

Mixed grazing - grazing ponies and sheep together Extrtacts from Nibblers online discussion group

We have been grazing Rammamere heath in Bucks with Hebridean sheep for the last few years. This year ran three dartmoor ponies with them. ponies were a bit aggressive to the sheep if they came near them and kept sheep away from the water trough. sheep now will not go near the area frequented by the ponies even though ponies were taken off several weeks ago. We are now having trouble catching the sheep up to remove them from the site....and is getting a problem with the amount of manpower being expended on trying to round up, which usually was not a problem..We have now booked a shepherd plus dog.

We catch the sheep usually by giving a few nuts within a coral of hurdles... this is close to the gate and our best corner for catching up. Unfortunately the ponies used to lurk here a lot also. subjectively i think the ponies have promoted this change in behaviour in the sheep....anyone else experienced the same or similar...or any advice on mixed grazing please.

Graham Bellamy
Beds Wildlife Trust

On Skipwith Common, a 600acre lowland heath near York, a flock of Hebridean sheep is grazed alongside cattle and ponies. No problems of this nature have ever come to our attention and one regularly sees all the stock types together, although they do not deliberately associate. When supplementary feed has been used in the past, the ponies have chased away the cattle, but they let the sheep feed amongst them most of the time. I have heard anecdotes about sheep eating ponies' tails and promptly dying, but whether this ever really happens I don't know! Ponies' temperaments do vary a lot, but I thought it would have to be a particularly bad bunch to be aggressive in that way.

Julian Small

I think these problems will be v hard to predict. I have grazed sheep
> (various breeds, including hebs, and age classes) alongside fell ponies
for several years now
> without any problem (apart from rounding them up when they would hide
> amongst the ponies because they knew my dog was scared of them). It does
> sound as though your sheep are a bit temperamental Graham if they won't
even
> co-operate once the ponies are removed. Try another breed of sheep maybe:
> Rough Fells, Lonks or Gritstones are all v robust types, well known for
standing their ground.

Bill g

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear.

We have been running ponies (New Forest and Exmoor), Sheep (Beulah and Hebridean) and goats (Bagots) together for around 10 years without a significant problem. Very occasionally the ponies will see the sheep off if they get too close, but never to the extent of panicking them. Conversely, when using a dog to round up sheep, the animals will often run to the ponies to escape the dog. I have never witnessed the ponies go anywhere near the goats. Cannot say that I can answer your problem except maybe change individuals or breeds.

Tim Beech

When I worked in the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB we set up a Countryside Stewardship agreement which involved grazing a small acid grassland site with the owner's riding ponies and some sheep. So far as I am aware

there were never any problems; in fact the two types of animal appeared to totally ignore one another, whereas they immediately reacted to a human entering the field (the ponies coming over to investigate, the sheep retreating to the field's most distant corner!) Judging from the various correspondents' experiences, there do not seem to be any firm rules as to which stock will get on well together, but some farming friends have always grazed cattle(of various crosses)and sheep (usually Suffolks)together without any difficulties. Moreover, they farm in an urban fringe area and believe that the presence of the cattle may deter dogs from attacking the sheep .

Paul Holley
