History and Objectives
The UK Horse Pasture Evaluation Program began in 2005 as part of Equine Programs to develop stronger ties with Kentucky's horse industry. The program focuses on the following objectives:

- Providing detailed pasture management recommendations to horse farm owners and managers.
- Improving pastureland by increasing forage quality and quantity and reduce the need for stored feeds, such as hay and grain.
- Assessing the potential risk of fescue toxicity for broodmares on pastures.
- Providing undergraduate students with a new appreciation for agriculture and the horse industry.

2019 Year in Review
This year saw the wettest spring and driest fall on record. The ever-changing weather patterns experienced in Kentucky the last few years only serve to emphasize the importance of regularly evaluating pasture condition and management.

Participation in the UK Horse Pasture Evaluation Program was at an all-time high in 2019, with 24 evaluations completed representing nearly 10,000 total farm acres. These farms included several owners new to Kentucky, major commercial thoroughbred operations, show and pleasure horse barns, and the UK Veterinary Science Research farm.

**UK Horse Pasture Evaluation Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2005-2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Evaluations:</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Farm Acres:</td>
<td>9,839</td>
<td>56,938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Pastures:</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>3,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counties:</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UK Forages hosted two equine field days in 2019: The annual UK Equine Farm and Facilities Expo was hosted by Olive Hill Sporthorses on May 30th. Over 200 people attended this event and many enjoyed the short walk to the solar field that supplies energy to the farm year-round. This facility is owned by Brian and Diana Conlon, both graduates of UK.

In September, a similar field day was held at the Weber’s Retired Horses farm in Princeton, KY. This facility, owned by Rob and Kim Weber, is part of the NRCS Overgrazing and Soil Degradation RCPP grant. Through this cost share program, the Weber’s were able to build a pond to water horses and re-establish several pastures.

**Extension Grant Receives Regional Recognition**

In April, NRCS Southeast Regional Conservationist James Tillman visited the Commonwealth to see some of the most successful NRCS projects in Kentucky. Part of his visit included Paul and Melita Knapper’s farm in Mercer County. Mr. Tillman, and newly appointed State Conservationist Greg Stone, spent time touring the facility, asking questions about the Knapper’s experience and the impacts on their operation. The NRCS-RCPP grant Overgrazing and Soil Degradation is wrapping up in 2020, but several other opportunities for further resource conservation work are being explored. To date, this program has provided over $250,000 to Kentucky horse farms for fencing, water facilities, and other modifications that improve overall farm management.

**Foxtail and Nimblewill Control Studies**

This year, the UK Forage Extension program collaborated with several area horse farms on a series of field research studies. The project investigated the application of a new pasture herbicide, Prowl H₂O® for the control of yellow foxtail and crabgrass, and several potential new chemicals for the control of Nimblewill. Dr. Bill Witt, retired UK weed extension specialist, conducted the trials, with the help of UK Horse Pasture Evaluation intern Chi Jing Leow and technician Sydney Beidleman. Preliminary results indicate:

- Prowl H₂O® can control warm season grass germination when applied in late April
- Summer use of Plateau® removes tall fescue, but significantly increase nimblewill

This work would not have been possible without the assistance and funding from Shadwell Farm, Kim Poland and Marc Richardson of Mill Ridge Farm and Dr. Mike Cavey of Respite Farm. **Contact us if you are interested in supporting the research, student education, and extension activities of the UK Horse Pasture Evaluation Program.**

**Kentucky Contributes to Horse Pasture Management Textbook**

While there are several quality forage textbooks available, most focus on ruminant production and not horse owners. *Horse Pasture Management* was recently published to fill this void. University of Kentucky faculty and staff were instrumental in the conception and development of this practical book. The Pasture Plant Establishment and Management chapter was authored by UK’s Dr. Ray Smith and Krista Lea. Drs. Jimmy Henning and Laurie Lawrence authored the comprehensive chapter on Production and Management of Hay and Haylage. The UK Horse Pasture Evaluation Program was also highlighted as a model outreach program and was written by our own program coordinator, Krista Lea. This text is available on Amazon.
The University of Kentucky is where Keith and Laura Haag first fell in love with horses, and it's where they turned to get advice to improve the environment for the horses on Endeavor Farm.

Keith Haag, a 2009 graduate, is the farm manager, and Laura, who graduated in 2010, is the sales coordinator for the Woodford County farm. Since the farm is primarily a commercial breeding operation, they were particularly concerned about the presence of KY-31 tall fescue.

Keith Haag said. “Our pastures are the most important resource that we have on this farm.”

In fall 2018, the Haags began working with the UK Horse Pasture Evaluation Program with Ray Smith, UK forage extension specialist, and Krista Lea, program coordinator, who was also a former classmate.

“Often farms initially contact us because they have broodmares, and they are worried about the reproductive issues that can arise because of tall fescue, but they often find out a lot of other things about their pastures, like ways to fill in bare spaces and weeds they can control,” Smith said. “So many of our clients call us back, not because of the fescue, but because they are interested in weed management, new grasses to plant and general pasture rotation.”

Through the program, the Haags were able to get a detailed evaluation of the forage composition of the pastures on the entire farm. They began implementing improvements as soon as they received the results.

“We have noticed changes already,” Keith Haag said. “Before, we were just kind of throwing darts at a dart board and really hoping they would stick. Now, we have a much better idea of what we need to be doing and when we need to be doing it. There were some really simple things we could do to improve the quality of our pastures.”

In addition to the UK Horse Pasture Evaluation Program, UK offers many avenues for equine managers to learn about pasture improvements, including extension publications that cover basic pasture management. They are available online at https://forages.ca.uky.edu/equine. Agriculture and Natural Resource Agents with the UK Cooperative Extension Service can provide pasture improvement advice to local producers at the farm level.

Looking Ahead
Enrollments are now being accepted for 2020. Please contact Program Coordinator Krista Lea for more information.

Resources
UK Forage Website: forages.ca.uky.edu
Find your local county extension agent: extension.ca.uky.edu/county
UK Equine Programs: equine.ca.uky.edu

UK Horse Pasture Evaluation Program c/o Krista Lea
N-222C Ag. Science Center North
Lexington, KY 40546
(859) 257-0597
ukforageextension@uky.edu

UK College of Agriculture, Food and Environment through its land-grant mission, reaches across the commonwealth with teaching, research and extension to enhance the lives of Kentuckians.
The College of Agriculture, Food and Environment is an equal opportunity organization.

http://forages.ca.uky.edu

It starts with us
The College of Agriculture, Food and Environment is an equal opportunity organization.