

Stream Management for Horse Owners

All of us, including horse owners, are responsible for and benefit from the sensible use of streams that flow through our property and make up our watershed. It's important for us to be diligent in caring for our streams.

Benefits of Responsible Stream Stewardship

- Increased land value
- Decreased soil erosion along the stream
- Improved water quality
- Diverse wildlife habitat
- Reduced severity of flooding
- Improved aesthetic quality



Horses can damage stream banks when they have full access to streams, which can increase erosion and lead to water pollution.

Need More Help?

For additional resources, contact your county extension agent. Some government-sponsored conservation programs can pay up to 80 percent of the cost of stream improvements.

For information on the web, see:

United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>

The UK Cooperative Extension publication *Riparian Buffers* (ID-175) at <http://www.ca.uky.edu/agc/pubs/id/id175/id175.pdf>

Authors: Laura Leavell, extension intern, Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering; Amanda Gumbert, extension specialist, water quality, Agriculture Programs; and Steve Higgins, director of environmental compliance, Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering

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What You Can Do for Your Equine Property

- Enhance and protect stream buffer zones.
- Fence off streams and water bodies from livestock.
- Provide a designated area for stream crossing or limit the access for horses.
- Place gates and troughs away from streams to prevent manure runoff.
- Manage pastures to maintain adequate vegetative cover to control erosion and runoff.



Stream Buffer Zones

Stream buffer zones, composed of trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers, are untouched natural areas along streams. They form a border between pasture and stream. Roots of plants in these zones hold soil in place and help prevent erosion. Buffer zones also provide diverse wildlife habitats, and they absorb nutrients and pathogens from manure that might otherwise run off into streams.

Farm managers can protect streams by fencing off designated areas and creating buffer zones. The size of the buffer zone will depend on available land, management strategies, and your goals for protecting water quality. A stream buffer of at least 30 feet will protect stream banks from erosion and filter nutrients from runoff water.

Stream buffer zones can be improved through careful planting of trees, shrubs, and deep-rooted grasses. Check with your local extension office to determine what plants are suitable for your area.



Fenced Stream Crossings

Designated fenced stream crossings provide a specific location for animals to cross waterways. To protect the stream bank, these crossings should be improved with materials to control erosion. You might install geotextile fabric overlaid with compacted rock/gravel. This material reduces erosion and provides adequate footing, making crossing safer for the horse.

Strategic Placement

To discourage animals from being drawn to sensitive areas, place hay feeders, water troughs, and supplemental feeders away from streams and other running water sources. Strategic placement also reduces foot traffic and the accumulation of mud on stream beds and reduces the chance that nutrients from manure will reach water resources. Periodically change the location of hay feeders, winter feeding sites, and supplemental feeders to prevent continuous congregation of animals.

