

Livestock The Nosepump

The Nosepump

So you have a creek or pond on your place. Just perfect for watering those horses or other livestock. Before you allow them to drink directly from or get into the water, however, there's a couple of things you should think about.

Creeks and ponds need protection from livestock to remain in good condition. The animals break down banks, causing erosion and increasing sedimentation. Their wastes fertilize the waters and cause blooms of noxious plants. Animals grazing adjacent to waterways typically prevent trees and shrubs from growing, shading the water and reducing its temperature in the summer and also providing wildlife habitat. Most creeks and natural ponds in King County are also protected by regulation from being disturbed by livestock.

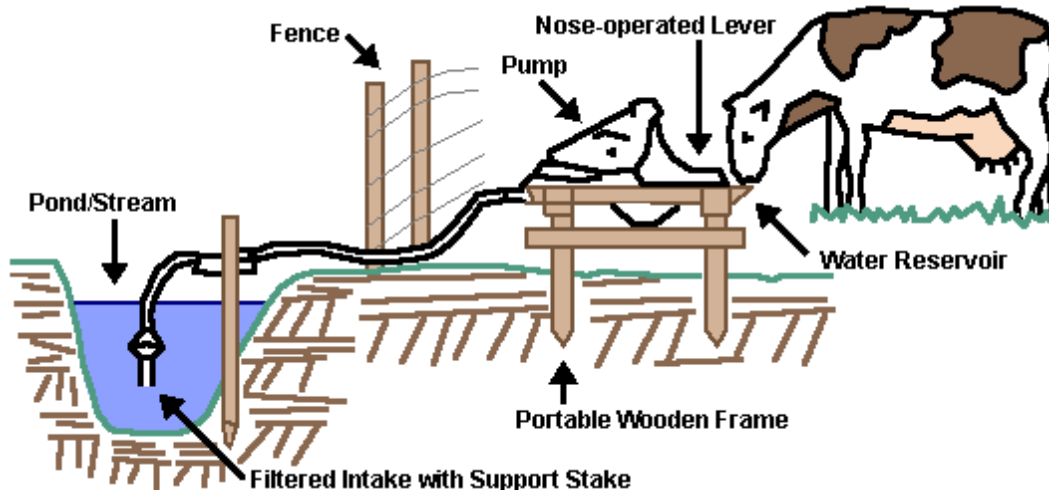


There is a device on the market designed to allow your livestock to draw water from creeks and ponds without damaging them. It is commonly called a nose pump and has been successfully used in Europe for a number of years. Farmers and ranchers in the U.S. are now also finding out that the nose pump will reliably deliver water to their livestock so that it doesn't have to be hauled out every day.

The livestock owner first fences the creek or pond with a minimum 25 foot buffer to ensure that it is adequately protected from the livestock. A hose with a filter on one end is dropped into the water. The other end leads to the pump, which may be left on the ground or mounted on a platform.

The livestock push on a lever with their noses. Water is drawn up through the hose into a built-in bowl. Although some animals have been resistant to using it, most quickly learn how to pump water for themselves. The Nose Pump's action is light enough for even calves and horses. It can pump water up a moderate creek embankment and easily past the distance of the buffer fence.

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The one drawback to a Nose Pump is that its parts can freeze during the winter. During western Washington winters, however, livestock should be confined and not allowed to have access to pastures because the animals harm the soils and plants, so the pump can be packed away until spring.

One nose pump can supply water for up to 20 head of cattle. There are several manufacturers of pumps and each varies slightly from the others. Typical pump costs are approximately \$300, with about \$100 additional to build a platform, hose, etc.

Contact the King Conservation District or the Natural Resources Conservation District for additional information on Nose Pumps or any other livestock management practices.