

HORSES, LAND AND WATER

Action Planner for Horse Properties

A tool to assist horsekeepers assess and improve environmental management

to accompany the

HORSES, LAND AND WATER
Management Guidelines



- Whole of property management
- Paddock management
- Management for intensive horsekeeping





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Introduction

A catchment is an area of land that catches rainfall, and directs it to a creek, river, dam or gutter, which eventually flows out to an ocean or lake.

Water is the link throughout the catchment. As well as rivers, creeks, lakes, dams and reservoirs, a catchment also includes groundwater, stormwater, waste water, and related infrastructure (including sewerage pipes and treatment systems).

It is important to maintain a healthy catchment to ensure watercourses:

- can support aquatic life such as fish, frogs and insects;
- are available for recreational use; and
- ◆ can supply safe drinking water for communities.

Everybody lives and works in a catchment, so we all have a responsibility to look after the environment within our local catchment.

All properties need to be well managed to prevent pollutants (including sediments from soils, nutrients from manure and fertilisers and chemicals from pesticides or veterinary products) from damaging the surrounding environment and/or entering watercourses or groundwater.

The way that you manage activities on your horsekeeping property can have a direct impact on the surrounding environment and the quality of the water that runs off your property, which in turn has an impact on your catchment's health. These include activities such as:

- pasture composition and groundcover maintenance;
- weed control;
- manure management;
- storage and application of veterinary products and chemicals; and
- horse access to and across watercourses.

A property that practices sound environmental management will have quality pastures, low incidence of weeds, habitats for native birds and animals and well-maintained watercourses. Sound environmental management not only translates into healthy land but also provides an environment that will have positive impacts on the health of the horses that live on such a property.

It is important to understand how activities on your horsekeeping property can be managed to prevent pollution in your catchment and promote horse health. Once issues are identified you can then begin working towards managing activities on your property to reduce or prevent pollutants harming the surrounding environment and catchment.

This Action Planner is designed to assist you to recognise any improvements in management practices that will promote catchment health on your property.

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How to use the Action Planner

This Action Planner is designed to be used in conjunction with Horse SA's *Management Guidelines* publication, which consists of a series of chapters for each of the 30 topics in the Action Planner.

The Planner has been developed to assist horse property managers to assess and continually improve their environmental management relating to:

- whole of property management (activities or issues that affect the environment and need to be managed across the entire property),
- paddock management (activities or issues that are specific to paddocks and grazing areas), and
- intensive horsekeeping (activities or issues that are specific to areas of intensive horsekeeping such as stables, yards etc.).

Step 1 Work through each section of the audit tool and for each topic and **select the statement that best reflects the current management practice** on your horsekeeping property:

- Ideal
- Nearly there
- Just beginning
- Haven't thought about it

Step 2 At the end of this process, record your results on the table in the '**Summary of results of the checklist**'.

Step 3 The topics that you rated the lowest, starting with "haven't thought about it", should be your highest priority for making improvements in the near future.

Step 4 Once you've identified your highest priority areas, the next step is to develop Action Plans to assist you in better managing and controlling these areas. Look at the corresponding topics in the *Management Guidelines* to help you develop the plans for your property. An Action Plan template is included at the back of this publication.

Step 4a – Choose the **short term improvement action(s)** which:

- can be planned and conducted within one year;
- helps your property comply with (regulatory) requirements not to cause environmental damage or harm to immediate assets such as soil, nearby water bodies, air and native vegetation;
- is financially feasible to implement in the short term; and
- fits in with family/ enterprise time commitments.

Step 4b – Choose the **long term improvement action(s)** which:

- needs to be planned and conducted over a longer time period (e.g. more than one year);
- needs additional resources currently not available in your budget; and
- enhances the overall aesthetics of your property.

Whole of property management

1 Property Management Plan

A Property Management Plan (PMP) looks at your personal goals, the natural resources (i.e. soil, water and biodiversity) on the property and the specific requirements of your enterprise.

Through developing a PMP, all three areas can be maintained in a sustainable manner. Plans will also help identify resources and costs to help with future improvements.

A well-designed PMP has management and improvement aspects that are built into your daily routine and annual planning. It collects information relating to the overall health and productivity of your property and warns of early problems.

Many horse property managers are probably already doing quite a number of the things you would include in a property plan, but have not yet formalised these in writing.

★ **A Property Management Plan for the management of natural resources is in place, actively used and reviewed (updated) annually.**

- Ideal A Property Management Plan for the management of natural resources is in place, actively used and reviewed (updated) annually.
- Nearly there A Property Management Plan exists, but needs updating.
- Just beginning No Property Management Plan exists, but I do know how to write one.
- Haven't thought about it I don't have a Property Management Plan and am not sure where to start.

Ideas for changes to management practices:

Summary of results

Instructions:

- 1 In the table opposite record the rating you selected for each topic.
- 2 The topics that you rated the lowest for, starting with 'haven't thought about it', should be your highest priority for making improvements in the near future.
- 3 Once you've identified your highest priority areas, the next step is to develop Action Plans to assist you in better managing and controlling these areas. An Action Plan template can be found in the next section to assist you in developing your Action Plans.
 - a Choose the short-term improvement action(s) based on the following criteria:
 - Can be planned and conducted within one year.
 - Helps your property comply with (regulatory) requirements not to cause environmental damage or harm to immediate assets such as soil, nearby water bodies, air, native vegetation.
 - Is financially feasible to implement in the short term.
 - Fits in with family/ enterprise time commitments.
 - b Choose the long-term improvement action(s) based on the following criteria:
 - Needs to be planned and conducted over a longer time period (e.g. more than one year).
 - Needs additional resources currently not available in your budget.
 - Enhances the overall aesthetics of your property.

Action Planner for Horse Properties

A tool to assess and improve environmental management

Summary of results

	Ideal	Nearly there	Just beginning	Haven't thought about it	Not applicable
Whole of Property					
1 Property Management Plan					
2 Horsekeeping systems					
3 Development and related approvals					
4 Siting of stables, yards and intensive work areas					
5 Fire prevention planning					
6 Emergency response planning					
7 Habitat for native plants and animals					
8 Storage and transport of veterinary products and chemicals					
9 Application and disposal of veterinary products and chemicals					
10 Preventing weeds entering or leaving the property					
11 Pest animals					
11 Disposal of deceased horses					
Paddock Management					
1 Maintain groundcover					
2 Pasture composition					
3 Weed identification and control					
4 Proclaimed pest plants					
5 Seasonal wet areas, wet seeps and drainage lines					
6 Steep slopes					
7 Management of manure					
8 Fence line tracking					
9 Management of horse feeding, watering and congregating areas					
10 Shade and shelter					
11 Management of watercourses (including erosion gullies and dams)					
12 Stock crossings					
Intensive Horse Keeping					
1 Horse exercise areas and yards					
2 Cleaning of intensive horsekeeping areas					
3 Stable/ yard waste storage					
4 Storage of feed					
5 Cleaning out horse floats and trucks					
6 Wash down areas					

Environmental action planning

Now that you've identified the high priority areas for action for your property, the next step is to develop Action Plans to assist you in planning and implementing your actions. The following steps will assist you in developing your Action Plans.

1 Objective

Objectives are broad goals for environmental management on your property.

Start by setting objectives for each priority area.

(Example – If your priority area is 'storage and transport of veterinary products and chemicals', your objective may be 'to improve chemical storage on property to minimise environmental impacts'.)

2 Actions

Actions are what you plan to do to meet your objective.

It's important to be realistic when setting your actions. Use the SMART principle when developing your actions.

S – Specific

M – Measurable

A – Achievable

R – Realistic

T – Time-framed.

Set a date for completing each action/target and designate someone to be responsible for completing the task. By doing this you are ensuring that the job gets done.

(Example – If your objective is 'to improve chemical storage on property to minimise environmental impacts' your actions may include:

- 1 Plan and construct a dedicated chemical storage area by December 2006, responsibility of property manager.*
- 2 Establish record keeping and MSDS sheets for all chemicals stored by March 2007, responsibility of property manager.*
- 3 Develop chemical handling and storage procedure/s by July 2007, responsibility of property manager.)*

3 Monitoring and recording

Monitoring the success of your action will provide you with a track record of whether and how well you achieved your target.

Think about:

- What you will need to monitor.
- Where are you going to monitor.
- How are you going to monitor.
- When are you going to monitor.
- Who will be responsible for monitoring.
- What records you will need to keep.

(Example – for above actions:

- Every three months monitor chemical containers for leaks.*
- Register to be filled out for every use of chemical.*
- Any chemical spills to be recorded through an incident report form.)*

Environmental action template

Action Plan – Title				
Objective				
Actions				
When to do it	Action	Date	Responsibility	Completed?
Monitoring and recording				

Summary of best practices/benchmarks/guides

Whole of property

- 1 A Property Management Plan for the management of natural resources is in place, actively used and reviewed (updated) annually.
- 2 The number of horses on the property and the management system used has been determined by the land capability and the needs of the horse property manager.
- 3 Approvals and permits are in place for horsekeeping and property improvements.
- 4 Horse facilities are sited and managed with consideration given to convenience and potential environmental impacts, and through open communication with neighbours.
- 5 A fire prevention program is documented and implemented throughout the year.
- 6 An emergency response plan is documented, communicated to relevant persons and reviewed annually.
- 7 Existing habitats are protected and enhanced for native plants and animals.
- 8 Veterinary products and chemicals (pesticides, fertilisers etc) are stored and transported according to labels, relevant legislation and recommended guidelines.
- 9 Veterinary products and chemicals (pesticides, fertilisers etc) are applied and disposed of according to labels, relevant legislation and recommended guidelines.
- 10 An active program to prevent weeds entering or leaving the property is in place.
- 11 Pest animals are identified and a pest specific control program is in place.
- 12 A plan exists for the suitable disposal of deceased horses.

Paddock management

- 1 All grazing areas have at least 70% (for soil susceptible to water erosion) or 50% (for soil susceptible to wind erosion) ground cover throughout the year.
- 2 All grazing areas have quality pasture grasses and legumes with less than 10% weed species and no proclaimed plants.
- 3 An active pasture weed control program is in place that is regularly monitored and reviewed.
- 4 Proclaimed (declared) pest plants are identified and controlled.
- 5 Horse access is restricted from seasonal wet (waterlogged) areas, wet seeps (boggy areas) and drainage lines while the soil is wet and soft.
- 6 Horses are restricted from steep, erosion-prone slopes.
- 7 Action is regularly taken to prevent manure build up in paddocks.
- 8 No fence line tracking is evident.
- 9 Horse feeding, watering and congregating areas are managed to prevent dust, mud and erosion.
- 10 Paddock shelter and shade areas are managed to prevent dust, mud and erosion.
- 11 Watercourses are fenced to restrict horse access.
- 12 Stock crossings are selected and designed to prevent stream bed and bank erosion.

Intensive horsekeeping

- 1 Intensive horse areas are managed to prevent dust, mud, manure build up and stormwater/watercourse pollution.
- 2 Horse manure and soiled bedding is stored in a manner that prevents water runoff entering or escaping from the area.
- 3 Intensive horsekeeping areas are regularly cleaned and wastes disposed of appropriately.
- 4 Feed is stored in dry, sealed containers and is not accessible to vermin.
- 5 Horse transport vehicles are cleaned out with waste collected and contained for disposal or recycling.
- 6 Waste water from wash down areas does not enter watercourses or stormwater drains.

Notes

Notes

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