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# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## on

# Agriculture Environmental Management Code of Practice

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**Who does the Code apply to?** The Code applies to all agriculture operations in BC, from small hobby farms to large commercial operations.

**When will the changes happen?** The code came into effect on February 28, 2019 (replacing the Agricultural Waste Control Regulation of 1992). Some components of the code like soil testing, record keeping and other various activities have already begun, while others will be phased in over the next ten years.

- **WEBSITE: Implementation Phase-in Schedule**  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/waste-management/industrial-waste/agriculture/regulation-requirements/nmp-under-aemcop>

**Can my cattle still access water?** Cattle can have direct access to watercourses in seasonal feeding areas, grazing areas, and temporary holding areas, although there are new setback requirements for wells and drinking water sources. However, cattle cannot have direct access to watercourses and drinking water sources in confined areas.

**What is a high-risk area?** High risk areas are important because they may require ranchers to adhere to additional protocols and documentation.

- ***Phosphorous- Affected area:*** Surface water or land that is next to, or hydraulically connected to surface water that has been, or may be, adversely affected by high phosphorous loading. Operations in phosphorous-affected areas may need a nutrient management plan for the 2025 growing season depending on phosphorous soil test results.
- ***Vulnerable Aquifer Recharge Areas:*** Land where surface water may seep through the ground into an aquifer, making it vulnerable to pollution or contamination. Depending on soil test results, these areas may require a Nutrient Management Plan or Nutrient Application Plan.
- ***High- Precipitation:*** An area that has, on average, precipitation of 600mm or more in total rainfall between October 1 and April 30. There is specific agricultural by-product (e.g. Manure, fertilizer) storage requirements and spreading rules for operations in these areas.

**How do I know if I am in a high-risk area?** There are interactive maps [online](#) where you can type in your location into the search bar to locate your operation. The website shows maps for high risk areas maps for both [vulnerable aquifer recharge and phosphorus affected areas](#) as well as the [high precipitation areas](#). There are also printable maps available on the [webpage](#) (scroll to the end for the printable PDFs) for phosphorus affected areas and vulnerable aquifers.

- **WEBSITE: Interactive Map of High-Risk Areas**  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/waste-management/industrial-waste/agriculture/regulation-requirements/high-risk-areas-conditions>

**How will the Code be enforced?** The Code will be enforced by environmental protection staff designated as officers under the *Environmental Management Act*. An officer may do an inspection on an agricultural site in response to a complaint or as part of a planned inspection. Inspections may be

scheduled or an officer may arrive unannounced. To prepare for a site inspection, make sure you understand the requirements of the Code and have all relevant records available for review. If a non-compliance is identified during an inspection, the officer's response will depend on the level of environmental or human health impacts and the likelihood and willingness to comply. Details of the inspection and any non-compliances identified will be outlined in an inspection record that will be provided to the farmer.

**Do the new rules affect the use of slow release fertilizers?** Yes – they are still a source of nutrients, so all applicable rules apply. Late or early applications to land that is frozen/snow covered or has no crop are restricted, but the risk maybe less from slow release as long as the material and the released nutrients from it are not leave the field. High-risk areas and conditions, apply regardless of source.

**Can I still compost my deadstock in manure piles?** Yes, but you must follow the general rules for agricultural composting and actively manage the pile, not just dump/bury and walk away. The manure/mortality mix must be an aerated process so turning and management of moisture and C:N ratio as well as aeration is required. And must be monitored.

**What rules apply to my winter feeding grounds?** Winter feeding is considered as “seasonal feeding or grazing area”. Some forage is on site and the rest is supplied to livestock. Setbacks, management of feeding areas/bunks and access to water conditions all apply. Flooding, run-off and manure accumulation are the main considerations.

**What do I do with stockpiled manure that cannot be used within 7 months?** Temporary field storage is defined as storage for more than 2 weeks but less than 7 months. After 7 months this basically becomes a permanent storage. So, although setbacks change, the requirements of a defined structure come into play. If the structure is in an aquifer recharge area it must have a protective base. In high precipitation areas these would require a roof or cover.

**What do I need to know if I give/sell manure?** Anytime manure is moved off your property, to another person / farm, you must keep record of who, what, when, and where.

For small loads, less than 5m<sup>3</sup> (i.e., truckload), you need to keep record of:

- The total amount distributed (in cubic meters)
- The dates that it was distributed (start and end date)
- The type of agricultural by-product distributed.

For larger loads, more than 5m<sup>3</sup> (i.e., dump truck), you need to keep record of:

- the name and contact information of receiver
- keep a receipt that is signed by the receiver of the product
- the total amount of manure distributed (in cubic meters)
- the dates that it was distributed (start and end date)
- the type of by-product distributed

**Who needs the nutrient management plan?** A NMP is required if these three conditions apply to you:

- You have a large landbase (over 5 ha)
- You apply nutrients to the land
- Your soil nitrates or phosphorus levels show as high after a soil test.

Most cattle producers won't likely trigger the nutrient management plan requirement because they are not located in a high-risk area. In high risk areas, a NMP can be prepared by someone who is a Qualified Professional who has experience and education in that area. In non high-risk areas, a producer can do a self-directed NMP. The Ministry of Agriculture is developing resources to help producers with self-directed plans.

**What if you cannot take a 12" soil sample due to too hard of soil?** Depending on the time of year that samples are taken, determines the depth of sampling. The 12" (30cm) refers to post harvest nitrate (PHNT) sample depth. The Soil Sampling for Nutrient Management [factsheet](#) on the Ministry of Agriculture website states that *"The recommended sampling depth is 30 cm (12"). Note the approximate sample depth if you must sample at shallower depths. Plants usually root deeper than 15 cm and nitrate will move with water down the soil profile, so it is important to sample deeper than for phosphorus and potassium."* Resources for more info on Post Harvest Nitrate Testing:

- **FACTSHEET - Soil Sampling for Nutrient Management**  
[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/soil-nutrients/600-series/631500-1\\_soil\\_sampling\\_factsheet\\_no2\\_sep2010.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/soil-nutrients/600-series/631500-1_soil_sampling_factsheet_no2_sep2010.pdf)
- **WEBSITE - Post-Harvest Nitrate Testing**  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/industry/agriculture-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/soil-nutrients/nutrient-management/what-to-apply/soil-nutrient-testing/post-harvest-nitrate-testing#SoilSampling>

**Where can I take my soil samples?** The Ministry of Agriculture has prepared a [list of laboratories](#) that provide agricultural testing services for farmers in British Columbia, in particular for nutrient management. It is not an endorsement of any laboratory.

- **WEBSITE: Soil Sample Laboratories**  
[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/soil-nutrients/600-series/631500-8\\_nutrient\\_testing\\_labs\\_factsheetno1\\_may2015.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/soil-nutrients/600-series/631500-8_nutrient_testing_labs_factsheetno1_may2015.pdf)

**Do those with existing EFPs receive an updated planning guide?** If an EFP was completed (new or renewed) in 2019 no new planning workbook (guidebook) will be issued. For EFPs completed prior to February 2019 the intent is to have the farm/ranch operation renew their existing EFP. The previous version of the Reference Guide that would have been provided to program participants is being replaced. It will be published on the EFP website. It will also be available to those program participants that complete new or renewed EFPs after January 2020.

**Are setbacks reciprocal? Do my neighbours have to follow setbacks from my confined area?** To a certain extent the answer is no. There are two regulations that impact this. The Health Hazards Regulation (Section 8) that requires "A person who installs a well, or who controls a well installed on or after July 20, 1917, must ensure that the well is located at least (a) 30 m from any probable source of contamination. And the new AEMCoP which requires as 30 m separation from a drinking water source for confined livestock areas. A "drinking water source" means a stream, reservoir, well or aquifer from which drinking water is taken. I would say yes to this – because a confined livestock area is a "probable source..." so the well installer needs to take that into consideration – it would be important (and good due diligence) then to keep some records noting the dates, as appropriate.

**How do I measure my collected manure?** If you move it in truck, spreader or loader – tally the number of loads and estimate the volume of the equipment used. To estimate the volume before it is transported, will require you to look at the shape of the pile and use a formula to calculate the volume. If it is a cone, the formula is  $V = 1/3 \pi r^2 h$  (r=radius and h=height). If the pile is more or less a triangle shape, estimate the height (H) and the area of the bottom of the pile (length (L) and width (W)). Then calculate the volume  $\frac{1}{2} (W \times H) \times L$ . You are looking for an estimate not an exact amount.

**Does 200 ppm Phosphorus refer to available P or total P?** Yes, it is available phosphorus (P) from a soil test. The recommended test is to use the “Kelowna extractant” but there is a converter [online](#) (Ministry of agriculture) to convert any other method to a Kelowna equivalent value.

- **WEBSITE: Online Converter**

[https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/soil-nutrients/soil\\_test\\_converter.xlsx](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/agriculture-and-seafood/agricultural-land-and-environment/soil-nutrients/soil_test_converter.xlsx)

**What makes a P affected area?** A phosphorus-affected area is an area of land that drains into surface water bodies that may be or are adversely affected by high levels of phosphorus. These areas were determined by the Ministry of Environment through water quality monitoring information.

**Do you have to harrow the livestock area?** No, but it is a recommended beneficial management practice to spread spoiled feed and manure that may have accumulated in seasonal feeding areas, overwintering areas of heavily used pastures.

**Who maps the aquifers and why are they only mapped to Williams Lake?** The aquifers are mapped by the Ministry of Environment. There are aquifers beyond Williams Lake that are considered moderately or highly vulnerable, but they are not currently included in Schedule B of the AEMCoP as “Vulnerable Aquifer Recharge Areas”. More information about aquifers is available on the Ministry of Environment webpage [Understanding Aquifers](#).

- **WEBSITE: Aquifer Mapping and Vulnerability**

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/air-land-water/water/groundwater-wells-aquifers/understanding-aquifers> .

**When will the rest of the provincial maps be completed?** The phase-in of the currently identified “phosphorus-affected areas” in the AEM Code and final group of “vulnerable aquifer recharge areas” will be complete by 2024 – meaning that by the growing season of 2025, if required, all applicable provisions will need to be followed. Groundwater and surface water research and water quality monitoring are ongoing. However, at this time, no additional mapping has been indicated.

*This Q&A has been prepared by the BC Cattlemen’s Association and reviewed for accuracy by the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment and ARDCorp.*

*This is not a legal document. For specific regulatory requirements, please refer to the Code of Practice for Agricultural Environmental Management:*

[http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/8\\_2019](http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/8_2019)