

# Keeping Stock in Central Australia

This Fact Sheet refers to the land management aspects of keeping horses on rural blocks in Central Australia. The principles are much the same for all large animals. With careful planning and extra effort, you can successfully keep horses on your block without creating nuisance dust, causing erosion or degrading your block.

## PLANNING

- Keep 30% of your block horse-free and vehicle-free. Plant more native plants in this area.
- Rely on commercial feed for your horse. Have a reliable supply of fodder arranged.
- Allow no free range grazing. Keep horses stabled except for limited periods of daily exercise. During good seasons, pasture growth may warrant controlled grazing.
- Fence the designated horse area into two or more paddocks. This allows you the option of using one paddock and spelling the other(s).
- Locate stables on well drained areas and make sure that runoff from stables does not flow onto your neighbour's block. Make sure that yards will not create nuisance dust for neighbours, especially during periods of gusty north-westerly or south-easterly winds.
- Use river sand in stables and exercise areas to reduce dust. It also makes a softer, safer area for your horse.
- Gates or troughs should be kept out of depressions. Vehicle tracks and stock pads will converge at this point and water flowing down these tracks or pads will cause either silt to deposit or erosion to occur.
- Set up your horse area to ensure minimum land disturbance. If you need vehicle access to the stables, locate them near an existing driveway so that you do not have to drive

across paddocks or natural areas.

- Carefully consider drainage when locating your stables, fencelines and tracks. Keep infrastructure away from areas where water flows; fences, stables, and tracks will interrupt the natural water flow, causing flooding and erosion.

## DAY-TO-DAY MANAGEMENT

- Reduce the time horses spend in paddocks. Stable horses and let them out for only a couple of hours each day.
- Feed the horse(s) just prior to letting them out in the paddock as this will help reduce the amount of grazing that they will do.
- Dispose of manure thoughtfully. Use it as fertiliser on your garden or offer it to other gardeners. Burning your manure pile creates very unpleasant conditions for your neighbours and yourself.
- Get to know your paddocks. You need to maintain ground cover at all times. When ground cover becomes low make sure you take your horse(s) out.

## PROBLEM SOLVING

- Blocks with bare, dusty paddocks will require rehabilitation BEFORE you allow horses on them.
- Plant shrubs and trees in paddocks to provide shade for horses and encourage ground cover underneath trees. This will improve aesthetics and minimise dust by creating a windbreak.

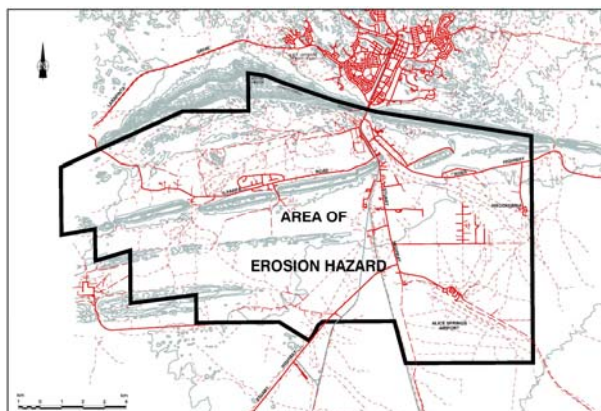
# FACT SHEET

- Protect young plants from being grazed.
- Some horses will strip leaves and bark from trees in their paddock. This will kill your trees. If possible, fence your trees or apply some protective covering, such as chicken wire, around the trunk to prevent horses from ringbarking the tree. Most of the large, naturally occurring trees on your block are over 100 years old. Consider them irreplaceable.
- Control weeds. Weeds don't provide a good or long lasting ground cover, and will crowd out valuable pasture grasses. They can also create a fire hazard as most are not grazed.
- For best results you must be very strict about your management techniques. It is amazing how often you may think it won't matter if the horse goes out for another couple of hours. Before you know it your horse will be out all day, every day, and you will have a bare paddock again

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Alice Springs rural area is in an Area of Erosion Hazard declared under the *Soil Conservation and Land Utilisation Act (1978)*. The declaration prescribes that land holders in the area shall maintain sufficient ground cover on their holdings for the purpose of controlling dust.

The Natural Resource Management Division is able to provide advice on specific management problems that rural block owners may be experiencing.



Picture 1: Declared Erosion Hazard Area

## DO NOT ALLOW YOUR BLOCK TO BECOME A DUST BOWL !



For further information about keeping stock on rural blocks, or within the Declared Erosion Hazard Area of Central Australia, contact the Vegetation and Land Management Branch in your region. Additional Fact Sheets are available at regional offices or on the website: [www.nt.gov.au/nreta/naturalresources/](http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/naturalresources/)

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