

What practical steps should I take?

- Assess any risks where fertiliser is stored; temporary field heaps should be situated at least 10 metres away from watercourses.
- Make sure vehicle tracks don't directly link polluting run-off to burns or ditches.
- Good practice guidance recommends a minimum 10-metre buffer when spreading slurry and manure, which may need to be increased if the land slopes towards a watercourse.
- Consider the location of boreholes both on your farm and on neighbouring land next to your boundaries. Remember to take into account appropriate distances when spreading fertilisers (see table of minimum distances).
- Always take into account (and allow for) the nutrients that have been added through slurry or manure applications when deciding how much bagged fertiliser to apply. The Scottish Rural Development Programme offers funding towards nutrient budgeting outside Nitrate Vulnerable Zones. Computer software is also available to draw up your own nutrient budget.
- Make sure spreaders are calibrated. Irregular or over application wastes both money and valuable nutrients.
- Make sure you carry out a risk assessment for manure and slurry, as described in the 4 Point plan (see 'Further information').

What is SEARS?

SEARS is a partnership delivering rural and environmental services on behalf of the Scottish Government. SEARS provides:

- a streamlined service
- easy access to information and advice
- a consistent and responsive service
- a customer focused service.

Further information

Controlled Activities Regulations: A practical guide

Specific regulatory advice about the activities you carry out.
www.sepa.org.uk/water/water_publications.aspx

Diffuse Pollution Regulations

More detailed information on the new regulations.
www.sepa.org.uk/wfd
www.sears.gov.uk

Guidance on best management practices

Practical advice for farmers on reducing the risk of pollution.
www.sepa.org.uk/bmp

NetRegs

Up-to-date advice on environmental regulations for small and medium size businesses.
www.netregs.gov.uk

Prevention of environmental pollution from agricultural activity (PEPFAA) code guides

www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/37428/0014235.pdf
www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2002/06/14968/7848

4 Point plan

The Scottish Agricultural College guidance on reducing diffuse pollution risk and protecting water quality.
www.sac.ac.uk/4pp

Tibre

A Scottish Natural Heritage initiative showing how technology in farming can benefit the environment.
www.snh.org.uk/tibre

For further information on the Diffuse Pollution Regulations please get in touch with your local office or contact SEARS:

Tel: 0845 30 20 50

Email: info@sears.scotland.gov.uk

www.sears.scotland.gov.uk

Reducing the risk of water pollution

Diffuse Pollution Regulations:
General Binding Rule (GBR) 18
fertiliser storage and application



What is diffuse water pollution?

Often driven by rainfall, water pollution from diffuse sources arises from the loss of potential pollutants such as nutrients, chemicals, bacteria and soil, into the local water environment. Individually, losses from land use may be of little risk to water quality, but when combined across a river catchment they can impact on ecology, drinking and bathing water quality.

Managing diffuse pollution

Both what you do on the land and how you manage run-off are key to controlling diffuse pollution. Farmers already following widely accepted standards of good practice, such as the PEPFAA Code, or those following rules set out in other regulations¹, should already comply with the Diffuse Pollution Regulations for fertiliser storage and application (including manure and slurry). In force since April 2008, the regulations set out the minimum distances from waterbodies for fertiliser storage and application and the acceptable soil depths, slopes and soil conditions when applying it to land.

¹Other regulations include:

- Sludge (Use in Agriculture) Regulations 1989;
- waste management licence in terms of Section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990;
- registered exemption under the Waste Management Licensing Regulations 1994;
- Control of Pollution (Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil) (Scotland) Regulations 2003 (as amended).

Minimum distances for fertiliser storage and application² (in metres)

Good practice recommendations, if different, are shown in brackets.

Storage and application requirements	Organic fertiliser	Inorganic fertiliser
Minimum storage distance from any surface water or wetland	10m	10m
Minimum storage distance from a spring or uncapped borehole supplying water for human consumption	50m	50m
Minimum application distance from a drainage ditch	2m (10m)	No GBR restriction (10m)
Minimum application distance from any surface water or wetland	5m* (10m)	2m (10m)
Minimum application distance from a spring supplying water for human consumption or an uncapped well or borehole	50m	5m (50m)
Application on steeply sloping land	Not more than 15°	No GBR restriction

²Please note: in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones action programme regulations apply.

The regulations also require that²:

- slurry is not applied to frozen, snow-covered or waterlogged ground;
- manure is not applied to snow-covered or waterlogged ground;
- fertiliser is not applied to land in excess of the nutrient needs of the crop;
- the equipment used to apply fertiliser is maintained in a good state of repair;
- fertiliser is only applied on land in such a way and at such times to minimise the risk of pollution to the water environment;
- fertiliser is not applied to land that has an average soil depth of less than 30cm and overlies gravel or fissured rock.

Why are these requirements necessary?

Diffuse pollution is a significant threat to achieving and maintaining good water quality. Plant nutrients from bagged fertiliser, slurry and manure are finding their way into surrounding burns, rivers and lochs and affecting water quality. The proper management of nutrients helps to keep fertilisers on the land, while also protecting the environment.

Benefits for the business

The amount and therefore the cost of inorganic fertiliser will be reduced.

Local water supplies will be protected.

Benefits for the environment

Surrounding waters will have a reduced risk of nutrient enrichment (eutrophication).

There will be increased amenity and wildlife value.