

How can horse-owners help the environment?

Here are 10 ways in which you as a horse-owner could help the environment and reduce losses to groundwater:

- 1 Try to avoid over-grazing of paddocks (especially in winter) which weakens the grass and results in bare areas where soil can erode and weeds proliferate.
- 2 For paddocks/parts of paddocks that tend to lie wetter use these during summer months and save any better draining land for winter.
- 3 Keep horses with company and turn out/bring in together so individual horses are not stressed, causing soil damage by fence walking and galloping around the paddock.
- 4 If possible use a sand school or bark pen as a turn-out area for horses on extremely wet days to save damage to fields.
- 5 Use strip grazing/moveable electric fencing to reduce pressure of gateway areas by moving where the horses go in and out of the paddock.
- 6 Consider using bark chippings around gate-ways to protect the soil.
- 7 Pick up droppings regularly, avoid locating temporary heaps in ditches, streams and ditch-like features; these are likely to be karst features which may act a preferential pathways for pollutants to the underlying groundwater.
- 8 Do not allow water used to soak hay nets or wash horses down to run into ditches, streams or drains.
- 9 Do not allow water used to soak hay nets or wash horses down to run into ditches or streams.
- 10 Graze horses over as large area as possible to minimise likelihood of poaching and compaction.



Other pollutants risks

If your stables or livery yard are in a remote location, away from mains drainage or gas, you should also watch out for:

- the storage of oil - particularly heating oil
- the storage of chemicals - including sterilizing agents, biocides, disinfectants and medicines
- foul drainage - including that from associated houses and offices

You should store pool chemicals in a secure area or within a bunded storage area, preferably covered by a roof. The store should be sited on a solid base, with a surrounding wall that is resistant to chemical attack. There should be no drainage outlet, and chemical spillages should be contained and soaked up with an absorbent material. If chemicals enter or might enter surface water drains, you must contact the Environment Agency immediately.

.....

Useful contacts & further information

Environment Agency

0800 80 70 60 (24 hour incident hotline)

The Horse Trust helpline

01494 488 464

BHS helpline

0844 848 1666

NFSCo helpline

0845 054 8888

Defra helpline

08459 33 55 77

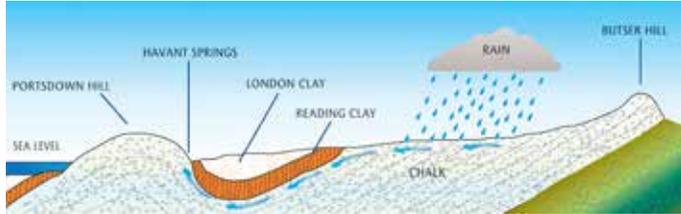


Prevention of water contamination and equine activities



Background

Portsmouth Water abstracts groundwater contained within the chalk rock (aquifer) of the South Downs to supply public drinking water in your area. The underlying aquifer is vulnerable to the risk of nutrients and other losses to groundwater which are closely linked to land use.



Currently, a large number of our groundwater abstractions are failing the legal drinking water limit for nitrate, with one of the main nitrate sources originating from farmland and associated agricultural practices. Portsmouth Water are focused on reducing the amount of nutrients, particularly nitrate currently entering the water environment. We aim to work closely with agriculture and landowners in our catchments by promoting a voluntary uptake of best management practices and services, so to reduce the impact of activities on the local water environments.



Did you know?

Water draining from horse paddocks can contribute to water pollution. Water from hay net soaking and washing down areas can contain nutrients and sediment which can be harmful to both environment and human health if it enters ditches, streams, groundwater or drains.

Muck heaps

Muck heaps or dropping piles can pollute water with nutrients, bacteria and worming chemicals.

You should avoid locating temporary heaps of field manure where there is risk of run-off to cause pollution, these include:

- near field drains
- within 10 metres of a water course
- within 50 metres of a spring, well or borehole that supplies water for human consumption
- potential/mapped solution features which may include depressions and/or old chalk pits



Common areas at risk of pollution

To prevent pollution, you should in particular pay attention to:

- Run-off from dirty yards
- Washing out of stables
- Soaking hay to suppress dust
- Exercise pools (due to the presence of treatment chemicals and associated sediments or solids)



Drainage

Contaminated runoff should be prevented from entering any watercourse or drain. The regulations state that it is mandatory to ensure that "When cleaning and disinfecting the stables, never let this effluent enter surface water drains or watercourses". In keeping with good practice stables ought to be designed to divert uncontaminated water e.g. roof drainage away from dirty areas, as only clean water can be discharged directly to watercourses and soakaways.



Portsmouth Water can help...

We offer free and confidential services to support equine establishments through our Downs & Harbours Clean Water Partnership programme; a forward-thinking initiative formed by Portsmouth Water, Natural England and the Environment Agency aimed to tackle diffuse water pollution issues affecting the quality of ground, surface and coastal waters in West Sussex and East Hampshire.

We can offer:

- Free visit to discuss paddock management to help get the best out of your grazing for happier healthier horses and to advice on manure management.
- Free soil sampling to check the nutrient status of paddocks.
- Possible subsidised capital grants for infrastructure improvements including fencing, in- field water management and so forth.
- Equine focused workshops on soil, pasture and manure management.

Please visit the Downs & Harbours Clean Water Partnership website to find out more:

www.cleanwaterpartnership.co.uk

