

How do I prepare a useable map for my farm?

It will be helpful for you to draw a map of your farm that includes barnyard sketches for buildings, storages, fences, fields, streams, waterways, wetlands, etc. Please include fields that animals use for exercise or grazing, and/or wherever manure is spread. A boundary survey, as described in a deed, determines the property lines of a parcel of land and may be a good starting point. This will indicate the extent of any easements or encroachments and may show the limitations imposed on the property by state or local regulations. Aerial photography can be downloaded using the sites listed below or your local soil Conservation district or Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) office can provide aerial maps (to scale) with topographic and soils information. Satellite or aerial images are readily available through these offices.

Your farm map will help to identify areas such as streams, wetlands, or waterways on the farm that are vulnerable to water contamination, especially where water coming from the livestock operation, barnyard, or manure storage comes into contact with clean water. The map may also reveal if manure is spread too close to a stream or wetland. A map can also help identify soil types and characteristics helpful in making management decisions about grassland management and crop rotations. A farm map is also valuable for future farm planning.

Depending on your need you may want to indicate some or all of the following items:

- Buildings
- Storages
- Streams
- Wetlands
- Waterways
- Field sketches
- Exercise areas or lots
- Driveways
- Pens
- Fences
- Wells
- Underground utilities
- Known survey markers
- Sinkholes
- Underground pipe whether tile or other
- Septic systems
- A north arrow

This base map of the farm should show all farm fields, the farmstead and barnyard area, related use areas, and areas such as wetlands and forested land.

Please see the eXtension question about maps: How can I obtain an aerial or satellite image for my area? <http://www.extension.org/faq/29817>

For more information, please see the following: Developing a Farm Map <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8062.pdf> and, Maps for Nutrient Management Planning <http://pubs.caes.uga.edu/caespubs/pubs/PDF/B1195.pdf>

For those with some Internet experience, aerial photos and some basic USGS quad maps can be downloaded from free or affordable public sites. After printing one of these maps the structures described in the FAQ answer can be drawn in with colored pen or pencil.

Free sources:

Terra Server USA <http://terraserver.microsoft.com> From the home page, use the “advanced find” function to search for the property in question by address. If available, both a USGS topographic map and aerial photo will be offered.

Google Maps <http://maps.google.com> "Surf" into your area or input an address. You can swap between a map view and satellite image.

Fee based:

Topozone <http://www.topozone.com> by Maps a la carte, Inc.

Soil survey:

You can find soil survey information online: Web Soil Survey <http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/> This site is operated by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and provides soil maps and data for more than 95 percent of the nation’s counties.

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