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AGRONOMY & EQUINE EDITOR

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I WANT TO BREED MY MARE THIS YEAR, WHAT SHOULD I BE ASKING WHEN CHOOSING A STALLION?

This is a great question that I wish more people would ask. The first thing I like to know from my mare owner is what they are looking for in a stallion (breed, temperament, discipline, marketability, etc.). This question will help you narrow down your search before you dive any deeper. I recommend before settling on one stallion you should go see the stallion, get a video, and/or see his offspring in action. This will help you determine the attributes this sire may possess and pass on to his offspring. Make sure the stallion you choose compliments your mare's qualities.

Once you have seen the stallion or his offspring and you have decided on a particular stallion next you need to investigate breeding fees and contracts. Find out exactly what the stud fee or breeding fee includes. At some facilities, this fee includes the non-refundable booking fee. This is the fee that holds a spot in the stallion's book for you to breed this year. Other stud fees do not include the booking fee and is an extra fee you may not be counting on when budgeting for breeding. Find this out first before signing a contract. Look carefully at the contract for any hidden fees such as chute fees, handling fees, packaging fees, etc. These small fees can add up quickly. A stallion may only have a \$500 stud fee but may also have a \$250 booking fee, and a \$100 chute fee per collection. So, your one collection may end up costing you \$850 without any vet fees on your end.

Does the stud fee include the first collection and shipment of semen? If not, this is another fee you need to factor into the total cost of breeding your mare. Most stud fees do include the first collection and shipment but do not assume this is the case with all stallions. Are you breeding with shipped semen? If you are, then there are another slew of questions that need to be asked if they are not already answered in the contract. I do not mind for people to ask me if my stallion ships well and if he has good conception rates. I always recommend you ask this question of your stallion owners, even though you may not always get a straight answer, it will give you a better idea of how easy or difficult the process of breeding your mare may become. If the stallion has a marginal to poor conception rate with overnight semen you may want to request a counter-to-counter shipment or on the farm breeding.

Let's assume you are taking the mare to the farm to be bred for either live cover or AI on the farm. I would visit the farm first before making the final decision.

- Is it a place you feel comfortable leaving your mare?
- Are there extra fees for the veterinary palpations while she is at the farm?
- Are there extra handling fees?
- What tests/vaccinations does the mare need to have before coming to the farm?
- Will the mare have turnout and is that extra? Be specific as to how you want your mare cared for so you can be sure to find out how much those extra things may cost.
- Wynne DiGrassie, DVM, MS, DACT, CVA

Owner of Mountain View Equine Hospital, Steeles Tavern, VA

- What day is the stallion collected for shipment? This is important for the timing of when your veterinarian needs to be on the farm to check your mare and order semen.
- How is the semen shipped? Is it overnight via FedEx, UPS, DHL, or is it counter-to-counter through an airport? If your closest airport is four hours away and he has to be shipped counter-to-counter for same day delivery you have to determine if you want to make that drive. For overnight shipments I prefer that it is shipped directly to your veterinarian. They normally have regular UPS or FedEx deliver days and can schedule their day better knowing they do not need to come to your farm until the semen arrives at their clinic.

How much notice do you need to give the stallion owner prior to ordering semen? Most require 24hour notice so they can make arrangements of how to plan the day and how many containers they need to ship. They can start the paperwork the night before making packaging the day of shipment go a lot smoother.



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Feeding rates will vary with size, ago, temperament, health status, forcinge quality, climate and activity lewi. Feed at regular times - at lease twice daily - with three daily leadings perirend. Lat horease feed in a natural position from troughs with large bottoms, placed at normal he height or below. Do not feed free-choice. Prevent rapid eating of any leed stuff.

Always feed a minimum of 1.0 to 1.2 lbs. per 100 lbs. of body weight of good quality hay or the equivalent in pasture.

Reduce and/or delay feeding a horse which is hot, excited, showing pain, has a fever or diarrhea. Consult your veterinarian if any problems arise.

Any feed changes should be made gradually over 7 to 10 days. Changes in the rate of feeding should not exceed 1.0 lb. per day of each horse.

Provide plenty of fresh, clean water at all times. Provide your horse access to salt. Maintain an effective control program for internal parasites. Examine your horses teeth annually and consult with your veterinarian on a regular basis.

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ON THE FENCE

When choosing a fence type for your horse property, keep safety, maintenance, and aesthetics in mind.

Never take farm fencing projects lightly. You'll likely have to live with the resulting paddocks and pastures for years to come, and that can be frustrating and inconvenient if you're unhappy with their appearance or practicality.



Four-Board Wood

This is the classic horse fence seen in America, England, and other parts of the world. It is a proven barrier that contains fractious racehorses and valuable breeding stock. It consists of treated wood posts, usually 8 inches in diameter, placed 8 feet on center. The posts are 8 feet long, with approximately 3 ½ feet of that below ground. Rough-sawn 1-by-6-inch oak boards 16 feet long are then spaced equally with the joints staggered for strength and nailed to the inside of the post. By staggering the boards and placing them on the inside, you create a very strong and somewhat flexible barrier.

- **Safety:** Very safe, as long as you maintain and replace the boards as needed.
- Initial Cost: Moderately high. Remember to include painting in your estimates.
- Long-Term Maintenance Cost: The biggest maintenance issue with this fence is that you need to paint it every two to three years and replace damaged or decayed boards.
- Aesthetic Appeal: Excellent. Installing this kind of fence can change a farm's entire look.

Diamond or V-Mesh Wire

Diamond-mesh and V-mesh are woven wire fence systems developed specifically for horses. Like four-board fences, they consist of treated wood posts set on 8-foot centers. A 1-by-6-inch oak rail usually protects the top of the wire fence and creates a strong visual barrier. Some property owners set the fence off the ground enough to allow string trimmers to get underneath. As with all wire fence that relies on tension to prevent sagging, it can be difficult to create curves and radiused corners because the tension pulls posts in over time. A top rail can help hold the posts vertical, acting as a brace, but it might be insufficient for tight curves.

- Safety: Excellent. This fence is very strong and somewhat flexible, without the risk of breakage. The tight mesh prevents hooves, including foal feet, from going through the fence.
- Initial Cost: High. Good-quality woven diamond or V-mesh is among the most expensive wire fencing types available.
- Long-Term Maintenance Cost: Medium/low. Good-quality mesh is galvanized and strong enough to withstand most impact without damage. The posts and top rail (if used) will require periodic painting. One downside of all wire fence, except high-tensile, however, is if a tree falls on it, the wire stretches very little, potentially pulling down or breaking a long length of fence. It can be difficult to repair small sections because long runs might need to be restretched after repair. Also, trimming weeds under wire fencing is always more difficult than trimming under the bottom board of a wood fence.
- Aesthetic Appeal: This type of fence with a top rail is very appealing, especially to experienced horse people who appreciate its safety and the investment made.

High-Tensile in a Polymer Rail

This fencing type is designed to provide the strength and flexibility of high-tensile fence, with a polymer sheathing or band that creates the look of board fencing and protects the horse from injury. This sytem's flexibility and strength is unsurpassed if installed correctly on wood posts. You can also use vinyl posts if you monitor them for ultraviolet-ray degradation over time that can make them brittle and dangerous when they break. Like all high-tensile fence wire, the key to installation is proper tension: It must be higher than that of traditional wire fence. You must install larger corner posts and gate posts that are wellbraced— typically with a second post—to withstand the constant tension, even when the ground is soft in the spring or after heavy rains. This type of fence is gaining popularity in horse country.

- Safety: Excellent. The high-tensile wire offers both strength and flexibility, surviving horse and hoof impact without entangling the animal. Again, wood posts are a proven support system.
- Initial Cost: High. The initial cost is almost 50% higher (than four-board wood).
- **Long-Term Maintenance Cost:** Low. This system eliminates the constant maintenance and painting of wood rails.
- Aesthetic Appeal: Excellent. From a distance this fence looks like well- maintained traditional wood plank fencing.



Wire Field

This is the traditional woven wire fence farmers use to contain a variety of livestock. Typically, the horizontal wires are spaced closer at the bottom for smaller animals. However, this fence is sometimes installed upside down for horse applications—the theory being that if an animal gets its foot through, it will have a better chance of extricating it without injury. It might also include a wood top rail for horse pastures. If using a top rail, wood posts must be on 8-foot centers. Some farm owners, especially those with cattle in the Midwest, alternate wood posts with steel T-posts or use all T-posts, except at corners, and a single strand of barbed wire on top. However, T-posts are not recommended for horse fence due to the sharp tops that can cause injury; the plastic caps available for these posts are not a long-term solution. And, generally speaking, barbed wire is inappropriate for horses. As with all wire, installation involves stretching to avoid sags and installing properly braced corner and gate posts.

- Safety: Marginal, depending on how it's installed. Avoid steel T-posts and barbed wire.
- Initial Cost: Moderate
- Long-Term Maintenance Cost: Low. Because it does not look like traditional horse fence, treated posts can be left unpainted. If impact damages the fence, repair involves restretching the fence after replacing the damaged portion.
- Aesthetic Appeal: It looks like farm fence, not horse fence, although a wood top rail can improve its appearance.

High-Tensile Wire

By itself, multistrand high-tensile fence is inappropriate for horses. It is difficult to see, and a panicked horse can be seriously injured if he runs into it. However, when using this type of fence as an internal paddock divider when combined with a band of mesh high-tensile tape at the top to create a visual barrier people have reported little problems. Use wood posts on 30-foot centers with heavily braced posts on each end. Do not use this fence with fractious or hot-blooded horses.

- **Safety:** Poor without a visual barrier, such as high-tensile tape, across the top.
- Initial Cost: Moderately low.
- Long-Term Maintenance Cost: Low.
- Aesthetic Appeal: It doesn't look like horse fence.

The Horse

AUGUSTA CO-OP SOLUTIONS - FENCING PRODUCTS

FENCE TYPES	SKU	DESCRIPTION	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	
No Climb Horse Fence	KHF602	No climb horse fence 60x200	2" X 4" mesh spacing prevents stepping through, walking down or getting over the fence by horses. Smooth side of Square Deal knot prevents injury to animal. Tight mesh also helps to contain other critters such as chickens, other poultry, and dogs.	
Woven Wire	543913	Red Brand, 60" x 50', 2" x 4" Welded Wire		
Fence Board	FB16	Fence Board, Pine, 1" x 6" x 16' (treated)		
Electric Tape	G624544	Gallagher Turbo Tape White 1.5 in 656 ft	Ideal for semi-permanent and portable electric fence. Patented mixed metal wire interconnected every 8 inches for maximum conductivity. 30 times more conductive than standard poly tape. Reinforced edges. Patented open weave for low wind resistance and better conductivity. 1.5 inch width offers maximum visibility to horses and people. Hard wearing UV resistant coating. One year warranty.	
Polywire	G620044	Gallagher, Polywire, 656'	Electric fence conductive material suitable for shorter runs of fence (1/4 mile or less). Economical choice. Made from hard wearing UV resistant materials and contains 6 stainless steel wires. 1/16" diameter. 10,000 Ohms/mile of resistance. One year warranty.	
Electric Wire	K1414	Electric Fence Wire, 14 Gauge, 1/4 Mile	Used for temporary and permanent electric fence applications where the wire will not be moved very often as in on a daily, weekly or semi-weekly basis. 14 gauge wire. Galvanized for resistance to rust and corrosion.	
POST TYPES	SKU	DESCRIPTION		
T-Posts	T70	T-Post, Steel, 7'	1.25 lb/foot of length. Green post with silver top. 5 clips included per post. More clips can be purchased. 200 posts per bundle.	
Wood Posts, 1/2 round 6" x 7'	HR76			
INSULATORS	SKU	DESCRIPTION		
For Wood Posts	DA233025	Dare Insulator Wood Post Tape Yellow 25/bag	Sold by the pack. For any poly electric fence tape up to 1.5 inches wide. Insulators grip tape tightly to help prevent whipping and sawing. Heavy tape holder unlocks to aid installation. Molded of all-weather high density polyethylene.	
For T-Posts	DA2193	Sold by the bag. Versatile insulator with screw tight design that adjusts to fit t-posts, larger diameter fiberglass and sucker rods, and garden U posts. Yellow.		
Pinhook or Claw	DA224925	Dare, Wood Post Insulator, Pinlock, 25/Bag	Sold by the pack. For more permanent installations on wood posts as it withstands the pressure of high tensile fence wire. Attached pin locks and unlocks fence wire. Large flange to prevent arcing and shorts. Molded of high density polyethylene. UV resistant. Includes galvanized nails. Black.	

CREATING A QUALITY PASTURE

Maintaining a quality pasture is vital to ensuring a healthy diet for a horse. The first step to establishing a quality pasture is to use forage seeds that are proven to go that extra mile. For additional detail on the suggested seed selection and assistance in identifying soil conditions, contact Augusta Co-op's Equine Specialists Hillary Morris or Alisa Berry at 540-885-1265.

AUGUSTA CO-OP SOLUTIONS - HORSE PASTURE SEED

SKU	ITEM	TYPE OF GRASS	SEEDING RATE	PROS	CONS
26635	Augusta Coop Horse Pasture Mix 25# (Pennington)	Potomac Orchardgrass 63.45% Annual Ryegrass 15.89% Climax Timothy 9.99% KY Bluegrass 9.92%	Seeding Rate - 25 lbs/acre for new stands. For overseeding, seed at the rate of 10 - 15 lbs/acre. Seed to a maximum depth of 1/4 inch.		
49050	GVS Hay & Pasture mix w/ fescue, 50#	42.81% Harvestar Orchardgrass 19.78% Perennial Ryegrass 9.97% Climax Timothy 9.90% KY Bluegrass 9.63% Lyra Orchardgrass 3.75% Seminole Ladino Clover	For new establishement, seed at the rate of 25 lbs per acre with a seed drill. If overseeding, seed at the rate of 10 to 15 lbs per acre. If broadcasting the seed, the seeding rates need to be increased to 40 lbs per acre for new field establishment.	More variety helps with drought, fungal issues, & weed pressure in fields. Also helps spread weather risk. Ideal for hay production but can also be used for pasture.	
K31	Kentucky 31, Fescue, Grass Seed, 50#.	Fescue	Seeding rate - 16 lbs/acre for new stand	For late fall and winter grazing. More drought and heat tolerant than most other cool season forage grasses. Produces a thick, durable sod and can be used to stabilize banks and steep areas.	Does carry an endophyte in the seedhead that may affect animal performance. Management techniques should be used to minimize the endophyte affect and optimize animal performance such as interseeding clover, clipping seedheads, etc. Not for breeding mares.
148376	MaxQ Forage Tall Fescue 25#	Endophyte free Fescue	Seeding rate - 25 lbs/acre at a depth of 1/4 to 1/2 inch. If seeding where there is an existing Kentucky 31 fescue sod, the existing sod should be thoroughly killed and the field should go through a transition phase before planting Max Q.	Contains a novel endophyte that is more friendly to cattle, horses, and sheep. Improved animal performance over regular Kentucky 31 fescue. Dought tolerant. Bred to provide a more acceptable blend of animal performance and stand survivability than Kentucky 31 and other varieties of fescue.	KY 31 will take this over if not killed entirely before planting
51693	Teton II Endophyte Free Tall Fescue 50#	Endophyte free Fescue	New pasture: 20-26 lbs/acre Existing pasture: 10-15lbs/acre	Fast establishing, highly palatable, high yield, soft leaf, endophyte free, heat and drought tolerant.	





CHALLENGES IN THE HORSE INDUSTRY

In response, equine industry organizations such as the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) and Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) have either canceled or postponed longscheduled events, including the FEI World Cup Finals slated for April in Las Vegas. USEF has also suspended all events, selection trials, training camps, clinics, and activities until May 3rd (at the time this article went to print). Since then, nonaffiliated local horse shows have followed suit, taking a bite out of income event officials expected to derive from those events.

Meanwhile, equine rescue organizations have been even harder hit economically. Some rescues are short-handed as would-be volunteers observe state-mandated stay-at-home orders or as fosters decline to fulfill commitments they made months ago.

Even so, COVID-19's long-term economic impact on the equestrian community is not entirely bleak. Some canceled events will just go online, and would-be exhibitors are increasingly willing to pay to judge their performances digitally. Meanwhile, some clients are requesting virtual lessons by submitting performance videos for trainers to evaluate and critique.

Whether or not equestrians and their horses will be attending events is yet to be determined, however, for the time being horse owners will want to consider of a few additional details:

Energy Requirements

The reality is that many horses, instead of ramping up their workloads for spring/summer activities, as would typically be happening at this time of year, are having their workloads reduced as events are cancelled and riders are quarantined or prohibited from premises. You might, therefore, need to make feeding changes to limit calorie intake, especially if you are feeding higher-calorie performance feeds. Reduced workloads mean less need for calories. If cutting your higher-calorie feed to amounts lower than the manufacturer's recommendation for your horse's body weight, consider switching to a feed that has lower calories but is more fortified, such as a ration balancer. Remove or reduce starch sources. If your horse is a hard keeper and requires higher calories, try to rely more on fermentable fiber and fat for calories than starch. Research suggests that horses fed calories coming from fat may be calmer than those fed calories from starch, which is an important consideration for horses entering a period of reduced work.

Preparing Rations

If you are unable to pre-weigh feed and will be leaving your barn manger/staff to feed for you, be sure to leave very clear directions on how you wish your horse to be fed. Label all scoops with your horse's name and the feed the scoop is to be used for, and mark a line at the point to which it needs to be filled so whoever is feeding is not left to guess.

Behavior Management

Evaluating a horse's diet before adding a calming supplement is also very important, because several dietary components can affect behavior. Imbalances and deficiencies in some nutrients can contribute to behavior disorders. In these cases, a calming supplement that contains one of these nutrients might help. Work with an equine nutritionist to assess your horse's diet and determine whether dietary excesses or deficiencies are causing behavior problems. Augusta Co-op Solutions Zylkene Oral Powder

Researchers found that a substance in mother's milk might be responsible for the state of relaxation newborns experience after nursing. This inspired the discovery of a unique milk-derived protein, alpha-casozepine, with proven calming properties.

Alpha-casozepine promotes a sense of relaxation and contentment. It is non-sedating and all natural. Zylkene[®] comes in a convenient single oral powder administration 8 gram pouch.



The virus' lasting impact on the equine industry remains uncertain. For additional information on dietary needs, please contact Hillary Morris or Alisa Berry at 540-885-1265. In the meantime, the American Horse Council (AHC) is polling those who work in the industry to learn how COVID-19 has affected their businesses. To participate in the survey, call the AHC at 202/296-4031 or email info@horsecouncil.org. *The Horse*