



Boost your bottom line with Livestock Exclusion

The benefit to your farm:

Your local Soil and Water Conservation District can help you qualify to receive up to 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). This can boost your bottom line by:

- Improving herd health.
- Promoting greater weight gain in beef cattle.
- Increasing the quality and quantity of milk produced by cows.
- 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.

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 up to 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-6N or SL-6W) approved by the local Soil and Water Conservation District.

How it works:

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.

The payoff:

In State Program Year 2023, the Virginia Agricultural BMP Cost-Share Program reimbursement rate will be up to 100% of the cost of all eligible components based on the width of the buffer and the practice lifespan. Additionally, a per-acre buffer payment will be added for all buffers 35 feet or greater. Fencing must be permanent and is subject to technical standards.

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

- Fewer incidents of mastitis, which decreases milk productivity.
- Lower rates of foot rot, which is readily transmitted.
- Decreased opportunities for injury and accidental death.

Next steps.

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. District staff also can identify other conservation programs for which you might qualify.

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