

# TECHNIQUES FOR REDUCING MUD PROBLEMS AND IMPROVING PASTURE ABUSED AREAS

Ken Johnson  
USDA District Conservationist  
Tompkinsville, KY

I would like to approach this topic from two directions, mud control and then problem areas. Mud control in concentrated areas almost impossible with forages alone. Using a mud control product is usually advised. I will talk about several.

- Filter Fabric - A plastic like product is the most widely used product. Lay this product on the soil surface and cover with 6-8 inches of gravel. The big advantage is low cost; the disadvantage is maintenance if used by large numbers of livestock on a continuous basis.
- Rubber Mats - In lanes and narrow areas, used conveyor belts are an excellent choice. The disadvantage is they are hard to find. Cost is usually low. New mats are very expensive.
- Plastic Grids - Like mats lay on the ground and clamp together, they do not require gravel. They can be added to create as large of an area as needed. They are more expensive than mats or filter fabric.
- Concrete - The best and highest cost.
- Rotating Feeding Areas - The lowest upfront cost, but you destroy a large area. When considering reseeding, the cost is much higher. Consider moving in a circle, using the same area several times during the winter.

Improving pasture abused areas usually requires moving the animals to another area and seeding forage that tolerates more abuse. No forage will tolerate continuous abuse. Some of them are:

- Bermuda grass - will tolerate more abuse than many grasses, but has several disadvantages. It can become a problem moving all over the farm. It also can be very low quality.

- Fescue, endophyte infected - an excellent choice. Very tolerate of heavy abuse and still and still come back. The disadvantage is the reduced gain in cattle.
- Ryegrass - use to reestablish abused areas. Inexpensive but short lived, can spread across farms and become a problem. Very high quality.
- Small Grains - use like ryegrass, even mixed with ryegrass to reseed abused areas for short periods of time. High quality, but only moderate resistance to abuse.