Healthy Horsekeeping for Water Quality includes:

- Irrigation techniques
- Off-stream stock watering
- Pasture Management
- Manure Management
- Composting
- Mud and Dust Control
- Dedicated All-weather Paddock
- Streambank and riparian vegetation
- Capture and reuse rainwater and snowmelt

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Horse Health & Water Quality

Keep the pasture green and the water clean!

Oregon Dept. Of Agriculture

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Management Tips for Healthy Horses and Clean Water

What's good for the horse is good for the water!

Proper grazing, parasite control, and manure and dirt management will help keep horses healthy and streams and irrigation water clean. Keeping water clean is a legal requirement and a priority in Oregon.

STREAMS

Vegetation along streams protects the water from excessive heating, filters out potential pollutants in runoff, and stabilizes banks.

Horse access to streams can result in trampled, eroding banks and manure in the water. Protect your stream and horse health by maintaining an ungrazed vegetated buffer next to the stream and providing off-stream drinking water.

IRRIGATION

Many people don't think of irrigation water as needing to be "clean". But, that water might drain into a stream or provide irrigation or livestock water for a neighbor. Fence horses out of canals and ditches, and provide them with safer, off-channel methods of obtaining clean drinking water, such as a nose pump or water trough.

PASTURES

Over-grazed pastures lead to soil erosion, surface water run-off, and less forage every year. Horses suffer from inhaling dust and eating less desirable forage.

A simple rule of thumb for irrigated pastures is to "graze at 8, no more at 4". This means graze when grass is about 8" tall and take horses off at 4" to allow the grass to re-grow.

Cross-fence your pasture into at least 3 smaller pastures. Rotate your horses through the pastures, providing at least 3 weeks of pasture rest to allow grass to regrow and parasite larvae to die in the sun.

MANURE

The average 1000-pound horse produces 50 pounds of manure per day! That's 9 tons or 6 pick-up loads per year!

Good pasture management includes harrowing your fields regularly. This helps incorporate manure into the soil, preventing bacteria and nutrients from entering water and exposing parasite larvae to sunlight.

Harrowing encourages horses to graze pastures more uniformly. Without harrowing, they tend to designate one area as a "bathroom" and then under-graze it while over-grazing other areas.

Always keep your horse on a regular worming schedule.

COMPOST

Composting can reduce the volume of waste material and the heat generated from this process kills weed seeds and parasites. Remember to cover your pile during wet weather to keep nutrients from leaching out.

MUD & DUST

An "all-weather paddock" is a key part of most well-managed horse properties. Keep your horses here to allow pasture grass to re-grow, protect saturated ground, and manage the amount of green grass your horss are eating. Think of it as a horse's "living room", with the pasture as the "dining room".

To reduce mud and dust, use wood chips, sand or other surface to provide adequate drainage. Surface selection comes down to availability, budget and personal preference.

Regular cleaning of the all-weather paddock is critical for pollution control and horse health. Would you want to stand in your own waste? A well-managed paddock will either have little or no contaminated run-off or nutrient leaching to groundwater. Direct any run-off toward a vegetative buffer or filter strip. Divert rainwater and snowmelt around the paddock with gutters and downspouts on the buildings.

Convert a large drylot into a small all-weather paddock and replant the rest of the former drylot with drought-tolerant grasses. Graze carefully.

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