

HOW GRAZING management water quality

By Rex Lockman

If your property is near or has a stream or pond, you can have a major influence on water quality.

Most people don't even realize they might be contributing to water quality problems. This is because most of these problems are from non-point source pollutants, which mean you usually don't see the pollutants going directly into the water. For example, manure from ducks, geese, chickens, cats, dogs, or livestock may be hundreds of feet away from a body of water, but, with a heavy rain, some of these particles can flow with the runoff to a stream or wetland and cause water quality problems.

Tracing these pollutants directly back to the source



Stock tanks away from streams will reduce time livestock spend near the stream.



Here is an example of a water gap. Notice the gravel on the path to the creek. The gravel helps reduce erosion.



Guess which will have more water runoff and erosion? The one on the right is properly grazed and will have less runoff.

is nearly impossible. A common source of non-point source water quality pollution comes from poor livestock grazing management in pastures near a stream or creek.

There are many simple solutions available to help reduce or eliminate water quality problems. Proper grazing management is an important solution. This includes dividing a pasture into several smaller paddocks and rotating livestock through each one during the seasons, making sure not to use the same area at the same time every year.

Remember also the "Take half, leave half" philosophy, meaning once 50 percent of the grass has been grazed, move livestock

to the next pasture. Leaving 50 percent of the vegetation will help increase plant regrowth, reduce weed problems, decrease soil erosion, trap blowing snow, and act as a filter for manure particles and sediment that can run off the pasture during a rainstorm.

Providing a stock tank with fresh water in the pasture will reduce the time animals spend in or near a stream or creek. Livestock would rather drink from a tank than a stream. If supplemental sources of water are not available, create a water gap where livestock can access a small section of the stream instead of the entire stream. Make a water gap by fencing off the stream or creek to create only one small, designated area for

water access. Gravel or rock is often used in this area to reduce erosion. A small access area will also reduce the time livestock spend near the water.

Landowners forced to keep a couple of horses in a small corral all winter should consider cleaning the corral on a monthly, or more regular, basis to reduce manure buildup. This will also benefit the horse's health. The manure can be composted and used in other areas as fertilizer. Having a vegetative buffer around the corral area will also reduce the chances of contaminating surface water. This vegetative buffer should be at least 30 feet wide and contain perennial plants that can be grazed lightly in late winter.

If you have an area you are concerned about and

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affects

need assistance, contact a local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office, conservation district, or University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service office. Online addresses are, respectively, <http://www.wy.nrcs.usda.gov/wymaps/wycomap.html>, www.conservewy.com/wacd/districts/index.html, and <http://ces.uwyo.edu/Counties.asp>.

These professionals have experience with these problems and can design and possibly even provide cost-share assistance to help mitigate water quality problems. NRCS offers EQIP (environmental quality incentives program) that can be used for moving corrals, creating buffer zones, and developing water sources away from streams. There are eligibility requirements that must be met. One is that small ag operations must make at least \$1,000/year income off the land. Inquire at a local NRCS office to see if you qualify for this or other programs. Some conservation districts also have cost-share programs available. Inquire at your local conservation district for possible programs.

BARNYARDS & BACKYARDS
RURAL LIVING IN WYOMING

New information resource available for small-acreage landowners!

By Jennifer Jones
Small Acreage Coordinator, University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service

A new on-line, one-stop information source for Wyoming landowners and managers has been created. The "Resources" page at [BarnyardsandBackyards.com](http://www.barnyardsandbackyards.com) provides more than 300 links to publications, video and audio clips, and Web sites about small-acreage/rural-living topics of interest to folks in Wyoming.

This Web page is meant to be a user-friendly, one-stop information source. A visitor can open the page and search for information by topic, or they can browse.

Subject sections listed on the site include:

- Business
- Landscaping
- Weeds
- Composting
- Pesticides
- Wildfire
- Domestic animals
- Plant diseases
- Wildlife
- Gardening
- Safety
- Workshops and conferences
- Handbooks
- Soils and fertilization
- Video spots
- Insects
- Water

In addition to browsing the site for information, visitors can sign-up on the new *Barnyards and Backyards* e-mail listserv. Those who do will receive periodic short e-mails announcing events in the state, new educational publications of interest, notification when the new issue of *Barnyards & Backyards* magazine is out, and other information.

Both of these pages plus information about the magazine, events, the Small Acreage Issue Team, its member organizations, and the project can be found at www.barnyardsandbackyards.com

Small Acreage Workshops and other events of interest will be occurring this Winter and Spring!
Check to see if one is occurring in your community at
www.barnyardsandbackyards.com/events.htm