



Best Practice Organic by-products

Sheet 10.0a

Water pollution risk reduction

Why change?

Water pollution - point source or diffuse - is a significant risk for farmers, carrying the possibility of prosecution, fines of up to £20,000, bad publicity and loss of reputation. Simple precautions and practical plans can be undertaken to minimise the risks.

By managing them you can:

- reduce the possibility of prosecution, fines and damages
- avoid increased insurance premiums
- minimise the clean-up costs of any pollution that occurs.



Fish kills from water pollution will have financial implications

Steps to Success

1. Review your current situation by inspecting all stores, yards, tracks, land and watercourses for signs of runoff and risks such as chemical spillages or leaks which could cause pollution. Dirty water management is one of the most common sources of pollution. Check the pathways of all sources of clean water which, if not adequately separated, may add to the problem especially during periods of heavy rainfall.

2. Identify potential opportunities such as pollution prevention by:

- minimising the risks of pesticide spillage or leaks from chemicals storage and mixing areas. Leaks of organic by-products, silage liquor and fuel oil caused by aged or out of dates storage facilities, physical damage, from machinery and delivery vehicles, containment failure, valve or pump malfunction, fire or flood
- managing applications of organic by-products, fertilisers, chemicals and wastes to ensure they are accurate, timely and appropriate so that risks of leaching, runoff and losses are reduced
- managing soils to avoid transport of sediments, nutrients and chemicals via tramlines, wheelings and tracks by timely and appropriate cropping, cultivation and the use of soil conservation practices such as cover crops and vegetation to reduce erosion.

3. Pollution risk management by:

- familiarising yourself with the signs of pollution
- considering the potential pathways and impacts of pollutants
- developing and maintaining "fail safe" systems, such as bunded storage, to contain leaks and provide time for remedial action
- formulating simple and practical contingency plans, including emergency resources, equipment and materials required to minimise potential pollution accidents. e.g. absorbent material for chemical spillages
- keeping an updated and easily accessible list of appropriate emergency telephone numbers, including the EA (0800 80 70 60), and friendly neighbours to call in a crisis.

4. Prioritise your action plan:

- Have the Environment Agencies pollution hotline number to hand 0800 807060 in case of accidents. Call them before trying any on-farm mitigation
- focus on the risk of major pollutions or incidents that could result in health risks, e.g. contamination of water used for public supplies, but do not ignore diffuse pollution impacts from ditches etc.

5. Check that all involved are aware of the risks, as well as the actions needed to forestall pollution. Make it a routine part of the farm work to check key areas and watercourses for any evidence of pollution impacts.

Water pollution risk reduction - practical examples

Reducing pollution risk is best practice because it reduces the risk of prosecution. Fines for water pollution in a Magistrates Court can be up to £20,000 plus costs. There is also the risk of much higher civil damages, remedial costs and higher insurance premiums. In addition, there will potentially be loss of reputation and bad publicity along with the associated loss of time and money. Loss of reputation from a pollution incident can impact on sales and risk contracts from buyers.

Pathway from yard to drain to river



Pathway from yard to drain to river



Remember

- Reducing the risk of pollution is best practice and can save you the costs of prosecution and civil damages
- Recognise the signs of pollution.
- Regularly inspect for pollution impact or potential risks and aim to rectify the dangers.
- Have an emergency plan of what to do if a pollution occurs and keep it up to date.