

To protect your spring

While you may seemingly have little control over the source of your spring, you can take certain measures to protect your spring outlet and its surroundings. The primary protection is to control or prevent livestock - and destructive wildlife such as feral hogs - access to the spring outlet.

Livestock, just by their numbers and size, often negatively impact springflow, quality, and overall spring habitat. Livestock and wildlife, like humans, prefer fresh sources of drinking water and often will go straight to the spring outlet in an otherwise large pond or flowing stream. They trample down or eat the spring vegetation, they clog the outlet or break down the soils/rock, and they degrade the water with excrement.

Some owners rotate livestock through pastures with springs but this is not really protecting the spring outlet and downstream habitat. A preferable alternative would be to place a wildlife-friendly fence around the fragile spring source and give your livestock access to water further downstream or adjacent to the spring source. If your spring fills a pond or stock tank, consider fencing part of the tank area where the spring flows into the containment. Be careful to avoid any alteration of the slope or surrounding vegetation.



Cows drinking cool, clean water directly from spring outlet
(Photo courtesy of TPWD)





Make sure that toxic elements (fertilizers, pesticides, etc.) are not kept or used upslope of your spring. Likewise, try to keep livestock holding pens away from spring outlets or where surface water runoff could introduce contamination. These and other simple management techniques could have substantial impacts on a spring's overall health.

If your spring is used for recreation, remember that human footsteps crush vegetation and paths promote erosion. Thoughtful management techniques can have substantial impacts on a spring's health:

- Locate the recreation area, and any roadways or trails, away from the springhead.
- Clear vegetation sparingly to avoid erosion and to minimize habitat destruction.
- Stay as natural as possible.

The following agents may also be able to provide assistance with spring protection efforts: your local Soil and Water Conservation District (www.tsswcb.state.tx.us) at (254) 773-2250, local county extension agent (county-tx.tamu.edu) at (979) 845-7808, or the local Natural Resource Conservation Service center (www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov/) at (254) 742-9819. Small grants may be available through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (www.nfwf.org).



Protection around spring outlet with downstream watering trough for livestock Gillespie County (Photo courtesy of TPWD)