

What is the best way to renovate a pasture?

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Ask five people and you'll get five different answers. The renovation options that await you are numerous, diverse and are often based on your access to equipment.

Renovating and reseeding a pasture requires time, money, and a little luck, so it's important to plan ahead. Non-irrigated, western Oregon pastures are typically planted in early September to early October, depending on weather conditions, but start planning long before then to save you from trying to make hasty last minute decisions in the fall.

Preparing a good seedbed should be a top priority. The first step is reducing weeds and weed seeds if possible. You may kill out your existing pasture in the spring and leave the land fallow for the summer while periodically disking the soil to reduce weed pressure or plant a cover crop the year prior to reseeding the pasture or in the least implement a mowing regime to keep weeds from going to seed.

Consider what method you'll be using for seeding. Seed to soil contact is needed for good germination and growth. Simply broadcasting or spreading grass seed on an established pasture with no soil preparation yields poor results. Drilling seed to the appropriate depth creates seed to soil contact, but the ground will need to be fairly smooth.

Try to match the grass seed species with your soil conditions. For example, orchardgrass doesn't thrive in wet,

ponded soils while tall fescue can better tolerate that environment.

Plan to also take soil samples from your fields for analysis. Prior to renovation is a perfect time to evaluate the soil's fertility. This will allow for incorporating needed nutrients. Many western Oregon soils have an acidic pH, which would benefit from incorporating lime before seeding. White clover, a common pasture legume, prefers a soil pH near 6.5

Perhaps most importantly, evaluate your current pasture management and determine ways to improve. Sometimes keeping the existing vegetation and improving grazing practices is the most economical approach and has desirable results. However, if you feel the solution to a better pasture is to finance a complete renovation, also be ready to implement good management practices that may include rotational grazing, winter feeding areas and active weed control, so the new seeding is a long-term investment.

The [Pasture and Grazing Management in the Northwest](#) (chapter 4) and [Pasture and Hayland Renovation for Western Washington and Oregon](#) publications are two excellent resources to learn more about the ins and outs of pasture renovation, planting and establishment.

Links to these publications are also available at smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/pastures