

Muck Matters

Good practice advice for agricultural contractors



Pollution incidents affect the quality of our rivers. The most common cause of these incidents in the agricultural contracting sector is burst umbilical pipes.

As an agricultural contractor, following these good practice guidelines will help you to comply with the law and prevent pollution.

Before you start

Don't start the task until you are properly prepared and briefed by the farmer

Obtain a copy of the risk map from the farmer to help you identify high/low risk and sensitive areas of the farm.

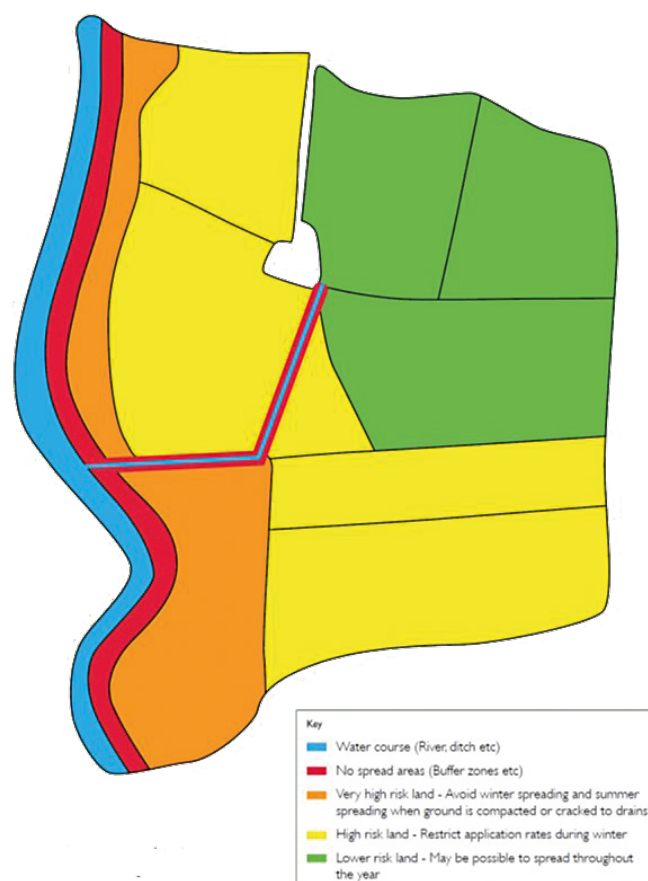
Consider having a written agreement between parties; if not you may both be liable for enforcement.

Make sure you understand the task at hand and have identified any pollution risks.

Understand how to operate key farm infrastructure, such as sluice gates and slurry pumps.

Ensure that your staff have had appropriate training prior to the task.

Know how to operate and maintain the equipment you will be using.



Example of a simple manure spreading risk map.
Photo: EA

Don't spread slurry in a hurry

Make sure you comply with the Farming Rules for Water (FRFW) when spreading

Ensure organic manure spreading complies with agricultural best practice and does not cause pollution.

Organic manures and manufactured fertilisers must not be applied if the soil is waterlogged, snow-covered or frozen.

Organic manures must not be applied within **10 metres** of a watercourse and **50 metres** of a spring, well or borehole.

Organic manures must not be spread if there is a significant risk of causing pollution, such as on steep gradients.

Manufactured fertiliser must not be applied within **2 metres** of a watercourse.

Avoid spilling slurry while you are filling and moving equipment around the farm.

Slurry spread *within* 10m of the watercourse.
Photo: EA



Slurry spread at least 10m from the watercourse.
Photo: Waver/Wampool, West Cumbria Rivers Trust

Employ more precise application techniques such as dribble bars / injectors.

Spreading slurry using splash plates loses valuable nitrogen via ammonia to the atmosphere.

Splash plates are likely to be banned from 2025.



Keep equipment in good order

Burst umbilical pipes are the most common cause of pollution

Ensure all machinery - including umbilical pipes, is regularly cleaned and maintained.

Check all equipment is in good working order prior to use.

Walk the line, frequently checking all umbilical joints and pipes both before, during and after use.

Use safety cut off to stop delivery if there is a problem.

Take care when repositioning umbilical pipes so that slurry does not run off into ditches.

Consider using higher grade pipework when near sensitive features such as watercourses/culverts.

Use newer sections of piping at the start and end of the line as they receive the most wear.



A split umbilical pipe. Photo: EA



Do not jet slurry over a hedge. Photo: EA

Reporting pollution incidents

The earlier we know, the better

Report any pollution incidents at the earliest opportunity to the Environment Agency hotline:

0800 80 70 60

The Environment Agency will be able to advise on the best course of action to protect the environment.

Plan in advance of a spill using the stop operations and blocking flow principle.



Digestate spreading using a spreader bar. Photo: Eden Rivers Trust

**For further information, contact the
Environment Agency on 03708 506 506**

About Eden Rivers Trust

Our dedicated farming, conservation and engagement teams work closely with farmers and other businesses to help find water-friendly solutions to improve the quality of water and habitats within the Eden catchment.

We provide assistance and guidance on compliance with current Regulations and future Government policy.

www.edenriverstrust.org.uk

