# Healthy Horses & Water Quality

There are simple practices to keep horses healthy and protect water quality. Some examples include:

- Off-stream stock watering
- Pasture management
- Manure management
- Manure composting
- Mud and dust control
- Dedicated all-weather paddock
- Streambank and riparian vegetation
- Capturing and reusing rainwater and snowmelt
- Adding gutters and downspouts to buildings

## WHAT IS REQUIRED BY LAW?

Oregon Administrative Rules require:

- Vegetation must be allowed to establish and grow along all perennial streams and some seasonal streams.
- Waste (such as manure, sediment, and nutrients) cannot enter waters of the state.
- Waste cannot be placed where it can enter waters of the state.

## DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

You can visit ODA's Agricultural Water Quality webpage to find more resources. Scan the QR code below to visit the webpage.

In addition, your local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) can help create a management plan. Scan the QR code below to access the SWCD directory.

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*03/2025*

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# Horse Health and Water Quality

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# Management Tips

## HOW TO PROTECT HORSES AND WATER

What's good for the horse is good for the water! Proper grazing and manure management will help keep horses healthy and water clean. Keeping water clean is a legal requirement and a priority in Oregon. The following management tips are simple ways to protect horses and water quality.

### PASTURES

Over-grazed pastures lead to soil erosion, surface water run-off, and less forage. Horses will eat less desirable forage if not given enough pasture space. Ideally, 2 acres of pasture should be available per horse.

A simple rule of thumb for pastures is to “graze at 8”, no more at 4”. This means graze when grass is about 8” tall and take horses off at 4-6” to allow the grass to re-grow. Parasite pressure is highest when grasses are less than 4."

Cross-fence your pasture into smaller pastures. Rotate your horses through the pastures, providing at least 3 weeks of rest per pasture. This allows grass to regrow.

### WATER

Gutters and downspouts on buildings can divert rainwater and snowmelt away from horse paddocks. Runoff from wash racks can be sent into drains or vegetated filter strips. Geo-tech fabric, rock, gravel or sand can be used in heavy use areas. This can reduce mud and manure build up.

The brownish liquid that flows out of a manure pile is known as leachate. Leachate contains excess nutrients and bacteria. It can be a problem if it enters surface or ground water.

Land managers can enact simple practices to protect against pollution of surface and ground water. For example, vegetation along streams can protect surface water. Vegetation can limit temperature increase of water, filter runoff, and stabilize banks. Horse access to streams can result in eroding banks and manure in the water. Providing off-stream drinking water can help protect vegetation.

**Allowing vegetation to establish and grow along streams and creeks is required by Oregon Agricultural Water Quality Rules.**

### MANURE

The average 1,000-pound horse produces 50 pounds of manure per day. Soiled bedding from a stall can double that number. Managing all that manure and waste can be tricky.

A good option is placing dirty bedding and manure on an impervious surface; like concrete. Covering the pile helps prevent runoff from precipitation. Storage should accommodate 180-days of waste.

Other options are composting and spreading manure. Composting bedding and manure is an easy way to turn waste into a more usable product. Spread manure in a thin layer to allow plants to uptake nutrients and desiccate pest eggs.

The structure in the photo below shows an outstanding example of covered manure storage and composting.

### COMPOSTING

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