



Wise care of feeding animal areas, septic systems, landscaping helps maintain clean water

By Nephi Cole

Wyoming is a great place to live. Open space and the rural nature of the state are some of the main reasons people choose to live in Wyoming.

Living in a place where many of our backyards also contain our barnyards is a wonderful opportunity, but, as we know, it also presents unique challenges in caring for the soil, air, and water.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Congress developed environmental legislation that affects us all today. Most are familiar with the Endangered Species Act. Its cousin, the Clean Water Act, tends to be less well-known and understood. It ensures our water stays clean and that the activities we use it for remain viable.

Barnyards and backyards are relevant to the discussion. Water from rain or snowmelt travels either over the ground or through the soil into streams, bringing with it anything it can move, such as sediment, minerals, and

contaminants. Although some amount of particle movement is inevitable, practices can be implemented to ensure your piece of ground is protected and that we are part of water quality protection and not part of a problem.

Here are some items every rural resident should be aware of:

Septic system maintenance

We take it for granted when we flush it goes away. Remember, septic systems are designed to clean water. The water almost always ends up back in a stream or the ground water. A properly functioning septic system (one that has a good tank, is pumped regularly, and has a properly functioning, non-saturated leach field) will cleanup effluent before it gets back into the water. Pollutants end up in streams

and ground water if a leach field is not functioning correctly. Have your system checked by a professional if in doubt.



Landscaping

Landscaping has a big effect on water quality. Maintaining good ground cover is essential to minimizing the overland flow of water and the amount of pollution water can pickup on its way to a stream. Maintaining some type of surface cover is desirable in most situations. Even in situations where having surface cover is not possible, such as driveways and heavy-use areas, it is important to try and maintain a vegetative buffer strip or area where water can filter into the ground or through vegetation before it gets back to streams. That isn't a green light to go overboard with inputs in landscaping. In fact, it is equally important to closely monitor the amounts and timing of fertilizers and pesticides that are applied. Acre-for-acre, more pollution comes from poorly managed lawns than from farms. Be sure to follow directions on the inputs applied to landscapes whether a lawn, a pasture, or a big garden.

Nephi Cole is the Natural Resources Conservation Service southern Wyoming watershed coordinator. He can be contacted at (307) 632-5716 or nephi.cole@wy.usda.gov.

Animal feeding areas

Government agencies like to call them AFOs, or animal feeding operations. An AFO is any area where animals are confined for a significant amount of time (40 days or more annually) that has no permanent vegetation. In most cases, these are corrals, but, in some cases, it may be small-acreage pastures where vegetation has been overgrazed. The animals can be horses, llamas, goats, cows, dogs – it really doesn't matter. Rain and snowmelt can pickup sediment and contaminants on bare ground and transport them to surface waters. What is the solution? Ensure these areas have good vegetation cover at all times. Alternatives are the use of good vegetative buffer strips, good manure management, and making sure water that leaves the area doesn't go directly into streams or ditches that may then drain into streams, rivers, or other water bodies.

With good planning, protecting water quality in our own little piece of the world ultimately makes our piece of the world that much better.

WYOMING LIVESTOCK ROUNDUP
The Weekly News Source for Wyoming's Ranchers,
Farmers and AgriBusiness Community.
www.wylr.net

P.O. Box 850
Casper, WY 82602
(800) 967-1647 • (307) 234-2700

DEFIANCE
Sacred Horse Feed

Low-Starch Horse Feeds Formulated for Performance

- Ingredients based on **cutting edge equine nutrition**.
- Low non-structural carbohydrates (NSC).
- **High quality fat** and fiber-based ingredients.
- Defiance Horse Feed is energy dense and highly fortified. This feed is perfect for **high performance athletes, breeding mares and stallions**, and thin horses needing to gain weight safely.

Sold at **Fine** Feed Stores throughout Wyoming
CALL FOR A DEALER NEAR YOU!

800 333 7929, Box 2026
Fort Collins, CO 80522
Ranch-Way.com
Dealer Inquiries Welcome