



USDA AGENCIES,  
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, AND  
STATE AND LOCAL CONSERVATION  
AGENCIES COOPERATING

## ARKANSAS FARM\*A\*SYST CHECK SHEET

Some farm practices can result in relatively high environmental risks, while others present low risk or virtually no risk at all. The natural resources on your farm can be protected by employing best management practices (Bmps) that deal with the broad range of management choices available in today's agriculture and forestry. Water quality and quantity, soil quality, pesticide and nutrient use, wildlife habitat, forestry and waste management are all natural resources management issues that must be addressed as a part of the farm or forest operation. Avoidance of these issues can affect the quality of the soil and water resource broadly, while also risking public health as well as that of you and your family.

This assessment process will provide you with an accurate self-determined analysis of how your farmstead structures and farm activities could affect such components of your daily environment as, drinking water quality, air quality, soil quality and irrigation water supplies.

Some of the information will be reassuring, and some of it may encourage you to consider modifying activities to reduce possible risks. All of the information will aid you as you attempt to deal with state and national conservation programs such as EQIP.

### What Is The Farm Assessment System?

The Farm Assessment System (Farm\*A\*Syst) is a series of fact sheets and work sheets that will help you assess how effectively your management practices protect the environmental quality around you.

Farm\*A\*Syst fact sheets explain best management practices that can be used to reduce potential sources of pollution and other environmental risks. The work sheets ask about farm structures and activities. The answers you provide will help you evaluate your farm's environmental standing by ranking activities according to associated risks. Sources to contact regarding any questions you may have are included in a Reference Organizations section in each fact sheet.

Each of the fact sheets and work sheets individually address areas of environmental concern. When used to conduct a comprehensive audit of your farm, the answers provided will put you in a much better position to understand, value and utilize the multitude of resources available to your environmental management needs. It is important to look at each issue individually, but it is also important to look at the big picture.

The following is a list of available fact sheets and accompanying work sheets. Not all will be applicable to your farm operation. Please check those that apply and request copies from your local County Agent. NOTE: The assessment is yours; it is technically a self-audit conducted for pollution prevention purposes and is a confidential document not subject to subpoena or Freedom of Information requests, protected by Arkansas State Law. The results will not be requested or required for consideration in application for EQIP or other conservation cost share program. Conducting the assessment better positions you to answer questions necessary to the EQIP application. Your completion of the assessment will be of value as you work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency in competing for EQIP cost share.

**Fact Sheet 1.**  
**Improving Drinking Water Well Condition**

**Work Sheet 1.**  
**Assessing Drinking Water Well Condition**

These materials discuss domestic water well location and construction requirements related to potential for direct surface or groundwater contamination resulting from farmstead activities. The discussion also includes guidance for water well testing, installation of backflow devices, well maintenance and the closure of abandoned wells. This fact sheet and work sheet will be of value to anyone whose household or farm enterprise depends upon quality groundwater or whose farm includes abandoned wells.

**Fact Sheet 2.**  
**Improving Pesticide Storage and Handling**

**Work Sheet 2.**  
**Pesticide Storage and Handling Assessment**

These materials look at five areas of pesticide management on the farmstead: pesticide storage, mixing and loading, spill cleanup, container disposal and other management practices. There is provided planning information on constructing and/or modifying storage and mixing facilities and guidance related to pesticide use record keeping.

**Fact Sheet 3.**  
**Improving Fertilizer Storage and Handling**

**Work Sheet 3.**  
**Fertilizer Storage and Handling Assessment**

These materials include a discussion of fertilizer storage practices and facilities. Included are general plans for a storage and mixing facility and loading pad, spill cleanup directions, container disposal practices and efficiency of use. Record keeping is also an important part of environmentally conscious fertilizer handling and application management.

**Fact Sheet 4.**  
**Improving Petroleum Products Storage**

**Work Sheet 4.**  
**Petroleum Products Storage Assessment**

These materials deal with potential for fuel and oil contamination of both surface and groundwater. The discussion includes information about both above and below ground storage tanks, monitoring or inventory management, leak or spill containment and tank closure. Also, included is information about the existing regulatory system and contacts.

**Fact Sheet 5.**  
**Improving Hazardous Waste Management**

**Work Sheet 5.**  
**Hazardous Waste Management Assessment**

This section deals with potentially hazardous wastes produced on the farm. Materials discussed include ash and sludge from farm trash fires or incinerators, plastics and containers, paints and solvents and pesticides. There is also a discussion of laws regulating waste disposal from farms.

**Fact Sheet 6.**  
**Improving Household Wastewater Treatment**

**Work Sheet 6.**  
**Household Wastewater Treatment Assessment**

This section deals with the most common form of farmstead wastewater treatment, a septic tank. Included in the discussion is system location, maintenance, water flow control, solids control and the systems process. Also discussed is the potential for damaging health and environmental effects as a result of a malfunctioning septic system.

**Fact Sheet 7.**  
**Improving Management of  
Animal Production Wastes**

**Work Sheet 7.**  
**Management of Animal Production  
Wastes Assessment**

This section includes a discussion of animal waste management plans, effective utilization of animal wastes, land application areas and rates, treatment facilities, siting and management of facilities, calibration of application equipment, silage storage, dead animal disposal and regulations. This section deals with production systems that include large animals (Confined Beef, Dairy, and Swine Operations).

**Fact Sheet 8.**  
**Improving Poultry Litter Management and  
Carcass Disposal**

**Work Sheet 8.**  
**Poultry Litter Management and  
Carcass Disposal**

Discussed in this section is the composition and utility of poultry litter and carcass residues. The discussion recommends that all management take place within the context of an Animal Waste Management Plan (AWMP). Information is also provided that outlines the voluntary best management practices recommended for both optimum production value and environmental protection.

**Fact Sheet 9.**  
**Assessing Your Cropland**

**Work Sheet 9A.**  
**Nutrient Management Practices**

**Work Sheet 9B.**  
**Cropland Pest Management Practices**

These materials look at issues such as erosion, soil testing, tillage, irrigation, cover cropping, crop rotation and pesticide use in a cropland agriculture setting. The questions asked focus on management issues that pose

risk to the natural resources surrounding the cropland situation. There is provided a list of contacts for additional information on irrigation and soil management and a glossary of terms for each work sheet.

**Fact Sheet 10.**  
**Assessing Pasture and Rangelands**

This fact sheet should provide guidance in grazing management options available, riparian zone protection or animal exclusion zones for wildlife habitat protection, erosion control, nutrient management, erosion control, livestock water management, etc.

**Fact Sheet 11.**  
**Fish and Wildlife Considerations  
in Arkansas**

This fact sheet is a brief overview of wildlife habitat issues that should be considered during any farm-wide environmental assessment. The fact sheet asks a series of questions related to the variety of habitat alternatives possible in agriculture situations in the state of Arkansas.

**Fact Sheet 12.**  
**Forestry Management Considerations  
in Arkansas**

This fact sheet provides guidance for management decisions and options available to landowners as they attempt to achieve sustainable forestry objectives. The fact sheet raises questions about riparian zone management, selective harvest, forest stand improvement practices, specific harvesting techniques, weed and insect control and wildlife habitat values.

**Work Sheet 13.**  
**Site Evaluation**

The Site Evaluation work sheet is designed to help land users determine the potential for their actions to affect groundwater. The evaluation has four basic parts:

1. Evaluating soil type and depth
2. Evaluating subsurface and geologic material, along with depth to groundwater
3. Determining an overall site evaluation ranking (combining parts 1 and 2)
4. Doing a farm/farmstead diagram (optional)

Getting this information will require information from outside sources, such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or the Extension office. The more information you can get the better the evaluation will be.

## **Work Sheet 14.** **Overall Farm/Farmstead Assessment**

This compilation of rankings allows you to visually compare specific areas of environmental risk within the agriculture enterprise. You can focus efforts on reducing risks in the most critical areas first. This overall assessment can then become the basis for management decisions such as application for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), Forestry Incentives Program (FIP) or any of the many other voluntary state and local conservation assistance programs available

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## NOTES

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