



factsheet



nitrate vulnerable zones

Background

The pollution of rivers and underground waters by nitrate from agricultural sources can reduce the quality of drinking water supplies and disturb the balance of nature.

Areas of British countryside have been placed in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones, meaning that restrictions have been placed on the levels of application of nitrate fertiliser. This helps maintain safe levels of nitrates within drinking water.

DEFRA set up "The Action Programme for Nitrate Vulnerable Zones Regulation 1998" (England & Wales). Areas where agricultural nitrate pollution is a problem, have been designated as "Nitrate Vulnerable Zones".

The measures in the action programme require careful management of fertilisers and manures, which reduces the risk of pollution, and at the same time, can save farmers some money.

If you are not sure whether you are in a NVZ, please contact DEFRA who will be pleased to inform you.

The Action Programme measures are only compulsory for use on land within NVZs, but are based on Good Agricultural Practice and are recommended for use on all farms. This in turn could prevent more land having problems with nitrogen pollution and therefore reducing the risk of more land being included in the boundaries of NVZs.

Monitoring

The Environment Agency monitors farmers compliance with the NVZ regulations, and will offer advice if any queries arise, e.g. if the RB209, fertiliser recommendation guide, does not sufficiently address any query you may have.

nutri-bio service

nutri-bio Farm Sales Advisors will advise on the best use of biosolids within NVZ's to ensure that its use does not breach NVZ regulations and ensure good agricultural practice is maintained to minimise the risk

of nitrate pollution to groundwater.

Nitrogen restrictions & applications

When applying organic manures to areas of NVZs there are application restrictions.

Farmers must follow these rules:

You must keep accurate records for a period of at least five years, which include details of cropping, livestock numbers, and the use of manufacturers nitrogen fertilisers and organic manures.

Crop requirement

Do not exceed crop requirement when applying manufacturers nitrogen fertilisers, taking into account crop uptake, soil supply from organic matter, crop residues, and organic manures.

Spreading controls

Do not apply manufacturers nitrogen fertilisers or organic manures when the soil is waterlogged, flooded, frozen hard or snow covered.

- Do not apply organic manures within 10m of watercourse
- Do not apply manufactured nitrogen fertilisers in such a way that will enter into watercourse
- Do not apply manufacturers nitrogen fertiliser or organic manures on steeply sloping fields.
- Spread evenly manufacturers nitrogen fertilisers and organic manures evenly and accurately, so as not to exceed NVZ restrictions

Stockpiling

Ensure all stockpiles are located at least 10m from a watercourse. Ensure stockpiles are not located over any main land drains.

If you have any further queries regarding biosolids, and NVZ's please do not hesitate to contact your Farm Sales Advisor. Or alternatively The Environment Agency Helpline **08708 506 506**.