

# Horse Environmental Awareness Program

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## Slowing the Flow with Vegetated Buffers

You've done the best you can to utilize Best Management Practices on your farm, but you know there's still storm water leaving your horse facility -- picking up soil and manure particles on its way to the nearest pond, stream, or wetland. Perhaps your pasture has a stream running through it -- the vegetation has been eaten off and the banks are crumbling. There's another piece you need to add to your pollution control system, and that is distance; a *buffer between your horsekeeping activities and the watercourse*.

### How Does Having a Buffer Benefit Horse and Owner?

- Reduces risk of injury due to mud and ice, and may mean fewer lost shoes
- Aesthetics of property are improved with vegetation

### What Does a Buffer Consist Of?

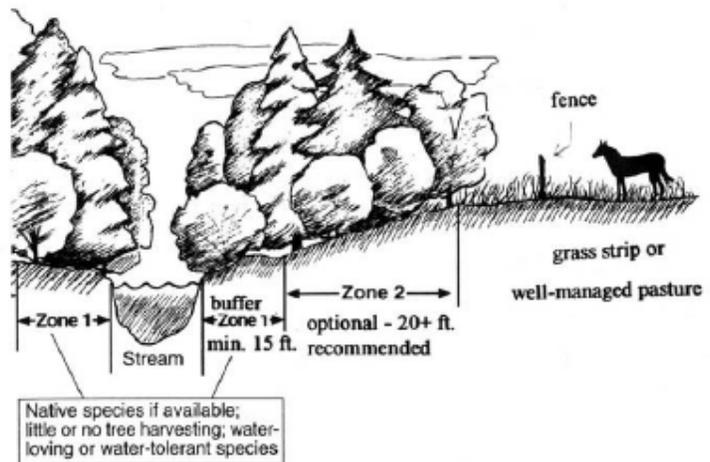
- Distance - to prevent a direct discharge of pollutant-laden storm runoff to sensitive areas
- Vegetation -an expanse of dense grass immediately down slope of the area of concern, in combination with an expanse of shrubs and/or trees where possible

### What Does a Vegetated Buffer Do?

- Helps to slow runoff to watercourses
- Traps sediment and solids carried in runoff
- Absorbs nutrients that would otherwise enter a water body
- Acts to structurally stabilize shorelines and streambanks
- Provides necessary shade for fish, keeping water temperatures cool and oxygen levels high
- Provides food and habitat for wildlife and the organisms that fish feed upon

### How Do I Create a Buffer?

- Determine the desired width. Setbacks of sacrifice areas, manure storage, and compost piles 200 feet or greater from sensitive areas is ideal, but not always possible on existing facilities.
  - ◆ buffer widths may vary depending upon upslope land use. A dense, well-managed pasture will require less buffering than a bare dirt lot.
  - ◆ the degree of the slope will also influence buffer size. On fairly level areas, a minimum of 15 feet may suffice, but greater than 35 feet is preferred. Sloping land will require significantly greater distance.
- Install or move existing fences to exclude horses from the buffer area. Provide alternative water source if necessary.
- Plant grasses or improve existing grass to maintain a dense sod. Mowing twice a year will help to keep the grass dense and reduce weed competition. Wherever possible, allow a strip of shrubs, trees, and grasses to become established adjacent to the watercourse.



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