

Keeping Equines: reducing pollution risks and managing water

This information is aimed at equine businesses and those running stable yards or livery yards to help identify and reduce diffuse pollution risks, improve water management and meet legal responsibilities.

What is diffuse pollution?

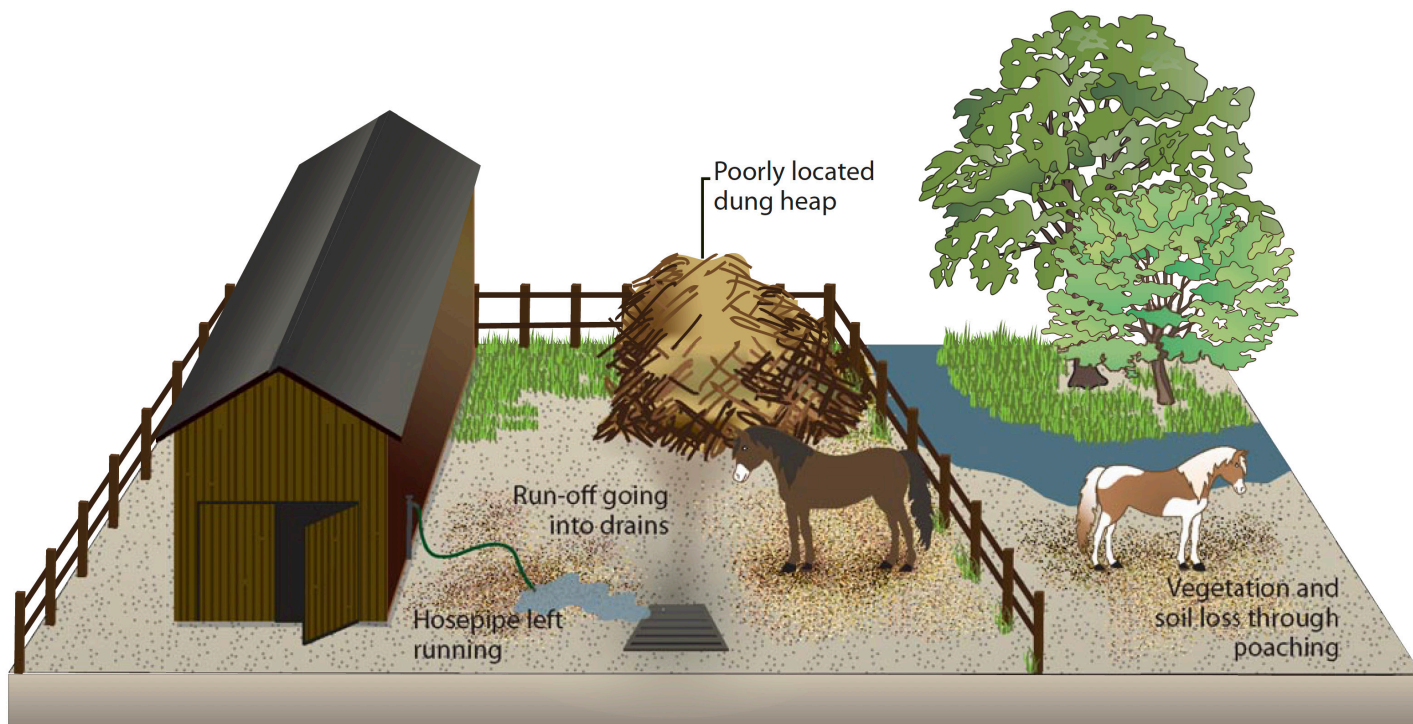
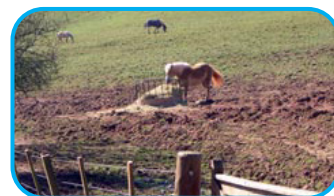
Diffuse pollution can come from several sources, for example nutrients, dung, chemicals or soil washed by rainfall into surrounding watercourses. These inputs can all affect biodiversity and water quality leading to:

- excessive aquatic plant growth;
- reduced habitat for invertebrates;
- reduced oxygen levels for fish and other aquatic wildlife;
- reduced amenity value for you and local community;
- increased risk of equine health and welfare problems.

Many routine practices can increase pollution risk, including:

- run-off from poorly constructed or located yard dung heap;
- poor management of dung around yards and stables;
- poaching and soil erosion around gates, riverbanks and at drinking points;
- over-grazing leading to soil erosion;
- chemical drips and spills during horse grooming and other routine maintenance jobs;
- soaking or steaming hay to remove dust;

Carefully choosing where to locate muck heaps and managing surface water runoff will not only reduce the pollution risk but will also reduce the number of places where insects such as midges can breed. These insects can spread serious diseases such as West Nile Fever and African Horse Sickness as well as causing problems such as sweet itch.



Diffuse pollution; potential problems and solutions

Problem	Potential Solutions
Dung heap too close to a watercourse	Move dung heap to a better location, avoiding slopes and keeping at least 10m away from watercourses or drains. Ensure contaminated drainage does not enter surrounding drains or watercourses.
Dung heap run-off getting on to yards and into drains	Relocate the dung heap to a safer location in the field, away from watercourses and drains. Redirect any flow of contaminated drainage from small heaps to a well vegetated area (e.g. a swale). Where run-off / slurry from dung heaps cannot be safely managed it will need to be collected and stored.
Disposal of tainted water from soaking hay	Do not dispose of tainted water to a surface water drain or watercourse. Evenly apply tainted water to well vegetated land, away from drains and watercourses and avoid any ponding or run-off.
Run-off from arenas, training or exercise areas getting into watercourses or drains	Collect dung from these areas. Re-route run-off to fields or construct a filter strip to intercept run-off.
Taps and hosepipes left running or leaking	Maintain equipment. Fix leaky taps. Fit a trigger gun to hosepipes.
Leaking drinkers	Make sure drinkers are carefully located to minimise impacts or damage. Regularly check and maintain drinkers.
Contaminated run-off from yards and stables getting into drains	Keep yards clean and minimise dirty yard areas. Keep clean roof water separate from dirty yard water; maintain gutters and downpipes and keep clear of debris so they can direct roof water directly into surface water drains.
Poaching near to watercourses	Alternative drinking facilities could reduce the need for equines to access watercourses. Fencing watercourses to enable a buffer strip to develop (consider planting pollinator species).
Heavy poaching in fields around gates, feeders and drinkers	Choose a safe location on firm ground at least 10m away from watercourses and ensure run-off cannot enter nearby watercourses or drains. Use mats or create hardstandings around gates, feeders and drinkers.
Stagnant water near stables or in fields creates breeding ground for midges that spread disease and a source of bacteria	Manage run-off on your property, assess soil for compaction and break up any hardpan.
Grazing / Outwintering	Avoid poaching, compaction and soil damage. Choose a 'drier' field away from watercourses. Check run-off from feeders and drinkers does not enter any watercourses or drains. Ensure horses do not cause any poaching or erosion within 5m (from the top of the bank) of any watercourse. Consider temporary fencing around gateways etc to prevent poaching.

What can you do?

Assess your holding to identify potential risks to the water environment; it may be useful to sketch a map and highlight any problem areas. Consider the best options to deal with the risks and then develop and implement an action plan to deal with the issues found.

We all share and benefit from Scotland's water environment. Please help us to protect our water environment and demonstrate how equine owners are acting responsibly. Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Further information

The British Horse Society Scotland – Equine welfare and stable management advice, and information on the UK's only livery approval scheme: www.bhs.org.uk or www.bhs.org.uk/horse-care-and-welfare/

CAR – A Practical Guide – Detailed information on regulations to prevent diffuse pollution from rural activities.

Farming and Water Scotland – Practical ideas to reduce diffuse pollution risks from farming activities. www.farmingandwaterscotland.org/

NetRegs – Up-to-date advice on environmental regulations for small and medium size businesses: www.netregs.org.uk

Pasture Management – The British Horse Society – www.bhs.org.uk/horse-care-and-welfare/health-care-management/pasture-management/