

# The Bottom Line:

## It Pays to Exclude Livestock From Streams



### Your farm can benefit

Your local Soil and Water Conservation District can help you qualify to receive 100 percent reimbursement for the cost of fencing the streams on your farm and providing an alternative water source for your livestock (SL-6 practice only).

Streamside livestock exclusion also can benefit your bottom line by:

- improving herd health,
- promoting greater weight gain by beef cattle,
- increasing the quality and quantity of milk produced by cows, and
- supporting better management of available forage by using an alternative source of water (i.e., well or spring) and distributing watering troughs on pastures.

Money comes from the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program, which is carried out by conservation districts and administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.



### Here's the payoff

Now through June 30, 2015 the Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Program reimbursement rate will be 100 percent of the cost of all eligible components. Fencing must be permanent and is subject to technical standards. Another practice LE-2 allows 50 percent cost share for permanent fence set back 10 feet from the top of the stream bank and alternative watering systems.

Farmers also can experience lower operating costs, because fenced livestock have:

- fewer incidents of mastitis, which decreases milk productivity and costs an average of \$150/case to treat;
- lower rates of foot rot, which is readily transmitted and costs an average of \$100/case to treat; and
- decreased opportunities for injury and accidental death.

### Who may apply?

Any individual or private business that operates a grazing farm bordering a live stream, wetland or Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Resource Protection Area is eligible to apply for 100 percent reimbursement on the installation of a livestock stream-exclusion system. To receive reimbursement, landowners must have a Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost Share program (VACS) contract for Stream Exclusion with Grazing Land Management (SL-6, or SL-6T) approved by the local Soil and Water Conservation District.

*Every operation's circumstances will be different depending on its unique resource conditions and economic considerations. Costs, returns and incentive payments may vary by region and over time. Consult your conservation district for the most current information.*

## “It paid off for me”

Conservation came into sharp focus for Dave Johnson 20 years ago, when he saw an aerial photo of the muddy Middle Fork of the Holston River. The tributary runs for about a mile through his family’s 1,100-acre, 460-cow dairy farm north of Abingdon.

Viewing the impact of erosion on such a large scale prompted Johnson to action. He participated in projects sponsored by the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Holston River Soil and Water Conservation District, and applied for cost-share funding to stabilize banks and build fences.

“My cows do a whole lot better with fresh, clean water pumped to their troughs,” Johnson said. “Protecting water quality also has been good for the dairy’s image, and is good for property values.”

Today, all of Highland Dairy Farm’s river and creek banks are vegetated and fenced. In addition to their commitment to conservation, he added, “cost-share was a great, big incentive” for the Johnson family to do that.

*“My cows do a whole lot better with fresh, clean water.”*

## How & where they work

Excluding livestock from streams reduces streambank erosion and decreases the amount of sediment that local waterways carry. It also eliminates the bacteria associated with livestock waste that cause illness in both animals and humans.

Fencing works anywhere a creek, stream or river crosses your property. Cost-share technical specifications require fences to be set back from the water by a certain distance. Installing a riparian buffer can enhance economic and environmental benefits.

## Take the next step

Conservation begins with your local Soil and Water Conservation District, which can help you apply for many different cost-share funding programs to help you implement stream exclusion best management practices. They also can identify other conservation programs for which you might qualify. For more information, contact:

