

Montana Livestock Winter Feeding Area Assessment

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In the state of Montana, livestock are generally wintered in one of three ways.

1. Livestock are grazed in a dispersed manner on range or pasture throughout the winter, with minimal supplement feeding.
2. Livestock are placed in a confined area such as a feedlot or drylot, and given supplemental feed for all of their nutritional needs.
3. Livestock are wintered in a pasture consisting of native range, tame pasture or crop stubble and given supplemental feed. Hay, straw, protein supplement, and/or grain constitute most or all of their nutritional needs. The livestock thus “concentrate” on the same area they are being fed, but not to the extent they would in a feedlot or drylot.

This worksheet will focus on the water quality risks associated with, “Livestock Winter Feeding Areas”.

	LOW RISK (rank 4)	MODERATE RISK (rank 3)	HIGH RISK (rank 2)	VERY HIGH RISK (rank 1)	Your Score
Location					
Dominant land type Where animals spend Most of their time.	Upland range or perennial pasture	Upland cropland	Low lying or riparian range or pasture	Irrigated land, low lying cropland, waterways	
Year to year changes in wintering locations	Livestock are not wintered on the same area more than one year in three	Livestock are not wintered on the same area more than one year in two	Livestock are wintered on the same area yearly.	Livestock are wintered on the same area yearly. Area has long history of use as a winter area.	

Feeding Practices					
Rotation of wintering areas within a year	Wintering area moved three or more times per year. Order of use changes from year to year.	Wintering area moved two times during a winter Order of use changes from year to year.	Wintering area moved one or two times a winter. Order of use not changed from year to year.	Same wintering area used all winter.	
How the supplemental will actually be fed.	Livestock depend on grazing for a significant part of their diet. Supplemental fed in a different location every feeding and well dispersed over the entire pasture.	Supplemental feed makes up the majority of the diet. Fed no more than a couple of days in the same location.	Limited land available to move supplemental feeding area. Portable feeder, if used, moved a couple of times a season.	Feed on the same spot daily. Permanent feeder, or portable feeder rarely moved.	
Water					
Watering areas	Water is piped to multiple tanks out of riparian areas, low-lying areas or drainage ways.	Water is piped to a single tank out of riparian areas, low-lying areas or drainage ways.	Watering site is in a low-lying area, riparian area or drainage way.	Water directly from streams, ponds, springs, or a tank with a continuous acting overflow.	
Feeding Area from water	more than 200 feet	100-200 feet	50-100 feet	less than 50 feet	

Shelter					
Windbreaks or shelter Belts	Abundant natural shelter. No use of windbreaks needed. Livestock remain dispersed regardless of weather.	Good natural shelter. Use windbreaks occasionally. Portable windbreaks available and moved regularly, keeping manure load to a minimum.	Multiple windbreaks available, but no manure cleanup done on an annual basis.	Livestock dependent on a single windbreak year after year and manure cleanup less than annually.	
Natural shelter.	Due to topography or vegetation there is good natural shelter in upland locations. Livestock don't have access to riparian areas.	Due to topography vegetation there is good natural shelter in upland areas. Livestock do have access to riparian areas.	Only natural shelter is in riparian areas Shelter is abundant. Livestock not forced to concentrate.	Only natural shelter is in riparian areas. Shelter is limited. Livestock concentrate in a few areas.	
Condition of Wintering Area					
Short term – Immediately	Little or no browsing apparent. 60% or less use of forage species. Forage remaining does not look "overgrazed". Manure & straw widely dispersed.	Lite to moderate browsing. Forage species grazed short, but not into crown of plant, do not appear trampled into the dirt. A few areas where straw & manure somewhat concentrated, but not to the degree where it will impede growth of vegetation. Not apparent by mid-summer.	Moderate to heavy browsing. Forage species grazed shorter than 1 inch. Trampled areas apparent but not widespread. Areas of manure & straw concentration still apparent by mid- summer. Due to uneven nutrient concentration crops look extra green & lush in spots. Soil compaction may be observed on cropland.	Heavy browsing. Forage species grazed shorter than 1 inch. Trampled areas widespread & still apparent by end of summer. Undesirable plants present. Crops green and lush in spots, and grow poorly in others due to excessive manure and straw. Soil compaction is a problem on cropland.	

<p>Long term- after a several year history of winter feeding in a given pattern.</p>	<p>Good to excellent range condition Browse species do not have any sort of a "hedged" appearance. Not apparent that it is a wintering area.</p>	<p>Fair to good range Can see some "hedging" desirable browse species</p>	<p>Fair range condition. Hedging of most species is apparent. Patches of "weedy" species where livestock concentration is the greatest.</p>	<p>Fair to poor range condition. Hedging is severe on most species. Loss of desirable species. Extensive patches of "weedy" species or bare ground. Crops won't establish in areas due to excessive manure& straw.</p>	
<p>TOTAL SCORE</p>					

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