

## Geotextile Fabric: Another Ally in the Fight Against Mud

by April LaLande and Jessica Paige

Ah, the endless days of summer...if only they were truly endless. It's hard to think about things like mud when we're surrounded by dust and dry grass, but now is actually a great time to take steps that will keep your horse place mud-free this winter.

By now you probably know that having a winter paddock—also called a sacrifice area—is key if you want to have healthy pastures next spring. If this is news to you, be sure to purchase the [“Creating the Sacrifice Area” Tip Sheet](#). And hopefully you also know that footing materials can help you keep that winter paddock from turning to mud. But what you may not realize is that you can dramatically increase the effectiveness of your footing and prolong its useful life with geotextile fabric (often referred to as landscaping fabric).

By first putting down geotextile fabric and then placing your footing material on top, it creates a layer between soil and gravel (or other footing materials) to provide a barrier that keeps them separate and prevents them from mixing. This separation helps the gravel maintain its position, improves drainage and increases the load bearing capacity of the site. The drainage in your paddock is improved because soil is not able to fill the spaces in the gravel layer. The fabric is permeable and still allows water to pass through it, so it does not restrict the movement of water.

One of our readers, Kent Wiles from Clatskanie, OR recently installed geotextile fabric in his paddock areas and was kind enough to share his experience with us.

“My roll of fabric was so heavy,” Kent notes, “that it took myself and another strong individual (my Dad) to simply move it around. As leverage, we used 4" x 8' wood rails or poles that you can purchase at most feed stores to move it around. The poles are simply inserted into the tubular ends of the roll to lift it about. Sharp scissors cut across the fabric in a sliding motion quite easily and I would recommend they be used as opposed to a box cutter for the control and accuracy they give.”

Kent adds, “I also have some experience with the Typar brand of landscape fabric. It is a spun-bonded fabric that appears to be more cloth like. I've used it under a sand and hog fuel footing with good success in my horse corrals and have not had a mud problem in our rainy climate. Although, I will probably not choose hog fuel again for a variety of reasons.”

Kent used different kinds of stakes to hold the fabric down. “The stakes shown here are U-shaped six-inch pins or staples that were purchased in affordable packages at Home Depot in their gardening section. They were designed and are sold for use with landscape fabric installations.”

More information on this type of geotextile fabric can be found by visiting the Ohio State University Fact Sheet [Using Geotextile Fabric in Livestock Operations](#).



Here's a photo of the fabric installed in Kent's barn paddock. Kent tells us, “At minimum, my overlaps were two feet, but in most places I made them about four feet to allow for shift as the gravel is added and spread about. You can also see that I laid t-posts across the fabric for added support until we top it with 5/8" minus because of our evening coastal westerly breezes.”



After this photo was taken, Kent also tucked the fabric under the fence and staked it on the outside. This will prevent horses from pulling the fabric up along the edges or by the gates.



Here's a close-up of the fabric. The fabric that Kent purchased is referred to as “Fabric subgrade 12.5' x 432'.” It cost him \$370.00 and was purchased in Longview, WA at Construction Specialty Supply.



This is a 12" plastic tent stake that Kent used to hold the areas where seams met and high traffic places such as near gates. Kent notes that, “tent stakes work really well, but one needs to be careful not to hammer them completely through the fabric itself.”

Keep your eye on the HCW website for our new Geotextile Fabric Tip Sheet which is coming soon! Your purchase helps us to continue this newsletter and supports Horses For Clean Water programs.

Our thanks to Kent Wiles from Clatskanie, OR for his excellent photos and comments! If you would like to share one of your projects with us, just send us e-mail. [http://www.horsesforcleanwater.com/thegreenhorse/09\\_2006.html#article2](http://www.horsesforcleanwater.com/thegreenhorse/09_2006.html#article2)