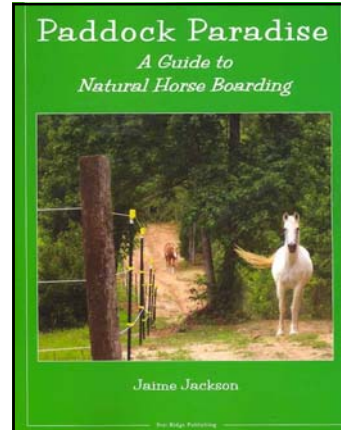


TRACK PADDOCKS:

An Alternative to Traditional Horse-Keeping that Promotes Healthy Horses and Healthy Pastures

What is a track paddock?

A track paddock is a lane that is designed to encourage equines to move and behave according to their natural tendencies. Often a track paddock is used to replace traditional horse-keeping facilities, like stalls and small pens. The goal of a track paddock is to create a safe, natural environment that encourages horses to act like horses! This handout is largely adapted from Jaime Jackson's book called ***Paddock Paradise: A Guide to Natural Horse Boarding***. Jaime Jackson spent several years studying the behavior and environment of wild horses and then used this knowledge to develop a natural horse boarding facility.



Paddock Paradise, A Guide to Natural Horse Boarding by Jaime Jackson can be checked out at the Clallam Conservation District office. It is also available for purchase online.



Track paddocks promote healthy pastures by providing a natural area for equines to live while pastures are re-growing after grazing.

Benefits of Track Paddocks Include:

- Healthier, strong hooves that require less trimming because of natural wear.
- Alleviates boredom and the bad habits (cribbing, digging, chewing) that oftentimes result when horses are bored.
- Provides natural exercise, better conditioning, muscle tone, and weight control.
- **Healthier pastures** since horses do not have constant access to pastures.
 - ⇒ Tracks can be used to confine horses when pastures are “resting” as part of a rotational grazing plan.
 - ⇒ Pastures are protected from overgrazing which leads to soil compaction, weed infestations and grass plant damage.

Track Paddocks Can Work For Everyone

Both large and small properties can incorporate track paddocks by simply fencing a lane or corridor along the perimeter of the property. Even a small track, around the perimeter of a riding arena for example, will encourage movement when compared to a stall and/or attached paddock. All breeds and ages of equines can successfully use track paddocks. Most vets and farriers agree that consistent movement fosters healthy horses, an exception would be a horse that a vet has placed on stall rest following an injury.



Gates strategically installed along the track can create an easy rotational grazing system in adjacent pastures. Use the “take half, leave half” rule of thumb when grazing pastures (don't graze below 3”).



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Tips For Building A Track Paddock

- Ensure that the track is wide enough to allow tractor and vehicle access and to provide ample room for horses to flee from dominant or aggressive horses. A general rule of thumb is to make tracks at least 15-feet wide.
- Think outside of the box! Tracks can follow your property perimeter but can also bisect properties, curve with slope, or be configured to fit in with a rotational grazing plan.
- Install gates throughout your track to easily allow for rotational grazing on adjacent pastures.
- Incorporate natural features into your track like trees, rocky areas, hills, sand and obstacles.
- Ensure the track is accessible by ATV, tractor or wheelbarrow so you can routinely clean manure (We recommend that manure be cleaned every 1-3 days and stored in a dry, covered area away from surface water and wells).



Use a variety of footing types, like rock, to mimic natural footings and promote healthy hooves. Sand is a good choice if the track will also be used for riding.



"Slow" hay feeders or hay nets encourage more natural feeding patterns in horses. A variety of DIY slow feeder plans are available online. Consider placing feed stations & water troughs at opposite ends of the track to persuade movement.



Consider placing natural obstacles such as logs, brush and dirt piles on the track.

Things To Avoid When Constructing A Track Paddock

- Horses and livestock should not have access to streams, ditches or ponds. Runoff from manure and eroding banks can lead to pollution of water from bacteria, nutrients and sediments, and hooves can damage these sensitive areas.
- Do not install tracks in wetlands or boggy areas as the track will likely become excessively muddy which is an unsafe footing and runoff can pollute nearby waterways.
- Install stock tanks for watering equines rather than allowing them to drink directly from stream, ditches and ponds.
- Make sure all areas of the track are accessible by wheelbarrows or equipment, in order to collect manure.
- Avoid sharp corners which can be unsafe if horses are intimidated by a more dominant horse (natural herd pecking order).



Do not allow horses access to streams, wetlands or ponds. Watering livestock directly from stock tanks provides clean, fresh water.