

HORSE OPERATIONS AND WATER QUALITY



Vermont horse owners who meet the thresholds to qualify as farms under the Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) must take measures to protect water quality in the state and are subject to regulation and/or certification by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM). Vermont farms are also eligible for technical and financial assistance through VAAFM. For more information visit agriculture.vermont.gov.

Required Agricultural Practice (RAP) Minimum Thresholds

RAPs apply to all farm operations which meet any of the following thresholds:

- farm 4.0 contiguous acres or more;
- have an annual gross income of over \$2,000 from the sale of agricultural products; or
- have filed a 1040(F) in the past 2 years

What are the RAPs?

The Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) are required practices for agricultural operations that aim to reduce non-point source pollution from agriculture to surface waters of Vermont. The RAPs include restrictions on agricultural activities that might impact state waters, including waste management, livestock exclusion from surface water, and the zoning of farm structures.

Do the RAPs apply to me?

The RAPs apply to all farms, including horse farms. You may be required to comply with the RAPs on your property even if you are just boarding horses or teaching lessons. On the next page you can find some of the RAPs that are particularly relevant to horse operations, but note that additional RAPs may apply. You can find the complete list at agriculture.vermont.gov/rap.





Additional Requirements:

Horse farms with over 40 equines OR more than 50 acres of annual cropland are required to certify annually as Certified Small Farm Operations (CSFOs) and have additional requirements under the RAPs. Larger farms that qualify as Medium Farm Operations (MFOs) and Large Farm Operations (LFOs) also have additional regulations. To learn more visit agriculture.vermont.gov/rap.

What RAPs should I be aware of?

1. Discharges and Runoff

Farms must use management strategies to prevent the discharge, runoff or leaching of agricultural waste to surface or groundwater or across property boundaries.

2. Manure Storage and Field Stacking:

Waste storage facilities must not leak or overflow. Field stacked manure must be at least 20% solids, able to stack 4ft high, and located 200ft from surface waters or drinking waters, 100ft from property lines or ditches, and not on bedrock or in the floodplain.

3. Manure Spreading

Manure may not be spread during the Winter Spreading Ban between December 15 and April 1. Manure may not be spread on bedrock, frozen ground, or during heavy rain. See RAPs Section 6 for more regulations and setbacks.

4. Livestock Exclusion

Livestock must be excluded from surface waters in barnyards except at livestock crossing or watering areas. Livestock may have access to surface waters in pastured land only where there are stable banks, adequate vegetative cover, and no signs of erosion.

5. Farm Structures

The construction of farm structures is regulated by VAAF. Local permits are not necessary, but farms must notify the municipality of construction and comply with local setbacks and Flood Hazard Area & River Corridor development restrictions. Contact VAAF or your town to learn more.

NOTE: These selected RAPs are included here due to their relevance to horse operations of any size. For the full list of RAPs, visit agriculture.vermont.gov/rap.