

The storage, stacking and treatment of litter, straw, manure and slurry arising from an exotic notifiable animal disease outbreak

SEPA position

If you comply with the requirements below, you can store, stack and treat infectious litter, straw, manure and slurry arising from an exotic animal disease outbreak without the need for an environmental authorisation.

Conditions that apply

During an outbreak of an exotic notifiable animal disease¹ SEPA will not normally pursue an application for an environmental authorisation for the storage, stacking and treatment of infected litter, straw, manure and slurry from infected premises where:

- 1- the waste is subject to the relevant Animal Health Order or official guidance and the stacking and treatment is supervised by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA),
- 2- the details of the operation are recorded and carried out in accordance with our requirements for environmental protection set out in Appendix 1,
- 3- the waste is treated on the site where it was produced, i.e. no waste may be brought on site from another location for treatment, and
- 4- the 'relevant objectives' of the Waste Directive are met:

'... ensuring that waste management is carried out without endangering human health, without harming the environment and in particular:

- (i) without risk to water, air, soil, plants or animals
- (ii) without causing a nuisance through noise or odours and
- (iii) without adversely affecting the countryside or places of special interest'.

During an exotic notifiable animal disease outbreak, the Special Waste Regulations 1996 should be complied with for movements of infected material off site, including the requirement to prenotify movements 72 hours in advance. In exceptional circumstances, where this is not possible, operators must ensure that risks to the environment and the public are minimised and all requirements are met as soon as possible after the event.

This regulatory position may be applicable to other lower risk or less severe incidents such as endemic diseases with unusual circumstances, for example where APHA require additional control measures to contain the disease. Whether or not this Regulatory Position Statement applies would be decided on a case by case basis by SEPA and depending on the circumstances and appropriateness.

Background

There are strict requirements on the effective storage and treatment of litter, straw, manure and slurry from infected premises. The requirements are specified in Animal Health Orders and official guidance and are regulated by the APHA. These requirements are necessary to control material potentially infected with an exotic animal disease and to prevent further infection and spread of disease. The wastes are also subject to waste management controls.

¹ A notifiable animal disease is a disease named in section 88 of the Animal Health Act 1981 or an Order made under that Act. "Exotic" notifiable animal diseases are diseases not normally found in Great Britain, including but not restricted to avian influenza, foot and mouth disease, Newcastle disease and swine fever. They affect a range of animals including poultry, pigs and cattle.

This statement sets out our position on the management of litter, straw, manure and slurry during an outbreak of an exotic animal disease.

Infectious litter, straw, manure and slurry are hazardous wastes. The relevant European Waste Category code is H9 (infectious) 18 02 02*, “wastes whose collection and disposal is subject to special requirements in order to prevent infection”. In normal circumstances the treatment (which includes stacking to heat) of hazardous waste can only be carried out under the terms of an environmental authorisation. During an outbreak of an exotic animal disease SEPA will not normally pursue an application for an environmental authorisation for the storage, stacking and treatment of infected litter, straw, manure and slurry from infected premises where the conditions above are met.

Once the litter, manure and slurry have been treated in accordance with the relevant Animal Health Order or official guidance and the APHA are satisfied that it is no longer infectious, it is no longer hazardous waste. It can be handled and treated in the normal way, i.e. applied to land for agricultural benefit under a paragraph 7 exempt activity registration, or sent to a suitably licenced treatment or disposal site. Where the material is applied to land the tonnage used must not exceed the minimum amount needed to deliver the desired agricultural benefit.

This position statement applies only in Scotland. The terms of this position statement may be subject to periodical review and be changed or withdrawn in light of technological, regulatory or legislative changes, future government guidance or experience of its use. SEPA reserves its discretion to depart from the position outlined here and to take appropriate action to avoid any risk of pollution or harm to human health or the environment.

Appendix 1- Environmental protection requirements for the storage, stacking and treatment of infected litter, straw, manure and slurry

The following information should be recorded and made available on request by a SEPA officer:

- 1- types of disinfectants to be used
- 2- disinfectant application rate and process of application (and re-application if any)
- 3- method of transporting waste to storage areas (covered and leak proof)
- 4- application rate and method of applying water for damping down
- 5- location of proposed storage and proximity to nearby surface waters and groundwater supplies (for example boreholes, wells and springs within 50 metres) noting restrictions on location of field heaps outlined below
- 6- location of proposed storage relative to sensitive receptors (such as residential areas and wetland habitats)
- 7- type and method of sheeting used for covering the stack (and confirmation that sheeting will take place immediately after disinfectant application)
- 8- drainage arrangements (and confirmation that any discharge from the stack will be collected)

Guidance on the storage of manure and slurry for farms is contained in the Prevention of Environmental Pollution from Agricultural Activities (PEPFAA Code). This should be followed wherever practicable, whether the site of storage is regulated under an environmental authorisation or not.

Yard storage

Where infected manure is stored in the yard all new manure storage areas should:

- have an impermeable base
- provide a collection and containment system for liquid run-off (such effluent is defined as slurry in SSAFO) which meets the requirements of the Control of Pollution (Silage, Slurry and Agricultural Fuel Oil) (Scotland) Regulations 2003. Contaminated run-off can be reduced by providing a roof or cover.

Field storage

Where possible field storage should be avoided but where no alternative to field storage is available, infected litter and manure should be stored in a densely packed heap with an "A" shaped profile.

You should not site field heaps:

- 1- over field drains
- 2- within 10m of a watercourse (or a greater distance if there is a risk of effluent run-off into a watercourse), within 50m of any identified swallow hole, or any spring, well or borehole that supplies water for human consumption, or is to be used in farm dairies; but see specific comments above regarding additional receptors
- 3- with best efforts, avoiding areas subject to surface water flooding or inundation as a result of groundwater flooding
- 4- where they would cause odour problems for nearby residents

The Action Programme for Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (Scotland) Regulations 2008 place additional rules on the field storage of solid manure within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone. These can be found on the Scottish Government website at <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/Environment/NVZintro>.

Appropriate measures for operations

- 1- Maintain effluent channels and collection tanks to avoid blockage
- 2- Effluent collection tanks should be checked regularly and emptied when necessary so that they do not overflow. Once no longer infectious the effluent should either be spread to agricultural land in accordance with the manure management plan or disposed of off-site. In some circumstances a permit will be required to land spread such contaminated drainage – a SEPA officer can advise you of the potential permitting requirements prior to making such as discharge. If produced and/or applied in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone additional regulatory requirements will apply; these can be found on the Scottish Government website at <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/Environment/NVZintro>
- 3- Manure can be stored temporarily in a field for a maximum of 12 months prior to disposal
- 4- Contaminated run-off and ammonia emissions can be reduced by covering manure with sheeting and maintaining the dry matter content above 60%
- 5- Field heaps may need to be re-sited if there is a risk of pollution or of odour nuisance

Other considerations

During an outbreak of exotic notifiable animal disease there will be other considerations not covered in the PEPFAA Code which are described below:

- 1- The effluent from storage and stacking areas must be controlled as it may be contaminated with the virus. If yard storage areas are not remote from receptors and not reliably impermeable, field sites may be preferable
- 2- Stacking in-house can also take place. However, this means that the farmer will not be able to carry out secondary cleansing and disinfection (and subsequent re-stocking) until after 42 days when the treated manure and litter can be removed. In-house stacking may have a number of advantages such as sealed drainage and controlled ventilation)
- 3- With field sites, it is possible (and may be necessary) to provide temporary arrangements for collection of effluent by stacking onto suitable sheeting, sloped towards a temporary sump. Given the transmission risks to other livestock, the stand-off should be from all springs, and all wells and boreholes providing water for human or agricultural use.