

Essential freshwater

Application of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser

New rules around the application of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser come into effect on 1 July 2021, as part of the *Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Freshwater) Regulations 2020* (NES-F).

In addition, existing rules set out in the Fresh Water Plan for Taranaki for the discharge of all fertiliser still apply.

If you intend to use synthetic nitrogen fertiliser after **1 July 2021** it is important to consider the new and existing requirements and whether you will need to apply for a resource consent.

Key points:

- From 1 July 2021 there will be a cap of 190kg/ha/year on the use of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser for all land in pastoral land use.
- From July 2022 (and each July thereafter) dairy farms must provide the Taranaki Regional Council (the Council) specific information relating to their use of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser.
- The Council's existing rules regarding fertiliser use remain in force - both before the new rules come in and afterwards.

What is synthetic nitrogen fertiliser?

Synthetic nitrogen fertiliser means any substance (whether solid or liquid) that is more than 5% nitrogen by weight and is applied to any plant or soil as a source of nitrogen nutrition for plants.

This includes any manufactured urea, diammonium phosphate, or sulphate of ammonia but does not include a compost, soil treatment or fertiliser that is derived from plant or animal waste or residue and is minimally processed (e.g. by being composted, mixed, dried and pelleted).

What is the nitrogen cap?

The synthetic nitrogen cap applies to land in pastoral land use. The application rate for a contiguous landholding of synthetic nitrogen must be no more than 190kg/ha/year:

- to all that land, as averaged over that land; and
- to each hectare of that land that is not used to grow annual forage crops.

Definitions

Contiguous landholding means each area of one or more contiguous parcels of land within a farm.

Pastoral land use does not include the use of land for the grazing of livestock on the stubble of a crop that has been harvested after arable land use.

Do I need a resource consent to apply fertiliser?

After 1 July 2021, most applications of fertiliser should continue to be a permitted activity (i.e. no resource consent is required). However, when applying synthetic nitrogen fertiliser for pastoral land use you must ensure that you do not exceed the **nitrogen cap**.

Exceeding the nitrogen cap will mean the activity is non-complying and a resource consent will be required.

In addition, the following conditions from the Fresh Water Plan for Taranaki must be met for **all fertilisers** before and after the new nitrogen cap rules come in:

- fertiliser is approved for use under the *Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act 1997*;
- discharge shall at all times adopt the best practicable option to prevent or minimise any adverse effects of fertiliser drift beyond the

boundary of the target property or on other non-target areas within the boundary of the property;

- if discharge is by any other method than aerial application, discharge shall not occur directly on or above a river, lake, wetland or other surface water body, including any drain which is discharging to a surface water body; OR
- if discharge is by aerial application, fertiliser shall be applied in a manner which does not cause or is not likely to cause an adverse effect from deposition into a river, lake, wetland or other surface water body, including any drain which discharges to a surface water body.

If you cannot meet these conditions you will require a resource consent.

Dairy farm monitoring and information requirements

From July 2022, the person who is responsible for dairy farm land must provide the following information to the Council each year for the 12 months ending 30 June of that year:

- (a) the area of land in pastoral land use in the contiguous landholding and, within that land, the areas of the following (all in hectares):
 - (i) the land used to grow annual forage crops;
 - (ii) the other land;

- (b) the area of land in other uses in the contiguous landholding (in hectares);
- (c) the receipts for the synthetic nitrogen fertiliser purchased for the contiguous landholding;
- (d) the types of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser applied to the contiguous landholding and, for each type, the percentage of the nitrogen component by weight;
- (e) the rate at which each type of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser was applied (in kg/ha/year)—
 - (i) to the land in pastoral land use in the contiguous landholding and, within that land, to—
 - (A) the land used to grow annual forage crops;
 - (B) the other land;
 - (ii) to the land in other uses in the contiguous landholding;
- (f) the dates on which the synthetic nitrogen fertiliser was applied.

Note - The Council is currently working on a system to collect this data as efficiently as possible for both the Council and farmers.

Contact us

If you have any questions on the application of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser or any other aspect of the NES-F please email info@trc.govt.nz. Our website at www.trc.govt.nz will also be regularly updated with guidance.

