



Topic	Topic
Environment 	Society friendly 

Background
 Preventing access by fencing off water bodies is a simple solution to help reduce pollution and damage to watercourses. Heavy trampling by livestock can erode banks and increase inputs of sediment and organic matter into a watercourse. This can then reduce water quality and can lead to the contamination of bathing waters and drinking water supplies.

How does Water Body Fencing work?

- The site of watercourse fencing needs to be carefully chosen on a case-by-case basis, by assessing the risks to the watercourse in relation to the timing of grazing, the grazing density, the habitat and the risk of invasive weeds.
- If not already present, post and wire stock-proof fencing can be erected. Existing and new fencing should be repaired and maintained in stock-proof condition.
- It is important to locate the fence on stable ground away from the immediate bank edge as this may be vulnerable to erosion.
- The fence should be located at a suitable distance from the top of the bank to enable occasional mechanical control of vegetation.
- Adding a gate to enable bank-side access should therefore also be considered.
- Where drinking troughs or pasture pumps are installed to replace in-channel drinking, these should be located at least 10m from the watercourse.



Equipment involved? Investment?

- Investment of time and resources will be required to plan and undertake the fencing of water bodies
- Grant funding may be available for water body fencing but if it is would require additional administration to access
- Upfront costs are high to purchase materials (posts & wire) and undertake the work (estimates at approximately €14/m of fencing).
- Ongoing maintenance is required to ensure the investment is worthwhile.
- Contractors could be used to undertake the work.
- Remapping of the farm may be required once the fencing is complete.

Positive features

- Compulsory in some countries – ensures legal regulations met
- Reduces environmental impact of farming activity.
- Prevents pollution of freshwater habitats with sediment and organic matter (e.g. soil and faeces)
- Protects freshwater habitats and drinking water supplies.
- Removes risk of damage to sensitive riparian habitats from poaching and overgrazing.

Be careful, especially on these points

Care should be taken when deciding where to fence off watercourses, as this can sometimes create new environmental problems. For example, ungrazed banks are more likely to develop problems with invasive problem plants or result in excessive woody growth.

Specific advice

- Fencing should be avoided on sites of archaeological or historic importance.
- Seek advice if the planned area is designated for habitat or species.
- Temporary fencing may be best in some areas – e.g. on floodplains

Assessment of method



Quote of the farmer:
“Fencing along the river course has visible improved water quality”