BRITISH COLUMBIA
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Ministry of Agriculture

Sustainable Agriculture
Management Branch

MEMORANDUM

Re: MANURE SPREADING ADVISORY #2 - 2011: SOUTH COASTAL REGION

Date: Feb 15, 2011

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.

Manure application conditions are improving but still not ideal on most sites.

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

Some manure pits may be at risk of overflowing. See below for advice on avoiding overflowing pits.

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

Current Conditions, as an indication of manure application suitability

Weather: Mild temperatures but variable rain and snow in the five-day forecast.

Soil: Soils are moist to saturated. Soil temperature is about 7°C.

Crops: The T-Sum is 189 for Abbotsford and 166 for Agassiz. When the T-Sum increases to 200, that is one indication of optimal timing for the first fertilizer application on well-established grasses (see farmwest.com). Also consider crop growth in your fields: cool-season grasses, legumes and most perennials are showing signs of new growth in some locations.

Avoiding Overflowing Manure Pits. Some producers may be faced with potentially overflowing manure pits. Producers should plan to have enough manure storage; the reason for overflowing pits could be unforeseen circumstances such as excessive rainfall.

Allowing any uncontrolled release of manure is likely a contravention of the Environmental Management Act. Until field conditions are suitable for manure application, producers are strongly advised to identify temporary alternatives, including neighbours who may have extra capacity in their manure storage facilities. If all else fails, contact the **Ministry of Agriculture** or the **Ministry of Environment** (contact info below) for further advice.

Principal environmental risks associated with manure application

- surface runoff of manure nutrients and pathogens to water courses
- short-circuit flow of manure nutrients and pathogens to water courses though drain tiles
- soil compaction from operating heavy equipment on fields that are very wet

Given the above risks, the "Manure Spreading Advisory Committee" (consisting of industry and government representatives) is advising that **manure application on most sites should be delayed**. However, the Committee recognizes that the environmental risks of careful manure application (see below) are likely less than the environmental risks of overflowing manure storage facilities. The Committee will monitor weather and soil conditions and issue new advisories as appropriate.

Perennial Grassland and Well-Established Cover Crops

As soil and crop conditions improve for manure application, it is strongly advised to follow these recommendations:

- Apply at rates matched to crop nutrient requirements (suggested maximum rate of 60 kg/ha of manure nitrogen which is about 2000 gal/ac of liquid dairy manure). Analyzing a manure sample for nutrients would help verify the nitrogen content of the manure.
- Protect surface waters from runoff by maintaining adequate setbacks to watercourses. At this time of year, the suggested minimum setback distance is 8 metres (26 feet), as in the Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide. This distance should be increased depending on a variety of factors including weather, topography, soil conditions and rate of application.
- Apply manure only when soil is trafficable and there is no significant rain (i.e. greater than 10 mm of rain or its equivalent in snow) forecast for any of the next 5 days
- Do not apply manure to areas of fields that are frozen or saturated
- Do not apply manure to areas of fields that are subject to flooding or runoff
- Do not apply manure to tile-drained fields, particularly if water is currently flowing through the drain tiles

Bare land

No manure application is recommended at this time unless it will be planted within two to three weeks.

Berry crops

In general, manure application is not advised before mid-February. However, if field conditions allow, manure application to meet crop nutrient needs for this time of year is acceptable. If applying manure, utilize precautionary measures listed under Perennial Grassland. In addition to the above measures, preference should be given to those fields that have a cover crop between the berry crop rows.

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

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

For further information, please contact:
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For questions of a regulatory nature, please contact:
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