

Checklist –printable version

*What would I look for to see if my soil's healthy?*

**1. What's growing in your paddock?**

Is it full of thistles  blackberry  gorse  ragwort   
Giant buttercup  dry clumps of grass   
Is there much clover   
What does the clover look like?  
Does it have small low growing foliage  large and upright   
How long does it take for the pasture to recover after it's been grazed   
Do the horses always prefer one area of the paddock over another   
Are there some places they'll never feed   
Are there great clumps of grass around the dung & bare, eaten out patches elsewhere   
Is the sward cover even or clumpy   
Does the pasture look healthy   
Or are the leaves chewed  dying back   
discoloured

**2. What do the droppings look like?**

Are there earthworms underneath   
dung beetles (North Island)   
lots of creepy crawlies on the dung   
How long does it take the dung to break down  
2-3 weeks  2-3 months  A year   
Do the birds get into the dung and break it up   
Or does it sit there

**3. Get a spade and dig a hole as deep as the spade**

How easy is it to get the spade into the ground?  
Do you have to try really hard  Or does it slide in easily   
Is the structure so powdery the soil just collapses into the hole   
Is the soil sticky  crumbly   
What does it smell like   
What colour is it   
Does it dry out and crack in summer   
Is the turf hard to dig through with lots of twisted, dried out roots

How deep is the top soil

How soon before you get to the subsoil  rock or gravel

#### 4. How far do the roots go down?

Measure this and write it down.

What colour are the roots

Are the roots straight with new growth  bent and distorted

Break apart the turf and have a look – are there worms, grubs etc in amongst the turf?

Are there any earthworms amongst the roots

Grass grub larvae  Porina larvae

How many

Remember to take a note of your observations, then after you take your soil sample and follow the recommendations, you can track the progress of your soil and your animal's health, behaviour etc. This is a lifetime commitment to your soils, your horses and yourself. Have fun and watch the changes happen.