

Suggested Animal Management Plan Format

Nicasio Valley

The presentation of a horse management plan in Nicasio Valley should address the following items. A more complete description of the issues to be considered or addressed can be found in the “Guidelines for Preparing Animal Management Plans - Nicasio Valley”. One item regarding the preparation of management plans needs to be emphasized. That is the use of qualified people to produce those plans, and the importance of the creation of indicators of success or failure. For low intensity use, an informally developed plan from the applicant, defining what is proposed and how land degradation will be defined and monitored may suffice. Alternatively, more intensive and most commercial sites should have a plan either developed or signed off by a professional that is qualified and experienced in the development of animal management plans.

1. **Description:**

- a. Type of Facility
- b. Parcel Size::
- c. Map:
- d. Number of animals:
- e. Description of anticipated special activities, if any:
- f. Description of physical accommodations:

2. **Health and Safety and environmental Issues:**

- a. Water Supply/Demand:
- b. Manure Management:
- c. Land and water quality Management:
- d. Pest Management:

3. **Visibility:**

- a. Visibility of the activities from Roads and from Neighbors:
- b. Site Lighting:
- c. Clustering of structures:
- d. Materials:

4. **Traffic and Noise:**

- a. Estimate of the Traffic:
- b. Accommodations for vehicles:
- c. Events:

5. **Management and Housing:**

- a. Anticipated number of workers:
- b. Number of housing units for owner, and workers on site:

Guidelines for Preparing Animal Management Plans Nicasio Valley

Both the County of Marin and the Nicasio Development and Design Guidelines require that any parcel intending to keep more than five horses (including llamas, donkeys, ponies, etc) prepare and submit a management plan. The purpose of the plan is to enable the county and affected parties to assess a proposed project's environmental impact, as well as its compliance with published standards for animal management. It is worth pointing out that, while the keeping of more than five horses by a private residence on a non-commercial basis is covered by the requirements to file a management plan, the primary focus of the requirement is for commercial operations. It is the commercial facilities which merit the greatest attention for two reasons. First, they are likely to be driven to impose a much more intensive use of the land and water, with potential spill-over effects on neighbors. Second, the increased demands they may place on facilities, originally designed to residential standards, could be a cause for a host of different problems.

For projects in Nicasio Valley, the basis for the review of animal management plans is the "Development and Design Guidelines for the Nicasio Valley Planning Area", dated September, 1997. Section III (B) of those Guidelines is dedicated to "Equestrian Land Use Guidelines", and provides a listing of issues to be included in a management plan, a set of definitions, the land use standards, minimum stall sizes, etc. The purpose for these standards is the simple concern that horse facilities be designed and managed in an environmentally friendly manner while maintaining the health of the animals under care.

Keeping with this environmental focus, we try to avoid prescriptions for the standards of practice to be followed, and instead focus on the applicant's assurance, with verifiable criteria, that a reasonable balance is being struck. That balance is between the landowner rights to conduct animal management activities and neighbor's rights to enjoy the natural features of our area. It is our expectation that, for operators familiar and experienced with the management of horses, the assurances sought by the community should not be difficult. Ours is a residential and recreational community, with a strong focus on the quality of the land, including its flora and fauna. While horses are one of the defining features of the community, horses are generally seen as a means by which to enjoy the land. Improperly managed horse keeping, however, can change that relationship by damaging the land in order to keep horses. If widely practiced, the cumulative impact could have a tremendous impact on the community. Since, the numbers of animals that can be responsibly cared for on any parcel will vary, it is incumbent upon the applicant to define how they propose to strike the necessary balance between potentially competing interests.

Therefore, what follows is a description of the kinds of issues which drive the community's and neighbor's concerns. These concerns fall into four categories: i) Health, Safety and Environmental issues, ii) Visibility issues, iii) Traffic and Noise Issues, iv) Management and Housing. Under each are examples of some issues that may, or may not, be applicable to a specific project, but serve to illustrate the kinds of concerns we seek to have addressed. Applicants may feel that other issues are important and are free to present those, but it is

hoped that this packet will facilitate the creation of a body of material that can keep the relationship between equestrian facilities and residential neighbors a friendly one.

Suggested Items to be Addressed in Animal Management Plans for Nicasio Valley

The first question most applicants raise with regards the preparation of animal management plans is the level of depth required and the standards of professionalism to be employed. Since no specific standards have been set within the rules setting forth the requirements for the plans, the only answer that seems reasonable is that the detail, depth and use of outside experts in the preparation of animal management plans needs to be consistent with the scale of the project. Thus, small projects, at low rates of animal density and as part of a residential project can be quite informal. They will still include basic descriptions of the project and will include standards of health/safety and environmental management that will guide the project. Conversely, projects with larger numbers of animals and other factors, such as parcels with close neighbors or key watercourses, a more formal approach to plan preparation is justified. Specifically, for sites that desire to maximize the number of animals on a site, the use of experts in range and land management should either be the developers of the plan or should sign off on such items as: 1) the accuracy and reasonableness of the practices to be employed, 2) the maximum number of animals that can be accommodated without significant environmental damage when managed by the suggested practices and 3) the indicators of success/failure that are specific for that project.

1. **Description:** Before it is possible to assess the impacts of a project, it is necessary that any application be specific about three things: the project's proposed physical facilities, the expected and intended uses and the type and numbers of animals to be kept. In order to describe and define the project, the following are some examples of questions that may be addressed:
 - a. What type of Facility is being proposed? For example,
 - i. Exclusively Personal Use: no renting of facilities or accommodations
 - ii. Commercial Boarding: Primarily designed for renting of facilities
 - iii. Personal with some commercial boarding
 - b. Parcel Size: What is the size of the parcel, and what portion of it is being developed?
 - c. Map: For projects proposing intensive development, it will be important to produce a parcel map, showing buildings, fences, housing, septic, wells, watercourses, roads and driveways, parking, etc.
 - d. Number of animals: What is the proposed maximum number of animals that could be accommodated by the facilities being developed and the management practices proposed, without creating adverse environmental impacts, either on or off site?
 - e. Description of anticipated special activities, if any: Is there an expectation that there may be shows, clinics, public open houses, etc. The development of

facilities needs to accommodate the range of uses, and the impacts of major events need to be anticipated.

- f. Description of physical accommodations: In what facilities will the horses be cared for, and what will be the ancillary facilities required to support those horses? Examples of some of the items that would be described include:
 - i. Barns for boarding and storage. If many of the animals are to be housed in a barn, thereby reducing the impact the animals have on the pastures and corrals that should be described.
 - ii. Pastures and corrals: Clearly, steep pastures have a lower carrying capacity than do flatter pastures. Further, shelters against summer sun and winter rain may be required. However, the goal in Nicasio is to minimize the cutting up of the landscape and the scattering of structures. Alternatively, creating larger open areas, with moveable fences to distribute grazing and clusters of shelters to avoid development scatter are generally preferred.
 - iii. Specialized facilities: If the facility is to host shows, clinics and training, then specific direct and ancillary facilities will be needed.
 - iv. Visitor accommodations, where appropriate. A home site converted to a commercial equestrian facility may find that a septic system sized for a family is insufficient for residents and visitors. Similarly, facilities to accommodate visitor parking, trailering of horses, truck delivery of feed, manure management etc. will all have to be resized if done on a commercial scale. Examples of items of interest include:
 1. Trailer storage: These should be screened from view,
 2. Visitor parking, offices, equipment storage can take up considerable area, and need to be planned for, while retaining the ability of emergency vehicles to respond if necessary.
 3. Water and sewage in commercial facilities are, obviously, larger than those for a residence.

2. **Health and Safety and environmental Issues**: The pressures of an equestrian facility can tax the ability of a property's ecology. It is important to verify that the number of animals, the facilities that are being proposed and the management practices to be employed all come together and match the ability of the parcel to support the plan.

Examples of issues that would be of concern:

- a. Water Supply/Demand: Is there a verification of being water sufficient to meet the competing summertime demands for:
 - i. Horse care and maintenance
 - ii. Pasture irrigation
 - iii. Dust Control
 - iv. Fire prevention and fighting
 - v. Domestic Uses

- b. Manure Management: The management of manure, especially in more intensively managed facilities is a significant issue. Issues to be addressed include:
 - i. The location of stockpiles particularly in relation to property lines, surface water or wells/springs
 - ii. Management of leachate
 - iii. The removal or spreading of the manure.
 - c. Land and Water Quality management. These are two very serious concerns for horse facilities. Some of the key concerns are the potential for soil erosion, water pollution, and dust control. While some amount of denuded land is nearly inevitable, what we seek to avoid is large areas of denuded landscape for several reasons: the loss of soil stability, water pollution and the visual impact. Therefore, examples of issues we are interested in having clarified include:
 - i. What percentage of the land is expected to experience a near complete loss of natural cover for part of year, as a:
 - 1. Percent of the total parcel
 - 2. Percent of pasture and corral areas that are below 30% slope
 - ii. What provision, if necessary, will be made for drainage away from barns, corrals, pastures?
 - iii. Erosion Minimization Plan: How will soil stability be assured, and how will any soil movement be both minimized and kept out of the air and creeks. What methods will be used to monitor creek siltation, dust generation, and other environmental impacts
 - iv. How will surface or ground water be protected from run-off of soil, manure or other sources of pollution?
 - v. What will your standards be for evaluating your success at land and water management?
 - d. Pest Management: Horses facilities can become an attraction to insects and change the rangeland ecology to favor undesirable weeds. These problems can impose significant impacts on surrounding landowners. How would these impacts be minimized?
3. **Visibility**: The development of an equestrian facility can produce a number of physical changes in an area. The locations of structures, the shielding of storage areas, the illumination of arenas, etc. all affect the quiet enjoyment of the neighborhood and of the community. Examples of issues that influence community response include:
- a. Visibility of the activities from Roads and from Neighbors: Can the facilities be seen; are there provisions to screen portions of the project from off-site viewers? Invisibility is not a reasonable standard for most activities, but minimizing the cumulative impact of a project on neighbors is a reasonable expectation.
 - b. Site Lighting: The Nicasio area is very sensitive to the maintenance of a dark night-time sky. All lights should be down facing to prevent leakage to off-site locations. Total lighting load is to be minimized to avoid the creation of a local halo.

- c. Clustering of structures: There is a strong preference to have improvements reasonably clustered as a means by which to maximize the areas that are left open.
 - d. Materials: The choice of materials and colors become an important tool by which to enable facilities to blend with the landscape. Similarly, open fences facilitate the feeling of openness in the landscape rather than its fragmentation.
4. **Traffic and Noise**: For commercial facilities, it is necessary to estimate the scale of traffic and noise that will impact the neighborhood. Some issues that become a concern in this category include:
- a. Estimate of the Traffic: What is the average anticipated number of:
 - i. Visitors/boarders per day
 - ii. Trucking and trailering per week
 - b. What are the accommodations for vehicles: A commercial facility will need to accommodate a significantly larger amount of vehicular activity than would be required for a residential development. Some considerations include the ability to simultaneously handle:
 - i. Fire and other emergency vehicles
 - ii. Visitors/boarders during peak riding periods
 - iii. Trucks for supplies, manure removal, animal transportation
 - iv. Parking or storage for trailers, trucks
 - c. Events: If there is a prospect of having events, which would host larger than average numbers of people, some of the issues that would be important to describe include:
 - i. What are the number, types and duration of events planned annually, if any?
 - ii. Anticipated attendance (estimated range)
 - 1. Horses
 - 2. People
 - iii. Can the property handle the parking, water, sewerage, and other issues associated with the events, or will special facilities need to be provided?
 - iv. Is sound amplification expected?
5. **Management and Housing**: Boarding horses usually requires residential managers, and may also require laborers. This is of direct interest to the community as it may require developing or upgrading housing on the site. Some of the issues that would be of interest include:
- a. Anticipated number of workers:, What is the estimated number of full time and part time workers on the site?
 - b. Number of housing units for owner, and workers on site: Is the required housing already on the property, or is it either having to be developed or improved? Other questions include:
 - i. Are all housing units part of permanent structures or are some in temporary facilities?

- ii. Are these facilities fully plumbed for approved water and sewer?
- iii. What is the total number of bedrooms?

6. Resources

In the preparation of management plans, there are a number of resources available to applicants. Some of these are:

A. Groups and Agencies:

- 1. Marin Horse Council
- 2. Marin County Community Development Agency, Planning Department
- 3. University of California Cooperative Extension Service

B. Publications:

- 1. "Development and Design Guidelines for the Nicasio Valley Planning Area", Prepared for the Marin County Community Development Agency, September 1997
- 2. "Horse Keeping: A Guide to Land Management fro Clean Water" published by the Council of Bay Area Resource Conservation Districts.