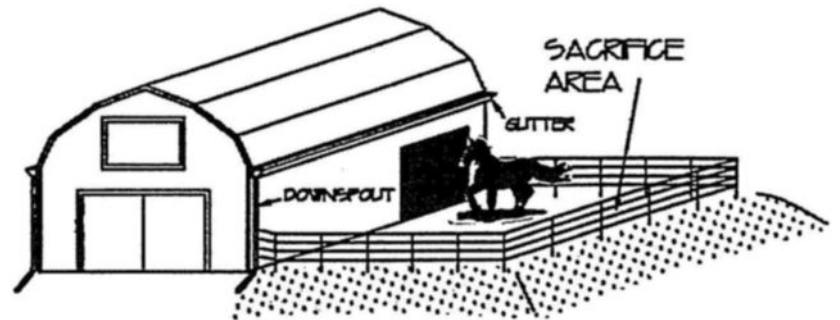




Sacrifice Areas

A sacrifice area is a small enclosure, corral or pen that is meant to be your animal's outdoor living/exercise area during the winter. It is called a sacrifice area because the presence of animals on it during wet months could be damaging, however, the rest of your pastures will be allowed to rest and recover all winter. This will be beneficial because your main pastures will not be subjected to over-grazing and compaction caused by unrestricted animal access.



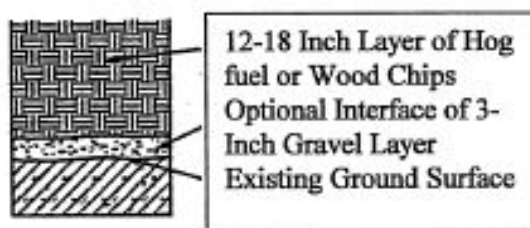
Keeping animals off rain-soaked pastures is critical to maintaining healthy pastures. Pastures in the northwest simply cannot survive continuous grazing and trampling in the winter months. Hooves compact the soil, which suffocates plant roots and decreases the soils' ability to absorb water. Hooves also can act like plungers, loosening fine particles of topsoil which can then be washed away by rain to surrounding water bodies.

Location: Sacrifice areas should be located on high ground away from low-lying wet areas. This improves drainage and prevents excess water from collecting and ponding in the area. For accessibility, pick a location adjacent to the barn, manure storage, and feeding area to make it easier to care for livestock and manage the sacrifice area. Avoid locating the sacrifice area near wetland areas and other surface water flows to reduce potential impacts to these areas.

Tip: Do you have a pasture that you are thinking of reseeding in the spring? Think about using it as your winter sacrifice area. The horses will do a good job of breaking up the existing sod. Then, in the spring, work up the field and replant. The negative side of this practice is that the horses will compact the soil and you will probably need to work the ground deeply and aerate regularly. New pastures take a year to establish well. Animals need to be kept off during this time. Remember, you will still need to fence animals away from any wetlands, streams or ditches to prevent manure from washing away.

Size: For horses, one sacrifice area per animal is recommended. Size can vary from a 20' x 20' sacrifice area up to 20' x 100'. Larger areas are preferable to give frisky horses more room to exercise and reduce the chance of injuries. Amount of land available and your horse's needs play an important role in figuring out the size of your sacrifice area.

Fencing: Safe fencing material should be selected for enclosing the area. The fencing should also be supplemented with a hot wire. Horses, while they will generally test most types of fences, have greater respect for those with an electric component. Size your gates to accommodate deliveries that you may expect.



Footing: Adequate footing material in sacrifice areas is of primary importance. Hog fuel or woodchips are a good choice, they provide a stable surface and tend to absorb the nitrogen in urine and manure. Gravel (5/8 minus) or sand can be a suitable alternative under some circumstances but should not be used as a feeding surface.

Additional considerations to improve the function and safety of your sacrifice area includes:

- ◆ Install gutters and downspouts on all adjacent buildings to divert roof runoff away from the area.
- ◆ Pick up manure frequently and compost it for spreading on pastures during spring and fall. This will help reduce parasite load, flies and contaminated runoff.
- ◆ Design the sacrifice area to eliminate possible sources of injury for horses such as protruding bolt ends, nails, fence posts, hanging cords, etc.
- ◆ Locate the sacrifice area so that it is surrounded by grassy strips, lawn or pasture. These buffers will act as a natural filtration system to reduce the amount of sediment and contaminants that wash away.