

## Agricultural pollution of water

# Update note to farmers – February 2014

This note provides an update on recent changes to NVZ rules and what's happening on slurry management and storage.

### Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs)

#### Important dates for new rules in 2014

<b>1 January 2014</b>	New rules for N max crop group limits apply.
<b>16 May 2014</b>	New rules for construction of field manure heaps apply.

See page 4 of this note for a summary of the main NVZ dates in the farming year

### N max - crop group additions

New rules on N max limits for crops apply from 1 January 2014. This change places an upper limit on fertiliser applications to most horticultural crops. The N max limit will apply to the crops within each group as a whole (see table below) rather than to individual crops within each group. Farmers can exceed the N max value for one crop within a group if less than N max is applied to other crops in the same group being grown, and the average N application across all crops in the group does not exceed N max.

Where vegetables are double-cropped, the N max limit applies separately to each crop.

N Max limit - kg/ha	N Max group crops
180	Swedes, carrots, asparagus, radish
280	Turnips, parsnips, courgettes, onions, sweetcorn, lettuce, runner beans, dwarf beans, celery
370	Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, calabrese, beetroot, leeks.

### Construction of field manure heaps

New rules on field manure heap construction will apply from 16 May 2014.

From that date farmers will need to ensure that field heaps on their land occupy as small a surface area as possible. This will reduce the amount of rainwater that heaps absorb, and therefore reduce the risk of nitrogen-rich fluid leaching from them. The enforcement authorities will take account of both the method of construction (e.g. whether a tipper trailer or front loader was used) and the site (e.g. whether heaps are on land strips at the edge of fields or in places where making circular heaps would be possible) when considering whether a heap occupies as small a surface area as possible.

In addition, farmers will not be able to construct field heaps within 30m of watercourses (including ditches) where land slopes steeply (12°, or 1 in 5, or greater). This land should already be marked on the risk map for the farm. This is to reduce any nitrogen-rich leachate from heaps reaching fresh water.

## **Informal consolidated regulations**

Defra has produced an informal consolidation of the 2008 nitrates rules (the Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations 2008) and all subsequent amendments. The consolidated regulations document is on the [GOV.UK NVZ page](#).

## **Guidance on implementation of NVZ rules**

Full guidance on complying with the NVZ rules is available on the NVZ page at GOV.UK.

The Farming Advice Service also provides free advice on nutrient management (including on the nitrates regulations) and Cross Compliance (including e.g. SMR 4).

- FAS helpline number: 0845 345 1302.
- FAS website: [www.defra.gov.uk/farming-advice](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farming-advice).

## **Slurry storage and management**

### **Updating the Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil (SSAFO) Regulations**

Government and the farming Industry have worked jointly to review the framework of requirements, advice, access to capital and enforcement within which farmers manage slurry. This has included a review of The Water Resources (Control of Pollution) (Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil) Regulations 2010 (the SSAFO Regulations) governing how farmers store silage, livestock slurry and agricultural fuel oil to prevent pollution of water bodies, and sets standards for the construction of stores. The SSAFO Regulations' measures help prevent agricultural pollution and sit alongside the Nitrates Regulations.

The [Joint Government and Industry Slurry Management and Storage Project](#) reported in November 2013 and made a number of recommendations, including

- The SSAFO Regulations have done a good job in preventing pollution and remain useful, but need to be updated.

- Several recommendations to simplify and clarify regulation for farmers, and improve resilience.
- A proposal to develop a systematic check of the condition of all silage, slurry and agricultural fuel stores, to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

## **Next steps**

In partnership with industry, Defra is working to implement the report's recommendations, as part of a wider programme of collaborative work: the Water Quality and Agriculture Project. This aims to develop, with industry, a coherent plan to reduce the impact of agriculture on the water environment whilst maintaining a sustainable and competitive farming industry. Defra plans to consult during 2014, on updating the SSAFO Regulations as part of this wider project.

Defra  
Water Quality Programme - Agricultural Water Pollution  
February 2014

## NVZ Farming calendar – main dates

Date	Activity
<b>1 January</b>	Start of period for assessing the livestock manure N farm limit Start producing a plan for applications of nitrogen to permanent grassland
<b>15 January</b>	End of closed period for spreading manufactured fertiliser
<b>31 January</b> (see note)	End of closed period for spreading high readily available N organic manure on soils other than shallow or sandy soils
<b>End February</b>	End of the following restrictions on applications of organic manure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 150 kg N/ha limit for registered organic producers</li> <li>• limitation on slurry and poultry manure single application rate</li> </ul>
<b>30 April</b>	Deadline for compiling records of livestock kept on your farm during the previous calendar year and storage period. Submission of fertiliser accounts for derogated farms
<b>1 August</b>	Start of closed period for spreading high readily available N organic manure to tillage land with shallow or sandy soils (unless a crop is sown on or before 15 September)
<b>1 September</b>	Start of closed period for spreading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high readily available N organic manure to grassland on shallow or sandy soils</li> <li>• manufactured fertiliser on tillage land</li> </ul>
<b>15 September</b>	Start of closed period for spreading manufactured nitrogen fertiliser on grassland
<b>16 September</b>	Start of closed period for spreading high readily available N organic manure to tillage land with shallow or sandy soils where a crop has been sown on or before 15 September
<b>1 October</b>	Start of closed period for spreading high readily available N organic manure to tillage land with soils that are not shallow or sandy
<b>15 October</b>	Start of closed period for spreading high readily available N organic manure to grassland with soils that are not shallow or sandy
<b>31 December</b>	End of closed period for spreading high readily available N organic manure to shallow or sandy soils

Note: 31 January is the end of the closed period:

- for the closed period starting in autumn 2013, for land in an NVZ before 2013, and
- for the closed period starting in autumn 2015, for land newly in an NVZ in 2013.