



## FACT SHEET 5.8

# CONTROLLING ANIMAL ACCESS TO WATERWAYS: ALTERNATIVE WATER SOURCES

Allowing farm animals unrestricted access to surface water has generally been the most common and easiest way to meet the water needs of horses, livestock and other farm animals. However, this method often results in impacts to surface water quality and to that of the adjacent land area.

Streambank erosion, depleted buffer zones and pathogens from manure are a few of the long-term impacts from direct waterway access. To avoid direct water quality impacts, hobby farmers need to find a dependable alternative water source for animals.

Benefits of providing an alternative water source include:

- stream bank and waterway protection
- aquatic and wildlife habitat protection
- improved animal health
- better pasture management
- improved relationship with neighbors

A water trough or similar device can be permanent or portable. When installing a trough, you should place it at a location that reduces the risk of contamination to waterbodies and water supply sources and encourages farm animals to drink. Remember, Massachusetts drinking water regulations (310 CMR 22.00) prohibit the stabling, hitching, standing, feeding or grazing of livestock or other domestic animals within 100 feet of the bank of a surface water source or tributary and prohibit people from allowing or causing any animal to go into, or upon, any surface water source or tributary thereto.



### **DID YOU KNOW?**

If your water trough is large, deep, covered, and won't be knocked over - you can add fish! Fish can have the added benefit of eating algae, reducing the need to clean the trough as often.



### **WATER QUALITY BENEFIT**

Alternate water sources eliminate the need for farm animals to access waterways, helping to protect water quality and adjacent habitat.

## **WHEN INSTALLING AN ALTERNATIVE WATER SOURCE**

- Locate it away from waterbodies and water supply sources
- Provide a flat and stable surface area around the trough to protect the area from erosion
- Centrally locate it so that it's accessible from all pastures and paddock areas at all times
- Provide adequate capacity to meet the requirements of all animals
- Ideally, construct a structure over the trough to provide animals with shade and reduce the amount of alga growth and maintenance required
- If the water source is also used for human consumption, install check valves or similar devices to prevent contamination of the water source (check local codes for requirements)

## **MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS**

- Always ensure animals have adequate water in the trough
- If automated, regularly check the flow of water to the trough
- Look for leaks and fix them right away
- If you have a float valve check it regularly to make sure it's working
- Areas around the trough can get wet and muddy - stop any leaks and fix eroded areas right away
- Consider a mud management plan
- Drain and cleanout troughs at least once a year

## **HOW TO CLEAN YOUR TROUGH**

- Dump out the existing water and use a pressure washer to hose off the sides and bottom
- Pour in a small amount of dish washing soap and use a stiff bristle brush to scrub the inside of the trough
- Dump out the trough again and thoroughly rinse out any remaining soap and debris
- Refill the trough