



# Agriculture: We're Half Way There

## Gerald Garber and Cave View Farms

Keeping livestock out of streams has proven herd health benefits. It is also a clear sign to downstream neighbors and other community members of your ethics and environmental stewardship.

Try these options to keep cattle healthy by keeping them out of streams:

- Off-stream watering systems
- Stream fencing
- Stream crossings
- Buffer strips
- Rotational Grazing

Both the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the state agricultural best management cost-share programs can help cover expenses for certain livestock stream exclusion projects that are built to specification.

*This is one in a series of articles about farmers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed who have implemented conservation practices to improve farm operations and water quality in nearby streams, demonstrating how agriculture has achieved half of the nutrient reductions necessary to clean up local streams and the Chesapeake Bay.*

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"I haven't seen the EPA being unreasonable. They came to the valley last year and targeted problems that needed fixing, and everybody knew it," said Gerald Garber, dairy farmer and former chairman of the Augusta County Board of Supervisors.

Garber is referring to the increasing pressure being put on farmers by the Environmental Protection Agency to install more Best Management Practices (BMPs) to clean up the Chesapeake Bay.



*Gerald Garber, dairy farmer in the Shenandoah River watershed in Weyers Cave, Va., at the beginning of one the streams fenced to exclude livestock.*

Cave View Farms Inc., owned by Garber along with Keith and Paul Wilson, is one of the largest dairies in the Shenandoah Valley. They grow crops on roughly 2,000 acres in the South Fork of the Shenandoah River watershed to support their 500-cow dairy. They received the Commonwealth of Virginia's Shenandoah Basin "Clean Water Farm" award in 2010 for their stream fencing, nutrient management, and no-till practices.

All the stream banks on their farms—six miles worth—are fenced to exclude livestock. "There's no advantage to having cows in the stream," said Garber. "It's bad for their health, and it pollutes the water."

These farmers have participated in many of the voluntary programs offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Commonwealth of Virginia. They also implemented many practices on their own without government assistance.

"Farmers know there's more to do than we are doing," Garber says. "We need to keep going. There are programs and people that can help us get this done, and we'll all be better off. That stream used to be a mess because of my cows. In less than a year after we fenced them out, the stream banks healed and my cows are cleaner and healthier."