

COMMODITY

HORSES

Description

In British Columbia, horses are maintained for an assortment of purposes using a variety of housing and holding methods. Horses may be reared on breeding farms, attend training farms, and be housed in facilities that vary from large equestrian facilities to backyard shelters. Horses are used for racing, sport, and recreational purposes and for work purposes such as ranching, guiding and packing. Horses are housed and ridden locally or transported for riding elsewhere. It is common to maintain a horse or two at home for part of the year and to have them boarded for part of the year.

Feed for horses is often purchased elsewhere for consumption at the farm. Many horse owners, however, grow hay on their own land and store it for future use. Some horses are boarded in facilities that provide specific feeding and exercise programs while others are maintained directly by their owners on home premises.

Horses graze on pasture, grassland, and wooded areas if feed is available. In most parts of B.C. year-round grazing is not feasible due to unfavourable weather conditions and quality of the feed. As a result, supplementation with hay and grain is common, particularly during the winter months when there is little nutritional value in the grazed plants.

The movement of livestock, feed, bedding, farming equipment and manure are all commonly done by trucks and trailers. Frequency and intensity of traffic depend on the size and type of the operation. The riding of horses on the road and road shoulders is regulated under the *Motor Vehicle Act*.

In some instances, horses are allowed access to a watercourse to drink, but fresh water is often provided through a watering trough supplied by a domestic system. Access to a stream for water is allowed only in those cases where the livestock receives all their feed from grazing. In such situations, agricultural wastes generated by animals must not impair the usefulness of the watercourse.

Many horse operations include riding rings, trails, turnout spaces and other confinement structures such as lunging and sacrifice areas. It is not uncommon to find wood waste used in these areas for many parts of the province. Sand, however, is being increasingly used for such purposes. Care must be taken to avoid wood waste leachate from accumulating to the point of entering water courses and ground water.

Horse manure, whether left behind by grazing animals, removed from confinement areas, stored for future removal from the farm, or stored for future use as a fertilizer on cropland, must be managed in a way that does not result in pollution. On operations where frequent manure removal for use off the farm occurs, the potential for pollution is typically low. In situations where manure and bedding are stored for later use, greater chances of problems arising from odour, flies, and pollution exist.

Farm Practices of Particular Interest

Practices for specific farm activities can be found in the Farm Practice section of this reference guide. Farm practices that are of particular interest to the keeping, boarding and maintenance of horses include the following.

Farm Buildings

Maintaining horses requires buildings to house horses, to protect equipment and to store feed, fertilizers and pesticides.

See also Farm Practice: [Structures](#)

Grazing

Horses can be pastured throughout the growing season. They may have access to pasture and range land 24 hours a day. In B.C., laws exist which govern where livestock are allowed to roam.

See also Farm Practice: [Animal Care and Handling](#)

Horse Handling and Husbandry

Information on the care and handling of farm animals is provided in the Farm Practices listed below.

See also Farm Practice: [Animal Care and Handling](#)
[Transportation](#)

Livestock at Large

In B.C., laws exist which govern where livestock are allowed to roam.

See also Farm Practice: [Livestock at Large](#)

Waste Handling

Manure is collected and stored or composted until it can be applied to cropland as a fertilizer. Some odours will be generated from waste agitation and land spreading.

See also Farm Practice: [Composting](#)
[Farmstead Refuse](#)
[Fertilizers and Soil Conditioners](#)
[Manure Storage and Use](#)
[Mortality Disposal](#)

Principal and Accessory Buildings

From an operational perspective, principal farm buildings on horse farms are typically barns, stables, and, in some situations, riding arenas. Accessory farm buildings may include storages for agricultural wastes, chemicals, compost input materials, compost products, hay, grain, and woodwaste. Other accessory structures could include shelters, confined livestock areas, machine sheds, and on-farm composting buildings. From a watercourse protection perspective, however, the definition of principal and accessory buildings may differ. For the purposes of determining applicable setbacks from watercourses and property lines, therefore, local government bylaws or the *Guide for Bylaw Development in Farming Areas* should be consulted. Building assessments may need to be conducted on a case-by-case basis if the designation of a building as principal or accessory is unclear.

Legislation

Agricultural producers are expected to follow all legislation that pertains to their farming operations. The *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* stipulates that the farm operation must meet the *Public Health Act*, *Integrated Pest Management Act*, *Environmental Management Act* and the regulations under those Acts. Information on federal and provincial legislation can be found in Appendices B and C.

Acts that pertain to specific farm activities are listed in the Farm Practices section of this reference guide. Local government bylaws may also apply to some farm practices. Acts that are not referenced elsewhere and which may be of special interest to horse owners include the following.

Provincial Legislation

The *Motor Vehicle Act* protects people travelling on public roads and regulates the movement of farm vehicles and implements on the road. The riding of horses on the road and road shoulders is also regulated under this Act.

The *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act* protects all animals (other than wild animals not in captivity) from distress during handling or any activities not considered to fall under generally-accepted animal management practices.

Local Government Legislation

Applicable local government legislation may include animal control and noise bylaws.

Publications

Publications that provide information on the keeping of horses include, but are not limited to, the following. Refer to Appendix D for details.

British Columbia Agricultural Composting Handbook

British Columbia Agricultural Fencing Handbook

British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide

British Columbia Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Guide

Large Animal Disposal – On-Farm Composting Option, South Coastal Region of BC

Large Animal Disposal – On-Farm Burial Option, South Coastal Region of BC

On-Farm Food Safety

Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Equines

Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals – Transportation