

This column features questions from readers submitted via the Web site. To submit a question to Small Acre Sam, visit BarnyardsandBackyards.com. If your question is featured, you will receive a free one-year subscription to *Barnyards & Backyards!*



ask Sam

question

Dear Sam,

I am a small-acreage landowner with a couple of horses. My neighbor has 40 acres he is willing to lease to me, but we have several questions about how grazing agreements work. What is a fair price for a private grazing lease? How is this price calculated? What details should be included in my grazing agreement?

— *Jim, Cheyenne*

Dear Jim,

What you and your neighbor need to develop is a grazing agreement. This agreement will outline several important details including:

- How much you will pay your neighbor to graze his property
- When payments are to be made
- How long your horses will be on your neighbor's property and in what season, which depends on the carrying capacity of your neighbor's 40 acres
- How many horses will be on the property
- Who is responsible for maintenance and construction of improvements such as water, fences, stables, and other improvements on the property
- Who is responsible for feeding and watering your horses
- An agreement to prevent overgrazing on your neighbor's property
- If noxious weeds are a concern, who will control those
- Who has the right to enter your neighbor's property

The grazing agreement can also outline other aspects you and your neighbor decide are important. If you're unsure about standards for grazing (i.e., how much grazing can be done), such as which standard is used to identify when animals should be pulled or the cost of controlling noxious weeds, contact a professional from an organization like the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service. Naturally, getting these things on paper is the best way to avoid problems. Consider having an attorney review the

lease before you sign to ensure it is binding and legal.

Determine the grazing fee next. This is more complicated. According to the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, the average price for a private land grazing lease in 2008 in Wyoming was \$16.40 per month per head. This is a good number to start with, but there are other factors that must be considered. Different areas in Wyoming will have a higher price for a grazing lease depending on demand and vegetation production. Asking others in your area what price they pay will be helpful. The cost of private land grazing leases has increased since 2003, so it is likely the base cost will be higher than \$16.40 per head per month. If your neighbor is assisting in the care of your horses as a condition of the agreement, this will also add to the fee.

The ability to lease your neighbor's pasture will benefit your land and decrease the amount of supplemental feed you have to provide your horses. When the grazing agreement is upheld, both you and your neighbor will be pleased with the results.

Examples of grazing agreements on the Internet:
www.mwps.org/stores/mwps/files/Free/ncr_109.pdf
http://riverbendowners.com/images/Riverbend_Blanket_Grazing_Lease_Agrmnt1.pdf

More articles on writing a grazing agreement:
<http://extension.missouri.edu/explore/agguides/agecon/g00426.htm>

<http://beefmagazine.com/beefstockertrends/0922-get-pasture-leases-writing/>

— **Sam**

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