



Environmentally Friendly Farm Program

Self-Assessment Checklist

The farm self-assessment checklist consists of a series of Best Management Practices (BMPs) that benefit the environment. Check each statement "Yes" if the practice is in place on the farm, "No" if the practice is not in place, or "Not-Applicable" if the statement does not pertain to the farm operation.

Section 1. Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Environmentally sensitive areas are natural resources and farm features that require special attention to protect water quality. Examples include: surface water (such as lakes, streams, ponds) and groundwater (active private and public wells). Sinkholes, gullies, wetlands, waterways, or other natural and man-made structures that transport water are all considered to be environmentally sensitive areas. These areas require extra protection from sediment and manure contamination. To prevent a direct connection between nutrient applications and surface waters, designated distances or "setbacks" from environmentally sensitive areas have been established for mechanical manure application.

What is needed for healthy animals, a healthy farm, and a healthy environment:

- **Know Your Farmland** – Familiarize yourself with environmentally sensitive areas and know where they are located on the property.
- **Maintain Vegetated Buffers** – Keep vegetated buffers between sensitive areas and manure sources to prevent water contamination.
- **Keep Manure Out of Water** – Animals and accumulated manure should be kept out of environmentally sensitive areas and manure-contaminated storm water should be prevented from entering surface water.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas:			
	YES	NO	N/A
1. I am aware of the environmentally sensitive areas on my farm.			
2. A vegetated buffer is maintained around all environmentally sensitive areas.			
3. Manure is not mechanically applied within any man-made or natural water flow areas (swales, drainage ditches, or gullies).			
4. Manure is not applied within 100 feet of lakes, ponds, streams, wells, springs, or sinkholes. <i>*Note: Manure may be applied within 35 feet of a lake or pond if a permanent vegetative buffer has been established.</i>			
5. Animals are not allowed to continuously congregate in or around ponds, lakes, or streams.			

Section 2. Pastures

A pasture is an area that is managed to provide nutrition for horses. A true pasture consists of a dense cover of grasses and legumes that maintains a minimum height of 3 inches. Bare areas and weeds are minimal in a true pasture. Well-managed pastures provide high quality forage as a source of nutrition, recycle manure nutrients, reduce bedding and feed costs, and enhance equine health and well-being. Overgrazed pastures are often over-populated with weeds and contain bare areas of exposed soil resulting in erosion and mud during rainy conditions. The combination of mud and manure increases the risk of equine health problems.

Well-managed pastures greatly benefit the environment. Pasture forages absorb manure nutrients and prevent nutrient and sediment runoff that could contaminate surface or ground water. Generally 2 to 4 acres of pasture are required for each horse in order to maintain high quality forage. At higher animal concentrations, pasture grasses can succumb to overgrazing. Overgrazed pastures often become exercise lots which require a different set of management conditions to minimize the risk to the environment. Small areas such as paddocks, barnyards, sacrifice areas and “pastures” with little or no vegetation are considered to be animal concentration areas (ACAs) and must meet the requirements listed in the “Animal Concentration Area” section of this assessment.

What is needed for healthy animals, a healthy farm, and a healthy environment:

- **Rotate and Rest Pastures** – Pasture forages need time to recover from grazing in order to continue to grow and remain productive.
- **Utilize a Sacrifice Area** – Designated bare areas can be used for turnout when environmental conditions do not allow pasture forages to grow and thrive.
- **Preserve Soil Fertility** – Pastures that are nutrient deprived and/or acidic (low pH) will struggle to grow optimally.

Pasture	YES	NO	N/A
1. Actively growing or dormant vegetation is maintained in pastures year round.			
2. At least 80% of the pasture is covered with vegetation.			
3. At least 3 inch grass height is maintained throughout the growing season.			
4. Weeds make up less than 30% of the vegetative cover. <i>(recommended - not required)</i>			
5. The grass stand is healthy and yields high quality forage.			
6. Animals are fenced out of streams <i>(not required but strongly recommended for animal health and local water quality)</i> .			
7. Streams have properly installed and managed livestock crossings.			
8. Pastures are free of gullies and signs of soil erosion.			
9. Bare areas are minimized.			
10. Pastures are mowed to reduce weed populations and encourage new grass growth.			
11. Manure does not accumulate excessively around animal congregation areas (gates/water/feed/shade).			
12. Grazing hours are restricted during wet ground conditions.			
13. Grazing hours are restricted during periods of reduced forage growth (drought, extreme heat).			

Section 3. Animal Concentration Areas (ACAs)

An area designed to confine animals that has little to no vegetation is known as an Animal Concentration Area (ACA). These areas are also known as sacrifice lots, barnyards, exercise paddocks, dry lots or heavy use areas. A planned ACA can be a valuable component of a well-managed farm. ACAs can be used to remove animals from pasture to protect new growth and existing vegetation during a period of adverse growing conditions, or if the number of animals exceeds the ability of the grass in the pastures to survive and recover from grazing. Pastures that do not maintain dense vegetation and 3 inches of growth are considered to be ACAs and need to be managed accordingly. Constructing and managing one or two small ACAs on the farm is more efficient than managing overgrazed pastures as ACAs. ACAs are more heavily regulated because they pose a greater threat to water quality from manure and sediment runoff. Vegetated grass buffers or a treatment system should be used to filter contaminants from water. ACAs should be located on level ground and slightly sloped to prevent water accumulation. Clean water should be diverted around and away from the ACA. Planned ACAs are normally constructed of larger stone covered by compacted smaller stone and may be covered with sand or wood chips.

What is needed for healthy animals, a healthy farm, and a healthy environment:

- **Keep Clean Water Clean** – Divert clean water around all ACAs by utilizing roof gutters, underground outlets, diversions, land grading, etc.
- **Treat Contaminated Water** – Direct “dirty” water to an adequately sized vegetated grass filter strip or some other treatment system.
- **Designate Your ACA’s Wisely** – Keep ACAs away from surface water, flood zones and uneven ground.
- **Collect Accumulated Manure** – Remove manure from ACAs on a regular basis.

NOTE: Complete the ACA assessment below if:
 You have planned Animal Concentration Areas (ACAs) on your farm.
 One or more of your pastures are being managed as ACAs because they are not meeting the pasture definitions outlined in the previous section.

Animal Concentration Areas (ACA)	YES	NO	N/A
1. ACAs are constructed on the farm to allow pasture grasses to recover from grazing.			
2. ACAs are constructed on the farm to limit the amount of high quality pasture grass that is available to horses.			
3. Some pastures have deteriorated and are being managed as ACAs.			
4. Diversion ditches and proper grading are used to divert water around the ACA.			
5. Spouting on buildings, including downspouts and underground outlets, diverts clean water around ACA.			
6. Water that runs across the ACA is directed to a storage facility or an area with dense vegetation that will absorb nutrients and filter the sediments.			
7. Manure is routinely collected from all ACAs.			
8. ACAs are not located near bodies of water.			
9. Feeding areas, shade, gates and other ACA are not located near surface water.			
10. Animals do not have access to streams from the ACA, other than properly installed crossings.			
11. ACA is free of excess standing water and mud.			
12. A stable base is used for ACA footing.			

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Section 4. Manure Storage

Manure storage is a predetermined location on a farm that houses manure and used bedding until it is utilized on the farm or exported. Rainfall can extract manure nutrients and storm water can transport those nutrients to lakes and streams, contaminating surface waters. Nutrients can also leach through the soil and pollute drinking water. Properly locating and constructing manure storage facilities is critical in preventing nutrient runoff and seepage. Manure storage does not have to be sophisticated. Manure that is stored on an improved base (concrete pad, crushed stone) and/or covered with a roof or tarp is usually adequate in protecting water quality. Covering manure will also prevent flies from breeding in the pile. Some farms construct composting storage structures, consisting of roofed structures with concrete half-walls and dividers that allow manure to be moved from one section to another. Properly locating the manure storage facility and sizing it to adequately hold the accumulated manure and bedding is a critical step in making manure storage environmentally friendly.

What is needed for healthy animals, a healthy farm, and a healthy environment:

- **Ensure Access to Manure Storage** – Pick a location that is suitable for year-round access to load and remove manure.
- **Select a Proper Location** – Keep manure storage away from surface water, flood plains, wells, slopes and property lines.
- **Separate Clean and Dirty Water** – Redirect clean water around manure storage facilities and divert dirty water to an adequately sized vegetative grass buffer strip.

NOTE: Complete the risk assessment below if you store any manure on your property. If you do not have a manure storage area on your property, please provide information about how you handle the manure removed from buildings and/or ACAs. Use the back of this paper if necessary:

Manure Storage			
	YES	NO	N/A
1. Manure is stored on an improved base.			
2. Manure is covered with a roof or tarp. (Note: Current manure management regulations require either an improved base or a cover.)			
3. Storage is large enough to prevent manure overflow (a six month capacity), or manure is removed frequently enough that overflow does not occur.			
4. Storage is not located near property lines.			
5. Storage is not located near drinking water wells.			
6. Storage is not located near lakes, streams, ponds, or wet spots.			
7. Water that leaves the manure storage is treated (dirty water drains to a vegetated buffer or some other form of treatment system).			
8. Manure is not stored in a flood zone/wet area.			
9. Storage is developed on relatively level ground. (A slight slope is good for drainage, but steep slopes have a higher potential for runoff)			
10. Storage facility is not highly visible to neighbors and passers-by.			
11. If manure is composted, the pile is frequently turned and maintained at appropriate temperature to kill pathogens and weed seeds.			

Section 5. Mechanical Manure Application

All animal operations produce manure. Some manure is directly deposited in pastures as animals graze. Other manure, such as stall bedding, is collected and mechanically applied to fields or exported. Applying manure to fields is a valuable way to add nutrients and organic matter to soil, reducing the cost of commercial fertilizers. Manure should be applied to fields based on soil test recommendations. Over-applying manure results in a buildup of excess nutrients that have the potential to runoff and escape into the environment. Ideally, manure application rates should not exceed the rate that plants need and take up. Manure should be applied at the most opportune time for crop growth. Winter applications pose a large environmental risk due to lack of growing vegetation to absorb the nutrients.

What is needed for healthy animals, a healthy farm, and a healthy environment:

- **Apply Nutrients According to Need** – Manure should be tested to determine the actual nutrient content. Calibrating the manure spreader will help determine a per acre application rate of manure nutrients. Combining both manure testing and spreader calibration will help you meet the crop’s nutrient needs and prevent the over application of manure.
- **Test Your Soil** – Soil test reports indicate how much manure should be applied. The report will also show which fields have excess, deficient, or optimum nutrient levels.
- **Pay Attention to Phosphorus** – Phosphorous is one of the main nutrients linked with degraded water quality. Pay close attention to soil test phosphorous levels. Do not continuously over apply this nutrient.

Note: *If you mechanically apply manure complete the risk assessment below:*

Mechanical Manure Application	YES	NO	N/A
1. Fields receiving manure have been soil tested within the last three years.			
2. Manure has been sampled for nutrient content. <i>(recommended – not required)</i>			
3. Manure applications do not exceed the maximum rates determined in the Manure Management Manual or Nutrient Balance Sheets.			
*4. Manure is not applied near (within 100 feet) of an environmentally sensitive area such as a lake, stream, drinking water source, or a non-vegetative channel or swale. <i>(*Exceptions may apply based on agricultural practices, and may be found in the Manure Management Manual).</i>			
5. Manure is applied when the crop needs the nutrients – spring, summer or fall.			
6. Manure is applied during the winter months <i>(Dec. 15 – Feb. 28, or ground is frozen at least 4 inches, or ground is snow covered. If Yes, complete 7-10.</i>			
7. If manure is mechanically applied during the winter (the application rate does not exceed 20 tons per acre.)			
8. If manure is mechanically applied during the winter, fields have at least 25% crop residue or an established cover crop.			
9. If manure is mechanically applied during the winter, fields with slopes greater than 15% slope do not receive manure.			
10. If manure is mechanically applied during the winter, no manure is applied within 100 feet of any lakes, ponds or streams.			

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Please Return Application and Self-Assessment To:

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