

# Manure Management: What's the big stink?

Proper manure management is a necessary consideration for everyone who keeps horses. Containing, treating and disposing of horse manure routinely helps to maintain friendly relations with neighbors, protects local water quality, and further promotes horse health. Manure related nuisances, such as flies, and horse health concerns like thrush, scratches, and parasites can be controlled by integrating basic best management practices around your farm.

**Routinely collect, treat, and dispose of manure** from your pastures, paddocks, stalls, and shed areas. Collecting and composting manure is one way to deal with your horse's wastes in a relatively inexpensive way. Composted manure is a valuable fertilizer that can be applied to your pastures and gardens if you practice good management techniques. Poor management may result in spreading infection and diseases. Maintaining an internal temperature of 135°F to 160°F in your compost will kill most pathogens, parasites, and weed seeds. If you plan to apply compost to cropland, pastures, gardens, nurseries, lawns, or greenhouses, test it for nutrient content before spreading.

Disposing of manure in "the back forty" is convenient, but it may be illegal. Unmanaged manure can cause water quality degradation by spreading bacteria and leaching nutrients into nearby water sources. Rather, look for folks who may want your manure such as, neighbors, lawn care companies, landscapers, farmers, gardeners, nurseries, and greenhouses. Find out if there are any restrictions -- for instance, mushroom growers will accept manure with straw bedding, but not with wood bedding (*chips, sawdust*). Then, arrange for them to gain access and remove the manure.



**Keep your pastures and paddocks clean and dry** by capturing and diverting excess rainwater and snowmelt, and water from roofs and hoses, away from heavy use and manure storage areas. Construct a diversion ditch or swale across a slope to intercept excess surface water runoff and redirect or divert it away from sensitive resources or heavy use areas. Vegetation, such as grass, should be used to line the sides of the swale to prevent soil erosion and filter pollutants. Roof runoff can be directly diverted to a drywell, captured in a rain barrel, or transferred to a safe area by installing gutters and downspouts or underground pipes.

**Maintain grassed areas around paddocks and exercise areas** as this will filter manure pollutants thereby reducing the amount that might leave the area in stormwater runoff.

**Consult with your County Soil and Water Conservation District staff** when planning your horse facility. Ask for advise and design strategies to minimize erosion and the potential for pollution to occur.

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