

Teagasc Notes for week ending Friday 28th August 2020

Water Quality at the Shoulder of the Year

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A testing growing season is coming close to its end, with a wet start followed by a drought; farmers have had many challenges to face throughout the year. Not alone has it been a challenging year as regards production, we also had the added difficulty of managing the farm alongside the increased pressure on our water bodies associated with adverse weather conditions.

Plan ahead

As we come into September there are a few things to consider on the farm over the next few months.

With growth rates in decline and the increased possibility of unsettled weather, the prohibited spreading period for chemical fertiliser kicks in on 15th of September.

Typically farmers will have slurry tanks empty at this stage, having targeted silage ground and fields with index 1 & 2 for phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) earlier in the growing season. Now is a good time to ensure tanks are empty and equipped for the winter period prior to the 15th of October when the prohibited period for slurry spreading begins.

When spreading chemical and organic fertiliser, ensure adherence to regulatory buffer zones from a water body or open drain. This is vitally important to ensure water quality is not negatively impacted and valuable nutrients are not lost from the farm.

Buffer Zones (adhere to DAFM regulations)

- Chemical fertiliser (2m)
- Organic fertiliser (5m), it's important to note that this extends to 10m for the last 2 weeks of the spreading period so slurry spread in October should adhere to a 10m buffer zone
- At the back end of the year it's better to avoid spreading organic fertilisers on vulnerable areas of the farm that might be prone to flooding, poorly draining land or ground sloped towards the river

- Don't spread on saturated ground and ensure heavy rain is not forecast within 48 hours of spreading

The Yard

Slurry storage has implications for your management decisions in the early growing season; 'you should decide when to spread not the slurry tank'. One of the big things that can put a farmer under pressure over the winter period is storage requirements for slurry. It's a small thing but can make a big difference, have a look around the yard now and make sure any clean water entering the yard cannot enter your slurry tanks. The main culprit here is often a gutter or down pipe blocked or broken, get these fixed now as you'd be surprised how much clean water can enter a tank over a small period of time.

Keep silage effluent tracks clean and in working order and keep yards scraped and clean.

Soil fertility & lime

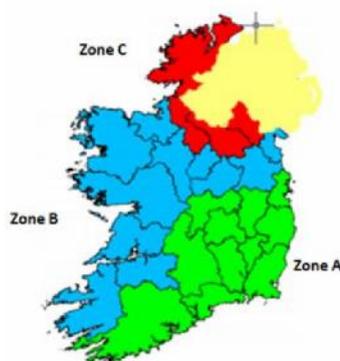
If you haven't had a chance to get some lime out yet, pull out your soil test results and target fields with low pH based on soil test recommendations. Aim to improve pH in grassland soils to 6.3 - 6.5, this will improve productivity and reduce nutrient losses to the environment through improved nitrogen efficiency and unlocking phosphorus.

Farm Roadways

From the 1st January 2021, all farmers are required to prevent direct runoff of soiled water from farm roadways into waters. See Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine (DAFM) Specification on Farm Roadways S199 on www.agriculture.gov.ie

Waters are defined in Specification S199 and include all water bodies but also open drains that may be dry for part of the year but carry water at times. In most situations it will be a matter of sloping or directing run off from the farm roadway at regular intervals onto a field to soak away.

Zones



Storage periods for cattle manure & the prohibited periods for spreading fertilisers to land

ZONES	STORAGE PERIOD FOR CATTLE MANURE	PROHIBITED APPLICATION PERIODS		
		CHEMICAL FERTILISERS	ORGANIC FERTILISERS	FARMYARD MANURE
A	16 WEEKS	15 SEPT–12 JAN	15 OCT–12 JAN	1 NOV–12 JAN
B	18 WEEKS	15 SEPT–15 JAN	15 OCT–15 JAN	1 NOV–15 JAN
C (Donegal and Leitrim)	20 WEEKS	15 SEPT–31 JAN	15 OCT–31 JAN	1 NOV–31 JAN
C* (Cavan and Monaghan)	22 WEEKS	15 SEPT–31 JAN	15 OCT–31 JAN	1 NOV–31 JAN