

# Is my barn eco-friendly?

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[www.extension.umn.edu/horse](http://www.extension.umn.edu/horse)

Many livestock owners are concerned about their affect on our environment and natural resources. It doesn't matter what kind of livestock you have. They all can be quite easy on natural resources like our lakes and streams and forests. However, if the owner isn't careful, livestock operations can be quite hard on our resources. Take this quiz to determine how eco-friendly your livestock operation is.

## \_\_\_\_ **Livestock Exclusion- 3 points for each yes**

1. Y /N – Are your animals fenced 30-100 feet from ALL sensitive water features such as: well heads, creeks, streams, lakes, wetlands? The area between the animals and water is called a vegetative buffer strip or filter strip. Steeper slopes need a wider filter strip. (Ideally, they should also be kept off septic systems to prevent compaction and damage to the system.)
2. Y /N – Is the filter strip maintained in good vegetative cover like tall grass, not weeds? Trees and shrubs along surface water are encouraged.

## \_\_\_\_ **Nutrient Management-3 points**

3. Y /N – Is your animal manure stored at least 150 feet from sensitive water features?
4. Y /N –Is the manure stored on a cement pad or compacted clay, or removed and relocated semi-annually?
5. Y /N – Is the manure utilized to prevent phosphorus levels from getting too high (eg. soil test results are within U of M guidelines)?
6. Y /N –Do you follow a manure management plan?
7. Y /N –If you fertilize your lawn, are you using phosphorus free fertilizer and keeping it away from sensitive water features, driveways, and ditches?

## \_\_\_\_ **Clean Water– 2 points**

8. Y /N –Is clean water from the roof or surrounding area directed away from the manure pile and bare ground?
9. Y /N – Is the storm water from your property collected so it can infiltrate into the ground? This helps recharge our ground water.



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\_\_\_\_\_ **Erosion Control – 2 points**

10. Y /N –Are gullies on your property stabilized and soil erosion controlled?
11. Y /N –Is the amount of bare soil on the property minimized, possibly through pasture management?
12. Y /N – Is the runoff from bare and paved areas (e.g., arenas, driveways and parking lots) filtered through a vegetative buffer strip?

\_\_\_\_\_ **Chemical Safety – 2 points**

13. Y /N – Do you follow the instructions for dilution rates, application rates and storage on labels for all hazardous chemicals (e.g., gasoline, pesticides, and fertilizers)?
14. Y /N – Do you dispose of these hazardous chemicals according to their labels?
15. Y/N – Do you follow University of Minnesota guidelines for applying pesticides and fertilizers? This includes following setback guidelines and ways to avoid spray drift.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Wildlife Habitat Management/Biodiversity – 2 points**

16. Y /N – Are noxious weeds controlled on your property? We are required by state law to control noxious weeds like canada thistle, bull thistle, purple loosestrife, and others.
17. Y /N - Are non-native invasive plants controlled on your property? Examples of non-native invasive plants include common and glossy buckthorn, spotted knapweed, garlic mustard, siberian elms and others.
18. Y /N - **Bonus Question- 5 points-** Do you plant native plants (instead of non-native plants) whenever possible?

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+ \_\_\_\_\_ **Page 1 Total**  
\_\_\_\_\_ **Total**

<b>Points Earned( 48 possible)</b>	<b>Grade</b>
0-20	<b>Poor-</b> call me, we have work to do
20-30	<b>I've seen worse-</b> you can do better
30-40	<b>Good work-</b> keep going
40+	<b>Child of nature-</b> keep up the great work!

If you answered *Yes* to all of these questions, pat yourself on the back. You are eco-friendly. If you answered *No* to any of these questions, you know where to improve. The questions with higher point values have a greater impact on our water quality. If you are looking for areas to focus, they are a good place to start.

These are not all of the things you can do to be environmentally friendly. They are an overview of common issues around water quality and natural resources for livestock operations. I hope the quiz helped point you in the right direction. For more information, visit the Extension website at [www.extension.umn.edu](http://www.extension.umn.edu) or contact Betsy Gilkerson at 612-596-1175 or [eliza003@umn.edu](mailto:eliza003@umn.edu).