

Preliminary Findings From a Survey of Agronomic Practices on Thoroughbred Horse Studs

S.C. Aston, G.M. Gurr, E.R. Hunt, C.G. Morrison, W.M. Wheatley
and R.A. Woodward

*Orange Agricultural College
University of Sydney, Orange, NSW, 2800*

A survey of thoroughbred properties in eastern Australia was conducted to provide information on two priority areas of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Firstly, to identify and develop improved pasture mixes and management regimes for sustainable land use practices and, secondly, to improve the extension and training for improved management.

Methods

The survey examined aspects of soil texture and pH, fertilizer use, pasture species sown, grazing management, pasture-related disorders of horses, and management of weeds and plant pests and diseases. Data was obtained from detailed interviews with property managers combined with surveys of representative paddocks on each property. In order to reflect regional

differences, twelve properties were surveyed in each of the following five regions: Darling Downs, Hunter Valley, NSW coast, NSW western slopes/Riverina and Euroa district.

Results and Discussion

In all regions, availability of land on individual properties was reported as an important constraint limiting management practices. For example, weed control options were restricted because paddocks could not readily be taken out of pasture and into a cropping phase. Furthermore, the need to withhold stock following herbicide application was a factor which reduced the use of chemical control. Approximately 20% of properties surveyed used cattle and/or sheep and these were considered to be useful tool for weed management, even by those not currently using mixed grazing.

The wider use of this option was also limited by land availability. Slashing was a common weed control practice, and many managers reported that uniform distribution of herbage rather than windrowing was preferable.

Fodder conservation was practiced on only 15% of properties, and most purchased high quality lucerne and/or oaten hay. Factors limiting wider use of conservation were land availability, 'on-farm' expertise and perceived risk of low quality of conserved fodder.

Autumn topdressing with superphosphate was normal practice, even on pastures containing mainly native species. Only two properties had obvious areas of soil salinity, and only one had significant soil erosion problems.

Acknowledgements

Funding from the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation and the cooperation of property managers is gratefully acknowledged.