



Spring Is Here....

The clocks have gone forward and spring is here, with lighter nights and warmer weather (hopefully) we can start to enjoy our hobby and our horses can start to enjoy their leisure time again.

Spring has to be one of the hardest seasons for most horse owners with much to do and many things to think about, so we have put together some useful hints, tips and ideas to help you spring towards summer.

Field, Fences and Fighting Weeds

Check fences and field conditions

Finally we can get away from mucking out, but first we must invest some time in getting our paddocks back in reasonable order for the summer months. We need to check the condition of our fencing and the pasture. Have a walk around the whole of the field looking for holes or weak spots that may have appeared. Regardless of the type of fencing you use it is essential to inspect it regularly to ensure it is safe and secure and to undertake regular maintenance to help prevent damage and to prolong the life of your fencing. You also need to walk around the whole of the paddock checking for rabbit holes, litter and poisonous plants.



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Wooden Post and Rail Fencing

Regular inspection to check for rotting and broken rails is essential. Wooden fencing requires treatment with a non-toxic preparation, to prevent rotting and to increase

its life expectancy. Some horses have a tendency to chew wood so this also needs to be monitored and possibly treated with an anti-chew product.

Plastic Fencing

This is a relatively maintenance free fencing in comparison to post and rail fencing. It does not rot or require treating but may become weak and brittle overtime so should be regularly checked and any weakened sections replaced.

Electric Fencing

Electric fencing is extremely versatile. It can be used as a permanent or temporary boundary. It can be used to help pasture management by dividing paddocks temporarily into smaller sections. Whether attached to permanent wooden stakes, or to specially designed [plastic posts](#), electric fencing should be checked regularly. Test that the battery is well charged and that your [energiser](#) is working correctly. Test that the current is flowing through the tape all around your paddock, a [line tester](#) is a simple way to do this. If any of your fencing tape looks worn or isn't conducting electricity adequately. Replace it now rather than waiting until your horse has escaped. There is a variety of [electric wire, rope and tape](#) to choose from ranging from 6mm – 40mm width. Ensure that all posts are in good condition, replace any damaged posts now to limit any inconvenience later. Make sure that the Posts and fencing are set at the correct height for your horse and that the tape is kept taught.

Below is a check list of items you will need.

1. [Energizer for mains or battery operation](#)
2. [Lead out underground cable](#)
3. [Earth Stakes](#)
4. [Corner insulator](#)
5. [Tape connection cable](#)
6. [Tape link cable](#)
7. [Tape, rope or polywire](#)
8. [Handles](#)
9. [Plastic posts](#)
10. [Special connector](#)

Fighting weeds

Weeds control must be part of our field maintenance, thistles, nettles, buttercups, and docks are a serious nuisance and rapidly reduce your grazing area. The weed most feared by us horse owners is certainly Ragwort.



The toxic nature of this plant has been featured again and again in the equestrian press and the fact the poison it contains stays in the liver and accumulates, and it pretty well known that if the horse consumes too much it can be fatal. With this in mind we must be intent on removing it from the pastures. You can dig out the ragwort by using a purpose made [fork](#), you must remove the entire root or the plant will regenerate. You must

wear gloves when removing ragwort, as the poison it contains also affects humans and can be absorbed through the skin. You must remove the weed once from the ground.



Ragwort control in our pastures is helped by good all year round pasture management, this will reduce the likelihood of poor ground conditions arising which predispose ragwort problems. Over grazed pastures will reduce grass cover and possibly soil damage and encourages seeds previously dormant within the soil to germinate and provides the ideal growing space for ragwort plants to establish.

Ragwort facts:

Ragwort is one of the most frequent causes of plant poisoning in livestock in the UK.

Ragwort is also harmful to humans. It can enter the blood stream through the skin, protective clothing must be worn when handling the plant.

Over grazed land provides ideal conditions for ragwort growth and spread.

Well managed pasture, with dense grass sward provides less of an opportunity for undesirable weeds to invade.

Each plant can produce up to 150,000 seeds with a 70% germination rate.

Ragwort seeds can be dormant in the soil for up to 20 years. Fragments of root left behind in the soil when the plant is removed can re-grow.

Ragwort poisoning can occur at any time of the year.

Ragwort acts as a cumulative poison, eventually destroying the liver. A small intake of ragwort over a long period can be just as damaging as a larger intake on a single occasion.