



Organic fertiliser application

Organic fertilisers such as slurry, manure, sewage sludge and anaerobic digestate (AD) are valuable fertilisers when applied to land at the right time and in the right quantities.

Before any application takes place a **RAMS (Risk Assessment for Manure and Slurry) map** **must** be produced and provided to the person carrying out the application (see Factsheet 9).

NB: If you have land within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) additional rules will apply.

Crop requirement

To make efficient use of fertilisers it is important to take account of the nutrients in organic fertilisers when planning fertiliser applications. When applying fertiliser you **must not**:

- exceed the crop requirement for nitrogen at time of application
- apply in excess of the amount required to maintain the target soil P status.

For more information on managing soil phosphorus see **SRUC Technical Note 668**.

Land Suitability

Taking account of the weather, conditions of the land and the location of features such as surface waters can greatly reduce the risk of causing pollution.

When applying organic fertiliser, you **must not**:

- apply during heavy rainfall or if heavy rain is forecast within 24 hours.
- apply to land that is:
 - within 10m of any surface water, wetland or shoreline
 - within 50m of any spring that supplies water for human consumption or any uncapped well or borehole
 - waterlogged
 - frozen (unless its farmyard manure (FYM) outside an NVZ)
 - snow covered
 - sloping, unless a sufficient buffer is provided to intercept any run-off to prevent slurry/contaminated run-off reaching a surface water, or
 - has an average soil depth of less than 40cm over gravel or fissured rock.

Slurry and Liquid Anaerobic Digestate Application Equipment

Low emission, precision slurry and liquid anaerobic digestate (AD) spreading systems give more control over application and minimise run-off and emissions.

All Spreading equipment **must** be kept maintained in a good state of repair.

From **1 January 2023**, slurry **must not** be applied using a raised splash plate or a rain gun and precision spreading equipment **must** be used when:

- applying liquid AD
- Slurry is applied;
 - by a contractor
 - on dairy farms, milking more than 100 cows
 - on beef farms keeping more than 200 beef livestock units (see definitions).
 - on pig farms keeping more than 800 sows or fattening pigs.

From **1 January 2027**, all slurry **must** be applied using precision equipment (Table 8.1).

Table 8.1 – Transitional periods for spreading slurry and liquid AD – what you have to do by when.

Activity	Key Date
Liquid digestate must be applied using precision equipment	1 January 2023
Slurry must not be applied using a raised splash plate or rain gun	
Slurry must be applied using precision equipment if applied by a contractor	
Slurry must be applied using precision equipment if applied on farms with more than 100 milking cows, or more than 200 beef cattle livestock units	
Slurry must be applied using precision equipment if applied on pig units with more 800 fattening pigs or 800 sows.	
All slurry application must be applied using precision equipment	1 January 2027

Definitions:

Anaerobic Digestate or liquid digestate – means whole digestate, the liquid fraction or any run-off from the storage of fibrous residue, resulting from an aerobic digestate process of a consistency that allows it to be pumped or discharged by gravity at any stage in the handling process.

Beef livestock units – for the purpose of these rules, in calculating beef livestock units, an animal of 2 years and older is 1 unit and an animal under 2 years is 0.5 of a unit. In general, the calculation should be based on the number of beef animals present on the 1 March and declared on the annual IACS form submitted to RPID annually.

Crop – any plant grown for a commercial purpose and includes cereals, root crops, grass and trees.

Livestock – any animal kept for use or profit as part of a commercial enterprise.

Organic fertilisers – for the purpose of these rules and guidance, organic fertiliser includes bulky organic fertilisers such as manure, slurry and anaerobic digestate.

Precision spreading equipment – includes dribble bars, band spreaders, trailing shoe or direct injection systems which apply organic fertilisers close to the growing crop.

RAMS – Risk Assessment for Manures and Slurry map showing no-spread, high, medium and low risk sites for organic fertiliser application.

Slurry – excreta, including any liquid fraction, produced by livestock whilst in a yard or building. This includes any mixtures of excreta with bedding, feed residues, rainwater and washings from dungsteeds, middens and any buildings or yards used by livestock.

Surface Water – all standing or flowing water on the surface of the land, transitional water and coastal water.