

Re: **MANURE SPREADING ADVISORY #3 - 2009: SOUTH COASTAL REGION**

**Date: September 1, 2009**

The following advisory is produced by government, in partnership with industry, to provide guidance to farmers regarding the *Agricultural Waste Control Regulation* and the *ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT ACT*. If a discrepancy arises between this document and the legislation, the legislation takes precedence. Following this advisory does not relieve anyone from their obligations under the LEGISLATION. The Province of British Columbia does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of the information referenced here from legislation, and in no event is the Province liable or responsible for damages of any kind arising out of its use.

**As the fall approaches, it will be very helpful to plan final manure applications now, so that storage facilities are close to empty before heavy rains begin to fill them. Heavy rains typically begin sometime in October: there is about twice as much rain in October than in September.**

**Perennial grassland fields are well suited to receive manure at this time. Harvested or fallow fields are poorly suited unless cover crops are planted early enough to support substantial fall growth and become well established.**

**Producers are responsible for decisions regarding manure spreading. Legislation gives no specific dates for manure spreading, but it does not allow for manure to be spread in a manner that causes pollution.**

**Please read the entire advisory for details and important information to assist producers with decision-making about manure application.**

The Manure Spreading Advisory Committee (consisting of industry and government representatives) is advising that **careful manure application is suitable on some sites**. The committee will monitor weather and soil conditions and will issue further advisories as conditions change.

## **Harvested Annual Crops (including corn and vegetables)**

For farmers considering manure application this fall on fields with harvested annual crops, the key message is “the sooner the better.”

Manure application should only be considered if a fall soil test has shown need for fertilizer and a winter cover crop has been planted or the cover crop will be planted by September 24\*. As the days get shorter and colder, cover crops are less able to take up nutrients. Also, as fall rains arrive, the risk of nutrient runoff and leaching increases.

Read the following guidelines to ensure manure is being applied appropriately, according to whether it is as a fertilizer or a soil conditioner:

### **Guidelines for applying manure as a fertilizer**

- The harvested or fallow field receiving the manure has been seeded to a cover crop by September 24\*.
- A representative soil test should be taken from the top 30 cm (12 inches) of the soil profile and sent to a lab for nitrate-N ( $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ ) analysis.
- If soil test nitrate-N is greater than 20 ppm (approx 66 kg  $\text{NO}_3\text{-N/ha}$ ), do not apply manure or other nutrients.
- If soil test nitrate-N is less than 20 ppm, manure can be applied to supply up to 60 kg of total nitrogen per hectare (53 lbs N/acre). With typical dairy slurry, this would be about 2000 gal/ac. If the nutrient content of the farm's manure is not known, a manure nutrient analysis is also required.
- Protect surface waters from runoff by maintaining adequate setbacks to watercourses. The suggested minimum setback distances increase with increased runoff risk, as in the Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide: it is 8 metres in September. This distance should be increased depending on a variety of factors including weather, topography, soil conditions and rate of application.

### **Guidelines for applying solid manure as a soil conditioner**

A manure test is required to show a carbon to nitrogen ratio of 30:1 or greater. Essentially, this demonstrates that the manure nitrogen will be ‘tied up’ by carbon sources (i.e., sawdust). In this case, manure may be applied as a soil conditioner. If the carbon to nitrogen ratio is less than 30:1, handle manure as a fertilizer and use the guidelines in the previous section.

## **Perennial Grassland**

As long as crop growth continues and fields are trafficable, manure application to perennial grassland is generally considered appropriate until the end of October. Application rates should meet crop nutrient requirements and appropriate buffer widths should be maintained to minimize the risk of runoff of manure to watercourses. The appropriate timing for final manure applications is somewhat flexible and will be determined based on weather conditions this fall.

## **Berry crops**

Fall manure application for berry crops is not necessary or recommended. If fields are being renovated for new plantings and a cover crop will be grown, consider the guidelines for harvested annual crops.

## **Additional Resources**

### **Canada-BC Environmental Farm Plan Program:**

Trained Planning Advisors are available to assist producers with completing an Environmental Farm Plan. For more information contact the ARDCorp office in Abbotsford.

- toll free 1-866-522-3447 or 604-854-4483  
[http://www.ardcorp.ca/index.php?page\\_id=14](http://www.ardcorp.ca/index.php?page_id=14)

### **Agricultural Waste Control Regulation:**

This is the actual legislation that applies to manure management in British Columbia.

[http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/reg/E/EnvMgmt/131\\_92.htm](http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/reg/E/EnvMgmt/131_92.htm)

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Please note that the September 24 date proposed here is a general recommendation. Based on previous research, the potential fall growth from cover crops planted after this date begins to drop off significantly.