



WHAT'S IN YOUR PASTURE?



IDENTIFY ERGOT FUNGUS IN PASPALUM
PART 1 GRASS ID SERIES

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BEFORE WE GET INTO IT

Welcome and thanks for downloading this guide PART 1 in identifying pastures series.

I'm Julie Wright, the founder of THE HOOF CO (formerly Bare Equine Australia). I've spent the best part of the last 20 years "bending over for a living" as a Certified Equine Myofunctional Therapist before transitioning into Equine Podio therapy. That is as a Hoof Care professional for the last 20 years. I've always had a special interest in "Hoof Funk" - that is now famously termed by us as "Smelly Cracks".

I'm on a mission to educate and empower horse owners about the detrimental effects of these pathologies if left unchecked and unattended to.

I am not formally trained in agronomy, but I also have a special interest born from necessity into identifying common pasture grasses, problems associated with these and how we can build healthier pastures for our horses to graze on.

So lets get into it.....



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There is nothing better than beautiful big pastures for horses. Heads down grazing enjoying an intake of energy, protein, vitamins and some minerals. BUT do you know what they are grazing on?



The last few seasons have without a doubt been challenging to say the least all over Australia. From drought to floods, lockdowns restricting service providers and all the conditions surrounding that! Post drought, the seasons have been exceptional for pasture growth. The abundance of pastures is certainly fantastic for fattening cattle - but for Equine management, it's certainly a challenge!

Have you ever stopped to take a closer look at the species growing in your pasture and identify which warm and cool season grasses you may have growing? Or is grass just grass to you? Well read on because I'm going to highlight in this series some common pasture grasses - Warm Season (C4) and Cool Season (C3).

First off is PASPALUM a C4 grass which can harbour Mycotoxins that contribute to Greasy Heel, Rainscald and Photosensitivity on Muzzles (sunburnt scabby noses) along with other problems.

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WARM SEASON GRASSES - C₄

Warm season grasses (classed as C₄) are those which typically grow through the summer months

COOL SEASON GRASSES - C₃

Cool season grasses (classed as C₃) are those which grow typically grown through the cooler winter months.



LEGUMES are an important part of pasture health too. Examples of such are lucerne, clovers, medics and trefoils just to name a few.

Grasses and legumes are also either Perennial or Annual.

Perennial means the species will continue to re-emerge for multiple seasons, year after year.

Annual means the species will usually last 1, maybe 2 seasons before the plant dies off (although there is the ability for the plant to reproduce via seeds).

Some of these grasses and legumes are susceptible to "mycotoxins" which are the fungi that occur on the plants and once ingested by grazing stock can cause a multitude of problems.

Let's have a closer look at one of these common grasses.

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PASPALUM - Common Paspalum (*Paspalum dilatatum*) Perennial.



Paspalum is a densely tufted grass, usually 50-90cms tall at maturity. A native of South America, it became the most commonly sown grass on the North Coast of NSW prior to 1960. It is still sown today and is naturalised in many habitats. It grows on a variety of soils - but best on moist fertile soils.

Paspalum is susceptible to paspalum ergot, a black fungal infection of the flowerhead which is toxic to stock and causes the seed heads to be sticky in summer.

WHY IS PASPALUM ERGOT A PROBLEM?

Well, apart from being really really sticky which means the seeds can easily get stuck in and around the horses' eyes, the other problem is the ergot can cause "paspalum staggers". It is more common in cattle but can affect horses.

These mycotoxins can also cause photosensitivity which will show up externally on your horse as greasy heel, a sunburnt crusty look to their nose and facial area. Any disruption to the gut health of your horses can potentially show up in their hoof health as well so keep a good check on them and discuss with your hoof care professional if you notice something is not quite right.

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PASPALUM seed head. These small seeds will eventually dry a little and become quite sticky.

One way to manage this is to remove horses grazing paspalum pasture when the seed heads are present. You can mow or slash this area and return horses to this pasture after the grass clippings have broken down and mulched into the soil. Frequent grazing or slashing may reduce the emergence of seed heads.

PASPALUM is a tufted grass meaning that it grows together in clumps. It does not spread via runners in the ground. Each plant is individual..



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PASPALUM seed head
affected by Ergot
Fungus on our property.

Example of
Paspalum Ergot
Fungus (photo
credit - Local Land
Services NSW).



AFFECTED HORSES may display some of these signs if
affected by Paspalum staggers:

- Muscle tremors
- Head shaking
- Uncoordination
- Falling over when overstimulated or stressed.

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO?

To minimise risk to your stock, you can either lock off the paddocks you know are affected or manage these pastures before they become a problem by frequently mowing, slashing or grazing before seed heads emerge.

TOXIN BINDER

Feed a TOXIN BINDER such as MYCOSORB A+ which offers superior binding ability. This may help alleviate any photosensitivity associated with Mycotoxins in the pasture.



Economical feed rate of 2g per 100kg of bodyweight per day. This equates to 10g per 500kg animal. Available for purchase in our online store.

PHOTOSENSITIVITY EXAMPLES.

If your horse is suffering from Greasy Heel, Rainscald, Photosensitivity, the Sunburnt nose look then you should also consider some topical support in conjunction with Mycosorb A+.

Our Zinc Putty has been developed to address these issues and is favoured by many customers Australia wide.

Some reference photos below for what Greasy Heel and Photosensitivity on the Muzzle may present like in your horse.



TOPICAL SUPPORT



Jam packed with Zinc Oxide in a Beeswax Balm, our Zinc Putty may assist with topical management. It's named Putty for a reason. It's thick, stays put and lasts for a few days in between applications. This is not a "cream" nor simply an oil mixed with Zinc Oxide.

We have included Neem Oil and Kunzea amongst other natural cosmetic grade ingredients in a 300gram pot. This gets to work so you don't have to.

Also available in a combo pack with Mycosorb A+.

I HOPE YOU FOUND THIS ARTICLE HELPFUL.
ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE SHOOT THEM
THROUGH.

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