

GIVE MUD THE BOOT



Mud can be a big problem wherever animals congregate, especially around gates, water troughs, barn entrances, and feeding pads. If mud in these areas is making you and your horses miserable, “heavy use pads” are an easy and somewhat inexpensive fix.

The main components of a heavy use pad -- stone and geotextile fabric -- allow water to slowly drain away without mixing with the soil. They are simple to install if you have a front loading tractor and can do simple excavation work. If not, you might want to hire someone with the necessary equipment.

Don’t skimp on the size of the pad. If you’re installing one around a trough, make it at least the length of one horse on each accessible side of the trough. To give your pad the best chance of working, first, divert any runoff, such as from barn, shed and house downspouts, so it moves around, not through, the area. Downspout extenders, gravel trenches and low berms are easy ways to reroute water. Contact your local Soil Conservation District for advice on safely rerouting runoff.

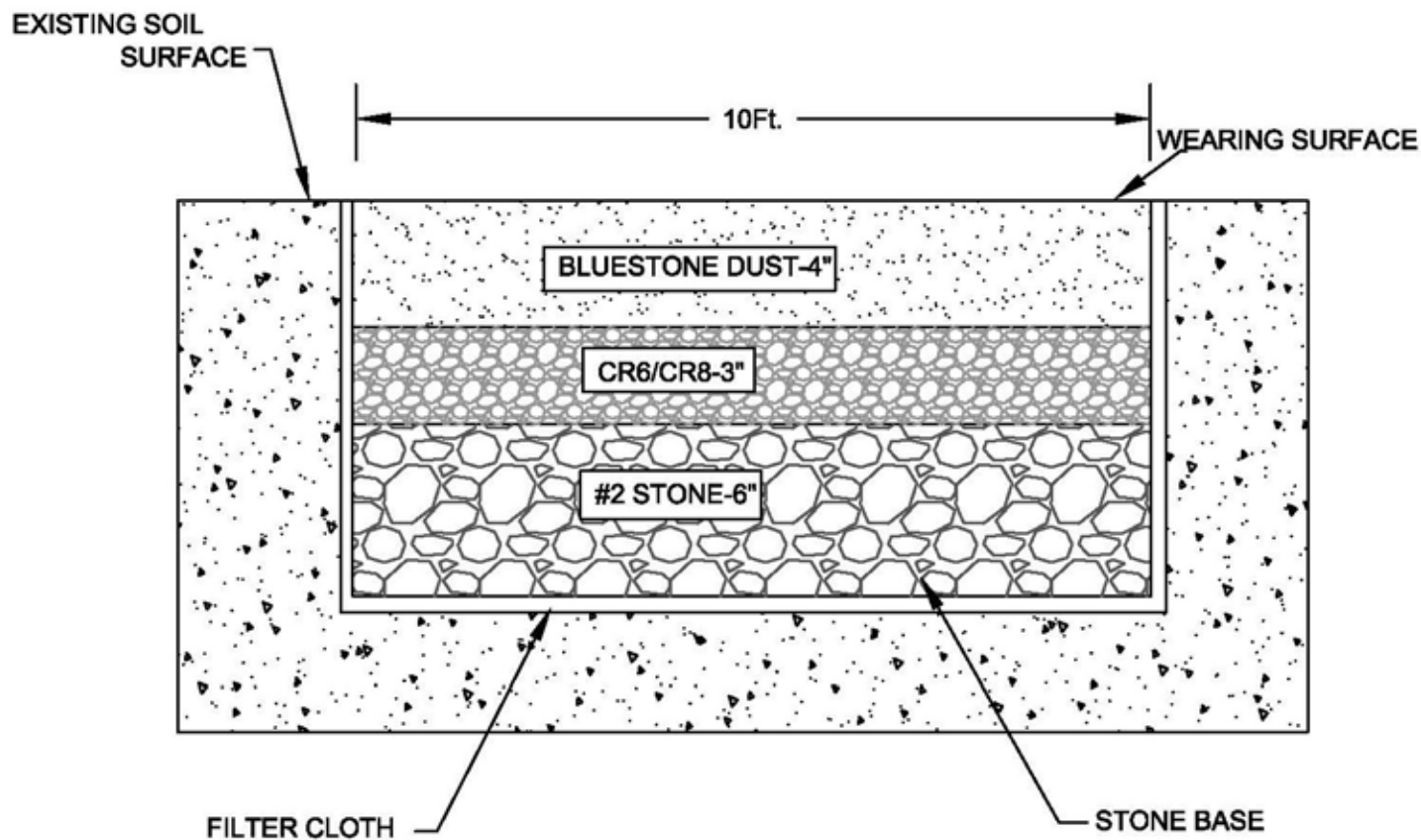
CONSTRUCTING A HEAVY USE PAD

- Excavate area to a depth of 8 to 12 inches.
- Level site.
- Install class SE non-woven filter fabric. If the fabric isn’t wide enough, refer to manufacturer’s recommendations for overlap.
- Put down 6 inches of milling (recycled blacktop) or #2 stone, which is about 2 1/2 inches in size.
- Wet stone and compact with a roller or by driving over the pad with a tractor.
- Install 3 inches of CR6 or CR8 stone. (CR6 ranges in size from dust to 3/4 inches wide. CR8 is smaller.)
- Top with a minimum of 4 inches of bluestone dust or wood chips.
- Compact and level stone
- Inspect regularly and repair as needed.

MATERIAL COSTS FOR A 10’ X 10’ HEAVY USE PAD

| MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS | COST ESTIMATE |
|--|------------------------|
| 10’ x 10’ fabric = 100 sq. ft. | Fabric = \$55 |
| #2 stone, 6” deep = 3.75 tons | #2 stone = \$187 |
| CR6 or CR8 stone, 3” deep = 1.875 tons | CR6 stone = \$85 |
| Bluestone dust, 4” deep = 2 tons | Bluestone dust = \$100 |
| | Total = \$427 |

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For more information on horse manure management and other soil conservation and water quality practices, contact your local Soil Conservation District. Addresses and phone numbers can be found through mda.maryland.gov/HOW.

The Horse Outreach Workgroup (HOW) provides information to horse owners on pasture and manure management. HOW consists of representatives from local Soil Conservation Districts, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, University of Maryland Extension, and the Maryland Horse Industry Board.



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Revised by Sally Barnes, USDA NRCS, June 2025.