

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE - IA
CONSERVATION PRACTICE GUIDANCE FOR WINTER FEEDING STATIONS

561 - HEAVY USE AREA PROTECTION

367 – ROOFS AND COVERS

313 – WASTE STORAGE FACILITY

DEFINITION

A winter feeding station (WFS) is a structure that facilitates winter grazing and provides shelter and a protected feeding/watering area for livestock.

PURPOSE

In Iowa, the winter feeding station (WFS) is used to provide shelter and a protected feeding and watering area for livestock as part of a grazing operation. A winter feeding station is not appropriate or applicable for a confinement livestock operation.

PLANNING

Clearly identify and document the resource concern(s) being solved before proposing a winter feeding station. Photos showing the existing resource concerns are helpful in justifying the need for a winter feeding station.

A winter feeding station may be used to address water quality degradation of surface and/or groundwater due to nutrients and pathogens from manure.

A grazing management plan is required before a winter feeding station is implemented. A nutrient management plan is required to be developed to ensure that manure collected from the WFS will be properly disposed of.

A grazing operation greater than 100 head shall consider or plan for multiple winter feeding stations to disperse grazing animals and minimize potential resource concerns.

SITE SELECTION

Locate the WFS as far from waterbodies and drainage ways as practicable. At a minimum, the WFS shall be 200 ft. from a water source.

Divert surface runoff water from the area around the WFS. Do not place the WFS in an area where surface water will accumulate. Place the WFS on a slightly raised or sloping area to provide positive drainage away from the structure.

Alternatives for locating a WFS include:

- Central location in an individual pasture which will always be used for winter grazing operations.
- Central location to multiple pastures that will be grazed and/or crop fields that will be annually grazed, with a plan to rotate winter usage annually.

A WFS is **NOT** a confinement facility so do not locate near or as part of a confined livestock facility. A WFS can be located near a farmstead if not part of a confined feeding operation, it is centrally located as part of a grazing management plan, and is necessary to provide access to a water supply.

Provide sufficient area or paddock space around the WFS as a sacrificial area during the winter feeding period. This sacrificial area or paddock space shall be allowed to recover (revegetate) during the normal growing period.

SIZING

Size the WFS to handle the number of animals that is supported by the proposed grazing system. Generally the smaller the herd size the better the WFS will function. This helps minimize resource concerns caused by damage to vegetation surrounding the WFS.

The feeding area of the WFS will allow for 2 ft. of linear space per cow on either side of a central feed bunk. Use a minimum of 8 ft. around all sides of the feed bunk for animal and equipment access. If feed rings are used, then allow 16 ft. of access between each feed ring and at least

10 ft. around the area surrounding the feed rings for equipment access. The minimum overall width for a WFS shall be 30 ft.

The waste stacking area shall be sized to contain a minimum of 90 days of manure/feed waste storage. It is recommended to use 1.0 cubic ft. per day per animal for storage volume estimation (includes both manure and wasted feed volumes).

STRUCTURAL

All heavy use areas within the WFS unit used for watering, feeding, and waste storage shall be underlain with a concrete floor and be roofed. The rocked or gravel transition area around the WFS does not need to be roofed. Roof runoff control (i.e. gutters and subsurface drains) is recommended.

WFS ACCESS

Provide an access road to the entry of the WFS to protect the soil in the vicinity from excessive rutting or soil erosion caused by vehicle traffic servicing the WFS. Likewise, provide one or two trails and walkways along with appropriate aprons to and from the WFS to prevent soil erosion caused by animals transitioning between pastures and the WFS.

FEED/WATER MANAGEMENT

All feeding must be done on or inside the WFS in order to address the resource concerns

associated with winter feeding. If a watering facility is part of the WFS then adequate drainage shall be provided to ensure that additional resource concerns are not created.

Irrespective of the feeding style selected, the producer should plan to prevent livestock access to the waste storage area, using temporary barricades or by other means. This will prevent animals from climbing on the manure stack and jumping over the stack wall.

Locate additional watering facilities and other facilities, such as mineral feeders, some distance from the WFS to minimize damage to vegetation and to distribute manure.

OPERATION & MAINTENANCE

Ensure that the producer understands that the WFS is not to be used for purposes other than winter feeding as part of a grazing management plan. The WFS is not a storage area for feed or equipment.

The WFS will be scraped on a weekly basis, at a minimum, into a manure storage area. The storage area will be cleaned out periodically and applied per the nutrient management plan recommendations.