



# Updated Guidance for Farmers on **Requirements for the Storage and Spreading of Poultry Litter** to 31 December 2014

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DARD Headquarters, Dundonald House on 028 9052 0100



Department of  
**Agriculture and  
Rural Development**

[www.dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)

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AN ROINN  
**Talmhaíochta agus  
Forbartha Tuaithe**

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MANNYSTRIE O  
**Fairms an  
Kintra Fordèrin**

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Northern Ireland  
**Environment  
Agency**

[www.ni-environment.gov.uk](http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk)



An Agency within the Department of the  
**Environment**

[www.doeni.gov.uk](http://www.doeni.gov.uk)

This guidance updates previous guidance which applied from 1 January 2011 to 30 September 2011. It provides details of new requirements effective from 1 August 2012, requiring poultry litter field heaps to be notified and authorised by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) and sited at increased distances from lakes and other waterways.

The Nitrates Action Programme Regulations (NI) 2010 (NAP Regulations) implement measures to improve the use of nutrients on farms and reduce their input into Northern Ireland's waters. This guidance leaflet primarily provides details of what farmers are required to do to comply with the measures in the NAP Regulations relating to the storage and spreading of poultry litter.

**Note: This Guidance refers to the NAP Regulations only. There may be additional PPC requirements and industry guidelines.**

## **What is poultry litter?**

Poultry litter is defined in the NAP Regulations as: *“a mixture of bedding material and poultry manure arising from the housing of poultry and with a dry matter content not less than 55%.”*

This guidance does not apply to poultry manure of a lower dry matter content or that is not mixed with bedding material, such as layer manure.

## **Is poultry litter a fertiliser or a waste?**

Poultry litter, to be spread on land as a fertiliser in accordance with the NAP Regulations, is not a waste. Where it is to be put to any other use, it is classified as a waste (The section on storage of poultry litter when it is not to be used as a fertiliser provides further details of the relevant waste regulations.)

## **Storage of poultry litter to be used as a fertiliser**

Poultry litter may be stored in a midden prior to field storage or land application, provided that adequate collection facilities are in place to capture all run-off. Run-off from middens is classified as slurry under the NAP Regulations and must be stored and applied to land accordingly. If the run-off collection facilities are new or have been substantially enlarged or substantially reconstructed since 1 December 2003, they must comply with the British Standards specified in the Control of Pollution (Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil) Regulations (NI) 2003 (SSAFO Regulations).

## Storage requirements for field heaps

Poultry litter can be stored in temporary field heaps subject to the following conditions:

- Storage of poultry litter in field heaps must be notified to and authorised by NIEA. To apply for authorisation, contact NIEA on **028 9262 3188**.
- A field heap containing poultry litter must be compact and covered with an impermeable membrane within 24 hours of placement in the field.
- The poultry litter must be spread at the time of next application on the field in which it is stored. The storage period must be no longer than 180 days.
- Poultry litter heaps must not be stored in the same location within a field year after year.
- Poultry litter heaps must not be stored on land that is waterlogged, flooded or likely to flood.
- Poultry litter heaps must not be stored within:
  - 100 metres of lakes; or
  - 40 metres of any other waterway, including open areas of water, open field drains or any drain which has been backfilled to the surface with permeable material such as stone/aggregate; or
  - 50 metres of a borehole, spring or well; or
  - 250 metres of a borehole used for a public water supply; or
  - 50 metres of exposed cavernous or karstified limestone features (such as swallow holes and collapse features).

It is essential that storage of poultry litter is properly managed and located to prevent water pollution. Check all field heaps frequently to ensure that the impermeable cover remains in place completely covering the heap and that there are no signs of run-off.

## Storage capacity requirements

A farm with more than 500 poultry places must provide a minimum of 26 weeks storage capacity. A poultry enterprise with less than 500 poultry places requires a minimum of 22 weeks storage.

You must also ensure that your storage is adequate to cover periods of adverse weather and soil conditions outside of the closed spreading period when poultry litter must not be spread on land.

The quantity of poultry litter stored in field heaps and middens can be used to meet the storage requirement.

## **Application limits**

Land applications of poultry litter require appropriate management at farm level. Crop requirement and soil nutrient status must be taken into account to ensure that nitrogen and phosphorus are not over supplied.

The NAP Regulations limit the amount of total nitrogen in livestock manures (including poultry litter) applied to the farm area to 170kg N per hectare per year.

Further details on calculating the amount of nitrogen applied can be found in the NAP 2011 - 2014 and Phosphorus Regulation Guidance booklet and NAP Guidance Workbook. An online calculator is also available at [www.ruralni.gov.uk](http://www.ruralni.gov.uk).

## **Closed spreading period**

Poultry litter must not be spread on land from midnight 15 October through to midnight 31 January.

Conditions outside the closed period when you must not apply poultry litter -

- when soil is waterlogged. This is when water appears on the surface of the land when pressure is added;
- when land is flooded or likely to flood;
- when soil has been frozen for 12 hours or longer in the previous 24 hours;
- when land is snow covered;
- if heavy rain is forecast within the next 48 hours; or
- where land is steeply sloping with an average incline of 20% or more in the case of grassland, or 15% or more in the case of all other land, and where other significant risks of water pollutions exist. Risk factors to be considered include the proximity to waterways, the length of time to incorporation, the type and amount of fertiliser being applied and/or the soil and weather conditions. Further information about the assessment of significant risk may be found in the Nitrate Action Programme 2011-2014 and Phosphorus Regulation Guidance Booklet.

## **Poultry litter must not be applied within:**

- 20m of lakes;
- 50m of a borehole, spring or well;
- 250m of a borehole used for a public water supply;
- 15m of exposed cavernous or karstified limestone features;
- 10m of a waterway other than lakes; this distance may be reduced to 3m where the adjoining area is less than 1ha in size or not more than 50m in width.

## Poultry litter and botulism advice

Botulism has emerged as a threat to grazing animals such as cattle, sheep and goats in Northern Ireland in recent years. The disease can be spread by scavenging animals which gain access to poultry carcasses in the litter after it has been stored or spread on pasture. Therefore, it is essential that precautions are taken to reduce the risk of botulism in grazing animals.

Care should be taken to ensure any carcasses are removed from the litter before storage and spreading. Where poultry litter is stored in a field it must be compact and covered with impermeable membrane as soon as possible and within 24 hours of placement in the field.

Poultry litter should be deep ploughed into arable ground. Poultry litter should not be spread on agricultural land that is to be grazed, or from which silage or hay is to be harvested, in the same year. Further information and advice on this is available in DARD's leaflet 'Botulism in Cattle' available from the DARD website (see below) or by contacting AFBI's Veterinary laboratories at Stormont (Tel: 028 9052 5680) and Omagh (Tel: 028 8224 3337).

Advice is also given in the Code of Good Agricultural Practice available on the DARD website.

## Storage of poultry litter when it is not to be used as a fertiliser

Poultry litter not to be applied to land as a fertiliser is regarded as a waste material. This includes litter to be used for producing mushroom compost. As waste material, it is subject to other controls outside of the NAP Regulations. The table below illustrates what authorisation is required depending on the location, duration and reason for storage.

Location and reason for storage	Duration of storage		
	0-12 months	1-3 years	>3 years
Litter stored on site of production pending collection for disposal, recovery or treatment	See note 1		
Litter stored on site of production prior to recovery or treatment	See note 1	See note 2	See note 3
Litter stored on site of production prior to disposal	See note 1	See note 3	See note 3
Litter stored at any other site prior to recovery or treatment	See note 2	See note 2	See note 3
Litter stored at any other site prior to disposal	See note 2	See note 3	See note 3

1. Covered by an exemption (paragraph 41) from Waste Management Licensing (free of charge and does not need to be registered).
2. A Waste Management Licence is required. Incineration for energy recovery is considered as recovery.
3. The storage area is considered a landfill site and requires a PPC permit.

N.B. The appropriate authorisation must be in place prior to any storage commencing.

When poultry litter is treated as a waste material then its disposal is not controlled by the Cross-Compliance verifiable standards.

## Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)

**Useful DARD telephone numbers** (Note: DARD 0300 numbers are charged at local rate)

**Environment Awareness** . . . . . **0300 200 7842**

Agri-environment scheme information. Countryside Management advice including - Cross Compliance, Nitrates Directive, Codes of Good Agriculture Practice, Farm Waste Management, Uncultivated Land Regulations and Field Boundary Removals.

**Education and Training** . . . . . **0300 200 7841**

The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise offers training including Cross-Compliance, Nitrates and Nutrient Management Planning. ([www.cafre.ac.uk](http://www.cafre.ac.uk))

**DARD Corporate Services** . . . . . **0300 200 7850**

DARD Headquarters, Press Office, information services and systems, human resources and facilities management.

**Textphone** . . . . . **0300 200 7851**

For people with hearing difficulties.

**Calls from non-UK numbers or networks/international calls** . . . . . **+44 (0)28 9037 8418**

A list of DARD contact numbers can be obtained by visiting the **Contact Us** section of the DARD Website - [www.dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)

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## Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)

**Water Management Unit, 17 Antrim Road, Lisburn BT28 3AL**  
[www.doeni.gov.uk/niea](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea)

**Agriculture Regulation Team** . . . . . **028 9262 3188**

Nitrates Action Programme, Nitrates Derogations & Field Storage of Poultry Litter

**SSAFO issues:** . . . . . **028 9262 3102**

Contact the NIEA before planning to substantially alter any existing storage facility or commission new diesel tank(s), silos or slurry tanks. (i.e.SSAFO is the control of Pollution from Silage, Slurry & Agricultural Fuel Oil).

**Ground Water Authorisations:** . . . . . **028 9262 3279**

(Authorisation for disposal of spent sheep dip)

**Applying Sewage Sludge to Land** . . . . . **028 9263 3445**

**Registration of Waste Carriers** . . . . . **028 9056 9360**

**Simple Waste Management Exemptions** . . . . . **028 9056 9360**

**Other Waste Management Exemptions** . . . . . **028 9056 9358**

**Hazardous Waste Queries** . . . . . **028 9056 9710**

**Urgent Water Pollution Incident** . . . . . **Freephone 0800 80 70 60**