

## Resources:

Oregon Department of Agriculture  
(541) 617-0017  
(541) 617-0055  
[http://oregon.gov/ODA/NRD/water\\_quality\\_front.shtml](http://oregon.gov/ODA/NRD/water_quality_front.shtml)

Soil & Water Conservation Districts  
Jefferson County (541) 923-4358 x101  
Crook County (541) 447-3548  
Deschutes County (541) 923-2004

Central Oregon Watershed Councils  
Trout/Willow Ck (541) 923-4358 x101  
Crooked River (541) 447-3548  
Upper Deschutes (541) 382-6103

Central Oregon Extension Service  
(541) 447-6228

Publication: Managing Small Acreage Horse Farms for Green Pastures, Clean Water, and Healthy Horses  
<http://smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/livestock/horses.php>

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# Managing Your Land for Horse Health & Water Quality



**Keep the pasture green  
and the water clean!**

Oregon Department of Agriculture &  
Central Oregon Soil and Water  
Conservation Districts



## Healthy Horses & 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.

Federal and state anti-pollution laws have been in effect for a long time, and protecting water quality in Oregon is a high priority.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture developed [water quality management plans](#) for 39 basins in Oregon, including three for Central Oregon: Middle Deschutes, Upper Deschutes, and the Crooked River. These plans provide information on local water quality concerns and recommend a variety of practices that benefit both the landowner and the water.

Copies of these plans are available on the Web at:

[http://oregon.gov/ODA/NRD/water\\_agplans.shtml](http://oregon.gov/ODA/NRD/water_agplans.shtml)

## Management Tips for Healthy Horses & Clean Water

### Pasture Management

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. Consequences can be as severe as colic or neurological problems from eating weeds.

Move horses onto lush pasture slowly if they have been eating hay or poor forage to prevent colic or founder.

A simple rule of thumb for irrigated pastures is to **"Graze at 8, No more at 4"**. This means graze grass when it is about 8 inches tall and take horses off at 4 inches to allow the grass to regrow.

**Cross-fence** your pasture into at least 3 smaller pastures. Rotate your horses through the pastures, providing at least 18-21 days of **rest** between grazings to allow grass to regrow and parasite larvae to die in the sun.

### Manure Management

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

Part of good pasture management involves **harrowing** your fields on a regular basis. This helps to incorporate manure into the soil, which prevents bacteria and nutrients from entering water. This also exposes 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.

And, always keep your horse on a **regular worming** schedule.

### Mud and Dust Management

Establishing an **"all-weather paddock"** is an important part of most well-managed horse properties. It is an area where you can keep your horses to allow pasture grass to regrow, to keep them off saturated ground, and to manage the amount of green grass they are eating. Think of it as the horse's "living room", with the pasture as the "dining room".

To minimize mud and dust, use wood chips, sand or some 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. The horse health aspects should be obvious. Would you want to stand in your own waste? A well-managed all-weather paddock will have little or no contaminated run-off or nutrient leaching to shallow groundwater. Any run-off that does come off should be directed to a **vegetative buffer** or filter strip. Rainwater and snowmelt can be diverted around the paddock with **gutters** and downspouts on the buildings.

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

### Composting Manure

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