Farming Rules for Water

2022 Statutory Guidance

Background

Farming Rules for Water introduced in 2018

- Aim to reduce diffuse pollution from agriculture
- Focus on nutrients and soil/sediment

The Rules (in summary)

Manures and fertilisers

- Applications must be planned to meet crop and soil needs
- Must take account of
  - Significant risk of pollution
  - Soil testing (within last 5 years)
- Do not store or apply manures within 10 m of freshwater or 50 m of groundwater
- No manufactured fertilisers within 2 m of freshwater

Soil

- Prevent significant runoff from
  - Fertiliser/manure application
  - Land management and cultivation
  - Poaching by livestock
- Protect land within 5 m of freshwater from poaching
- No livestock feeders within 10 m of freshwater or 50m of groundwater or where there is significant risk of pollution

Autumn applications

Autumn applications and crop need

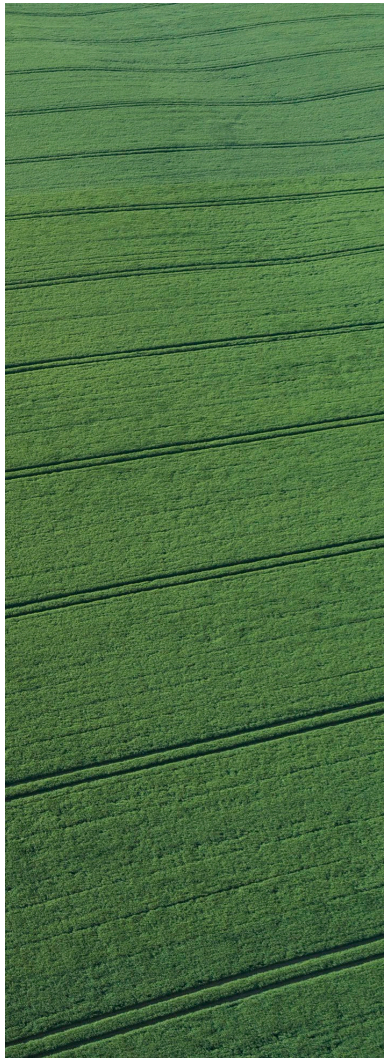
- EA require applications to meet crop need at time applied to limit risk of leaching losses to environment
- ahdb.org.uk/an-assessment-of-the-impact-of-farming-rules-for-water
- Switch to spring applications increased storage needs, pressure on working days in spring and pollution swapping

Defra and Industry working group Jan-March 2022

- Defra issued Statutory Guidance in March 2022
- Guidance from Defra to EA
- Search for “Applying the farming rules for water” at www.gov.uk
- Sets out criteria which EA should consider when inspecting farmers under the rules

Statutory Guidance

- ✓Applications must be planned – nutrient management plans
- ✓Assess crop requirement – RB209, FACTS adviser, PLANET
- ✓Soil testing results
- ✓Take account of nutrient content of material applied – testing or standard values
- ✓Crop need for N based on **annual crop cycle**
- ✓Plan to avoid applying to raise Soil P index above 3 unless not reasonably practicable and precautions to mitigate risk of pollution are taken
- ✓Existing regulations such as NVZ requirements remain



Requirements based on RAN

- ✓Readily Available Nitrogen % (RAN) define requirements
  - Split into ‘High’ >30% or ‘Low’ <30%
- ✓Low RAN organic manures
  - Risk of N leaching not considered significant, if reasonable precautions taken
  - Limited to N requirements over **annual crop cycle**
- ✓High RAN organic manures
  - Rate limits autumn/winter (aligned with NVZ closed period dates based on soil type and cropping)
  - No repeat within 21 days
  - To meet a commercial crop need (not cover crop or green manure need)

High RAN limits in detail

Soil type	Grassland	Tillage Land
Sandy or Shallow	1 September – end of February	1 August – end of February
All other soil	15 October – end of February	1 October – end of February

- Application rate to meet soil and crop need of autumn/winter commercial crop

OR

- Applications restricted to 30m^3/ha for slurries and digestates, 8t/ha for poultry manures, no repeat within 21 days
- **In an NVZ, closed period restrictions apply**

Reasonable Precautions

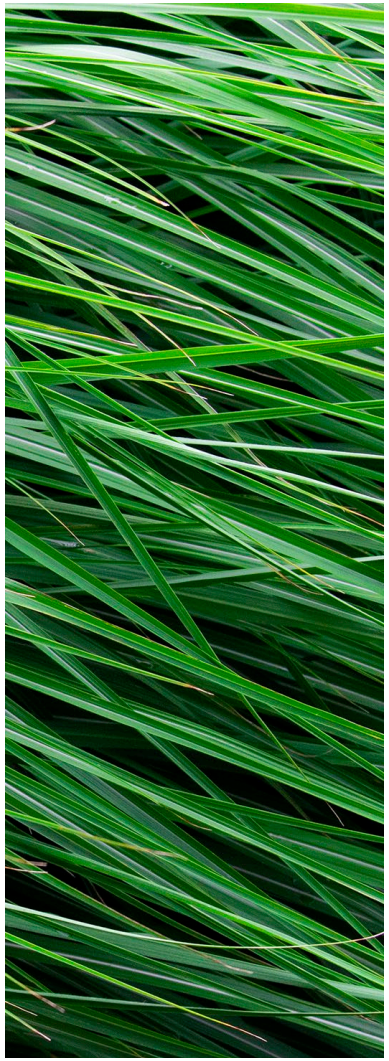
Required in all cases

Plan to establish green cover (commercial crop, cover crop or green manure) by 15 October

- Justifications if bare soil required, such as delayed drilling due to persistent weeds

Incorporate as soon as reasonable

- Unless not justified, such as applied to growing crop/grassland



Main messages

Read the rules and guidance – especially if applying organic manures in autumn/winter

Have a nutrient management plan

Document actions

Be prepared to justify decisions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