

Horse Manure—A Problem?

If you do not think there is a problem with horse manure on your farms or on our trails, you need to start reading and educate yourself. Many believe that horse manure carries human pathogens.

Manure on Multi-Use Trails: Non-equestrian users on multiuse trails complain about the poop on the trail where they hike or ride their bike. Last fall such complaints surfaced on the Macomb Orchard Trail in Macomb County. Most of these trails are 10-12 feet wide with more than enough room to step around the few piles of horse manure, but that is not enough for most of these people. They want the exclusion of equestrians. As equestrians, we all know that there are no human pathogens in horse manure; however, these anti-equestrians do not know that. They only know the “yuk” factor that we have all been taught since we were small children. Equestrians need to be ready to educate others and be willing to engage in dialogue on the perceived “horse manure” problem. We need to ask what solutions they are requesting. You need to attend the multiuse trail meetings armed with the truth. Look in the Library tab on www.oaklandequestrians.org for some articles that will be of help.

GAAMPS for Manure Management: At the Michigan Equine Conference on December 13th, 2007, two breakout sessions dealt with horse manure. One was manure management and the second one was Pasture Management. The speaker, Matt Shane, MSU Extension, encouraged farm owners, small or large, to join the Farm Bureau and to become familiar with GAAMPs for the handling of manure. Generally Accepted Agricultural Practices guide owners of horse facilities on the acceptable ways of disposing of the horse manure, in order that your farm not be deemed a nuisance by local governmental officials when complaints are lodged against your farm by the city folk new to your neighborhood. There are several ways to get rid of manure from small farms where spreading it on the land is not an option. Generally it is the piles of manure and bedding that bring odors and flies that are the origin of this type of complaint.

Horse Manure and Water Quality: Another speaker Jane Herbert District Water Quality Educator for MSU Extension spoke on Pasture Management; however, her talk was about the dangers of horse manure to water quality. She correctly identified the dangers of nutrient enrichment from manure that is too close to a stream, which carries the nutrients into the river and lake systems and cause algae blooms, which remove oxygen from the water and cause fish kills. She incorrectly talked about the human pathogens that are present in horse manure. Typically there are no human pathogens in horse manure. Any articles that identify salmonella or indicator species such as E. coli were done in Veterinary Hospitals, where the horses sampled were already sick and compromised. It was sad that this misinformation was presented as if it were the truth at a public conference and I did send her the articles that are in the above mention Library Tab at www.oaklandequestrian.org.

Get the Real Scoop on Poop. Non-equestrians are complaining.

Visit Equestrian Land Conservation Resource at www.elcr.org and the EnviroHorse at www.californiastatehorsemen.com/enviro/index.htm for more information.