrass doesn't pull out of the ground, start limited grazing for an hour a days, then go to two hours a day after the horses are accustomed to it in a week or so. An hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon are better, but time consuming ,if you don't have the freedom of schedule to open and close gates twice a day. Leaving them on too long will result in trampling when they lie down to rest. Take them off of the pasture so they can lie down outside on a dry lot or other pasture. As soon as they get full and start resting, try to remove them.

Plan to divide the pasture into several small plots after you finish fertilizing. Electric fence is ideal for this. Plan to repair the fence a few times if the horses are not accustomed to it. They will learn quickly, and you will get to where you don't even have to keep the charger on all the time.

In summary, prepare a good seedbed. Plant by late October, preferably before a good rain, fertilize according to a soil test, or follow recommendations. Fertilize with nitrogen when the grass first comes up. Limit grazing at first, and set up rotational grazing pens to maximize yield.

If you follow these instructions, and have luck with adequate rainfall, you will have a good winter forage program for your horses.

Call or email me if you have any questions.

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## Louisiana Stock Horse Assoc. announces plans for the 2009 Finals

The Louisiana Stock Horse Assoc. has made plans to conduct the 2009 year end finals. The finals will be held on November 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, in Leesville, LA. To qualify for the finals, a person must have competed in at least one LaSH show in 2009. The finals will be totally separate from the competition for LaSH year end awards. Points won at the finals will not count toward year end awards.

The LaSH board has decided to give awards at the finals based on the average winners for the two days of showing at the finals. Awards will be given for both Hi – point and class awards in all divisions. The awards for the 2009 Finals range from trophy stirrups for high point winners to vest for top individuals in each division. Class winners will receive Gist buckles and awards in the classes will vary from items like breast collars, winter blankets, bronc halters, gear bags, navaho pads, hay bags, clocks, boot jacks, and spur straps. There will be lots of nice awards given away to the average winners.

This will be a great opportunity to compete and win some nice awards, especially if you haven't been able to attend all the shows throughout the year and maybe are not eligible for year end awards.

Those of you that are not LaSH members but would like to participate in the finals still have a chance to join and participate in two shows. LaSH has two more regular season shows at Leesville on September 12<sup>th</sup> and Sulphur on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

For more information on LaSH or the finals, contact Judy Weisgerber at (337) 238 – 0193 or [jweisger@bellsouth.net](mailto:jweisger@bellsouth.net).

## Prepare Plans and Farms for Hurricane Season

*by: Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine*

With the hurricane season upon us, Louisiana State University (LSU) is reminding horse owners of steps they can take to ready themselves in advance for evacuation, as well as other recommended tasks related to hurricane preparedness.

Here are some tips from the [Louisiana State Animal Response Team](#) and [LSU School of Veterinary Medicine](#) for effectively preparing horse owners in areas prone to hurricane damage:

- Be sure your horse is current regarding vaccinations for tetanus and the encephalitis viruses (Eastern, Western, and West Nile).
- Network a "plan" with the horse or farm animal-owning neighbors in your parish. Get to know your

neighbors, plan a meeting, talk through different scenarios, and identify the local resources for dealing with disaster situations. Be prepared to help one another.

- Be sure that your horse has two forms of identification: (1) Permanent identification such as a microchip, tattoo, or brand, and (2) Luggage-type tags secured to the tail and halter. Be sure to use a leather halter for break-away purposes. Fetlock tags are also useful and can be acquired on-line or from a local farm supply store. Be sure to print your name, address, and a phone number (the phone number of someone out of state might be best in the event of phone outages) legibly on the tags.
- Be sure to store the record of permanent identification, such as the microchip number, in an accessible location. It is recommended that horse owners keep a second copy of this information with a family member or friend in a distant location, but through which it will be easily accessible.
- If you plan to evacuate (and you should *always* evacuate if possible) in the event of a storm, have a destination and route(s) mapped out well in advance. It is important to evacuate your horses a sufficient distance from the coast. A good general guideline in Louisiana is north of Interstate 10. Arrange to leave a minimum of 72 hours before the arrival of the storm. The worst thing that can happen to you is to get stuck in traffic with a trailer full of horses and a hurricane approaching. Provide your neighbors with the contact information they can use to reach you at your evacuation site.
- Prepare a waterproof emergency animal care kit with all the items you normally use, including medications, salves or ointments, vet wrap, bandages, tape, etc. Place the kit in a safe place where you can easily access it after a storm.
- Clean up your property and remove all debris that might be tossed around by storm- and hurricane-force winds. Be careful of down power lines which can be "live" and represent a danger to people and animals.

If you plan to weather the storm at home, there are some general guidelines to follow:

- The choice of keeping your horse in a barn or an open field is up to you. Use common sense, taking into consideration barn structure, trees, power lines, condition of surrounding properties, and the likelihood of the property and structure to flood. Farms subject to storm surge or flash flooding should turn their horses out so horses are not trapped.
- Remove all items from the barn aisle and walls, and store them in a safe place.

- Have at least a two- to three-week supply of hay and feed. Wrap or cover hay in plastic tarps, and store feed in plastic water-tight containers.
- Place these supplies in the highest and driest area possible, out of reach of floodwaters.
- Fill clean plastic garbage cans with fresh water, secure the tops, and store them in the barn for use after the storm.
- Have an emergency barn kit containing a chain saw and fuel, hammers, a saw, nails, screws, and fencing materials. Place this kit in a secure area before the storm hits so that it is easily accessible after the storm.
- Be sure to have an ample supply of flashlights and batteries.
- Listen to local radio stations in your area. If Internet access is available, access state-run Web sites that contain accurate status information (i.e., State Police, State University, and State Department of Agriculture). Take all cautions and warnings seriously and act accordingly.

Visit [Equine.vetmed.lsu.edu](http://Equine.vetmed.lsu.edu) for more detailed information regarding horse hurricane preparations and other emergency and health-related information.

For more tips for veterinary clinics and large equine facilities, see "[Preparing a Veterinary Practice for a Hurricane](#)."

### **Horse Tips**

- **Feeding Alfalfa hay can decrease ulcers.**
- **If a horse can feel the slightest thing such as a fly landing on his hair, why is it necessary to kick or whip a horse severely to make it respond? Could it be the fact that the horse has not been taught to respond to pressure and release?**
- **There is no such thing as a stupid horse! There are just those horses that don't understand what they are being asked to do. Maybe it could be the way that you are asking them that might be the problem? Remember to always reward the slightest try!**
- **It takes approximately 18 minutes for the horse to consume a pound of hay and approximately 4 minutes to consume a pound of grain.**
- **If you get a horse that is emaciated, start the horse on very, very small amounts of alfalfa hay ( less than a handful), and feed multiple times per day.**

**Cleve Weisgerber  
Regional Equine Agent  
LSU AgCenter**

## ORDER FORM

### Master Horseman Horse Training (2) DVD'S

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DVD's (2) Cost: \$30.00  
(Includes shipping)

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Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Please allow two weeks for delivery.

