

Dorset farmer's leaky silage clamp kills fish in river

Press release

More than 400 fish were killed because a Dorset farm owner was unaware effluent from his silage clamp was discharging into a river.



Effluent from a silage clamp was going into the river

Jasper Miller, 52, of Lower Fifehead Farm in Fifehead St Quintin, pleaded guilty to causing an incident which saw the River Divelish, a tributary of the River Stour, polluted for over 3 kilometres between 25 and 29 June 2019. He was fined £1,300 and ordered to pay costs of £6,079 at North Somerset Magistrates Court on 14 June 2021.

The court heard from the Environment Agency that a member of the public reported seeing dead fish and officers went to investigate. Tracking the pollution upstream, they eventually found silage effluent discharging from a pipe connected to the farm.

Dye tracing established the link between the silage clamp and the pipe and Miller admitted that the wrong pipe had been unblocked, leading to the discharge. To mitigate the impact he began removing polluted water for proper disposal by tanker.

Sara Durden of the Environment Agency said:

We are grateful to the person who alerted us to the pollution which set in motion the events that led to stopping this incident. Good intelligence sent to us through our hotline is more important than ever because it allows us to react accordingly and take the appropriate action.

We take incidents of agricultural pollution very seriously and while most cases can be resolved by following guidance, we will

take enforcement if the offence is serious. This incident could have been avoided if proper maintenance and checks to the drainage system had been made prior to the silage clamp being filled.

If you see pollution or dead fish in a river, contact our 24/7 incident hotline on 0800 807060.

Notes to editor

Miller of Lower Fifehead Farm, Fifehead St Quintin, Sturminster Newton, pleaded guilty to one count of allowing silage leachate to discharge into the River Divelish without an environmental permit, contrary to Regulations 12(1)b and 38(1)(a) Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.

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