Reducing Mud

This factsheet is one of a series developed for livestock owners with small farms. Each factsheet focuses on an area of management that will benefit the health of your animals, as well as the health of your property's natural resources.

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BMP Factsheet **Winter 2015**

Mud doesn't have to be a "given" every winter. Your farm can be managed to prevent mud problems. The presence of mud is more than just a mess or a nuisance; mud often has negative health effects for your animals. The moist, muddy areas can be breeding grounds for bacteria, flies, and other insects. Standing in or walking through mud exposes livestock to skin and hoof diseases that often bring higher feed and veterinarian bills. Following a practical management program will minimize the mud on your acreage.

Begin by installing gutters and downspouts on barns and shelters to collect and divert clean rain water away from animal confinement areas.
Locate downspout outlet pipes to divert clean water to an appropriate vegetated area outside the animal confinement space. The idea is to prevent the clean roof water from mixing with manure in the confinement area and contributing to mud build up and polluted runoff.

An inch of rainfall on a 12' x 12' roof produces 90 gallons of runoff. Collecting all that roof water in gutters and directing the runoff through downspouts away from animal confinement areas is a simple and immediate step toward reducing mud in the high traffic areas around buildings. By keeping clean water clean, manure and wastes are not carried into natural waterways. Gutters and downspouts greatly reduce the mud problem around barns and shelters and help prevent manure and sediments from reaching waterways.

Best Management Practice (BMP) Factsheets

What is a Farm Plan	Small Farm Resources
Livestock Confinement	Composting
Reducing Mud	Pasture Management
Filter Strips	Wetlands

Once gutters and downspouts are installed, drain tiles, or simple ditches may be used (with proper care and planning!) to intercept rainwater and to re-direct that water away from your animal confinement areas. Re-directing roof runoff water away from animal confinement areas prevents that offsite water from contributing to muddy conditions.

Muddy areas should not be allowed to drain directly into streams, ponds, swales, or ditches. Muddy water or runoff from an animal confinement area should be limited to draining into a vegetated filter strip. The main purpose of a filter strip is to intercept nutrients, sediment, and pathogens before the contaminants enter

Whatcom CONSERVATION DISTRICT
(360) 526-2381
www.whatcomcd.org
6975 Hannegan Road
Lynden, WA 98264

Use footing materials to reduce mud in high traffic and heavy use areas;

- **Wood chips**
- **Hog fuel**
- **Sand**
- **Gravel,**
- **Pea rock**
- **or other materials will reduce mud**

Create Confinement Areas

To prevent pastures from becoming compacted and muddy, livestock should be removed from pastures and confined to a holding area, paddock or corral (sacrifice pasture) during wet winter months (see Livestock Confinement and Pasture Management Factsheets for more information).

Careful consideration should be given to the location of these livestock holding areas. Choose a well-drained area away from existing streams, ponds, swales, wetlands, or other clean water. Pea gravel, hog fuel, wood chips and sand are some possible footing materials that can be used to help keep these areas dry. Different site preparation and footing materials are appropriate for different soil and livestock types.

Buildings and shelters should also be located in high, well-drained areas. Avoid placing buildings close to streams, ponds, swales, wetlands and other surface water.

Check with Whatcom County Planning & Development Services (360-676-6907) for setback and permitting requirements.