

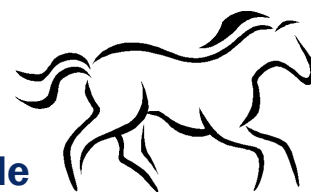
How to Use & Compost Horse Manure

WHY COMPOST?

- ♦ Reduces parasite re-infestation of your horse
- ♦ Reduces mud, making chores safer and more enjoyable
- ♦ Reduces flies by eliminating their breeding ground
- ♦ Reduces the risk of manure contaminated runoff reaching surface and ground waters
- ♦ Free & easy source of fertilizer
- ♦ Makes your property more aesthetically pleasing

HOW DO I COMPOST?

1. Select a site for your compost system.
Look for a high, level area on your property. A location that's convenient to your stall and paddock areas will make the chores of cleaning easier and less time consuming.
2. Decide on the number of bins needed, at least two bins for 1 to 3 horses. When one bin is full, start filling the second bin. The compost is ready after it is crumbly and sweet-smelling, like good soil.



Troubleshooting Chart for Your Compost Pile

SYMPTOM	PROBLEM	SOLUTION
Has a bad odor	Not enough oxygen	Turn– if too wet, add bulky dry material
Pile is cool & dry	Not enough water	Moisten & turn pile
Compost pile is damp but warm only in the middle	Compost pile is too small	Collect more material and mix it in
Pile is damp & sweet smelling but not hot	Lack of nitrogen	Mix in a nitrogen sources such as manure
Pile is cold & wet	Too much moisture	Cover with a tarp
The pile attracts flies, rodents, & pets	Not mixed well– meat scraps may have been added	Do not add meat scraps. Mix the pile and cover with soil

IF YOU HAVE MORE THAN 3 HORSES, CONSIDER A 3 BIN SYSTEM!



COMPOST MANAGEMENT

- ♦ It is easier to manage a compost pile when you understand that what you are trying to do is create an ideal home for decomposers like bacteria, fungi, worms and others. This means to survive and make compost, they need oxygen to breathe, moisture, and a balanced diet of nitrogen and carbon.
- ♦ A lack of oxygen can result in nasty smells, so if the pile smells unpleasant, try turning it, adding more coarse materials to hold open air pockets, or insert pre- drilled PVC pipes to allow air into the center of the pile.
- ♦ Decomposers live in the little bit of water that covers materials in the compost, which is why wet things rot much faster than dry things. If the material is too dry, composting is very slow.
- ♦ Too much water can result in not enough air reaching the middle of the pile, loss of nutrients to leaching and possibly water pollution if nutrients make their way into bodies of water. Cover the pile with a tarp in winter and don't over- water the pile at any time. The material should feel like a wrung out sponge.
- ♦ Fortunately, horse manure itself provides a fairly balanced diet for microbes, but if it has a lot of bedding mixed in, it would be good to mix in some extra nitrogen to hurry things along. Examples of things high in nitrogen are grass clip- pings or chicken manure.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO FINISH COMPOST?

Depending on moisture, temperature and how often the pile is turned, the compost should be ready for use as a fertilizer or mulch in between 2 and 12 months. Want help figuring out what's right for your pile in that wide range? Contact Thurston Conservation District!