Date: August 2011

Dear Member,

Are you ready to meet the NVZ slurry storage requirements by 1st January 2012?

Will you be ready to meet the new slurry storage requirements to comply with the Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations by 1 January 2012? The Environment Agency is concerned that there are a significant number of livestock farmers in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ) who have yet to make preparations for increasing their slurry storage.

The NFU has held briefings and the Environment Agency has also run a number of workshops previously, but with the deadline approaching we are holding some final workshops across the North East to ensure members know exactly what they should be doing. This will be your last opportunity – so if you are unsure in any way do book a place at one of these meetings.

By now you should have:

- already assessed your storage needs to provide sufficient volume for slurry and poultry manure kept on farm– six months' worth for pigs and poultry and five months' worth for other slurry. The Defra Guidance Booklet[1] provides assistance in the calculation process.

- investigated what you need to do if you have identified a need for additional storage; submitted a planning application to your Local Authority (where required) and obtained quotes for construction that comply to Silage, Slurry and Agriculture Fuel Oil (SSAFO) Regulations. Under these regulations the Environment Agency must be notified 14 days before new facilities are brought into operation and it is highly advisable to consult with them at the outset rather than discover a problem after construction has taken place.

If you are in a Deferred Slurry Storage Area (DSSA) or 'purple area[1]' you have an additional year (1st January 2013) to comply, but may still be visited by Environment Agency staff to check what steps have been put in place. The Environment Agency position statement[2] on enforcement of slurry storage provisions in England and Wales provides guidance on its approach, including where slurry storage is not provided by the required date.

The NFU lobbied hard to limit the application of NVZs, and achieved a 9% reduction in the designated area in 2008, benefiting thousands of farmers nationally. Regionally, the changes related to the Yorkshire Derwent (River Dove and some other headwaters only) and River Wear (except the Valley Burn tributary) catchment. The NFU also made a strong case to the government's task force on farm regulation chaired by former NFU Director General Richard Macdonald to reduce the burdens of NVZs on farmers, the outcome of which is awaited at the time of writing.

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