

# Farmers given support to tackle water and air pollution from slurry

Farmers in England will soon be able to apply for grants of up to £250,000 to improve their slurry storage, helping them to prevent water and air pollution and make the best of their organic nutrients.

Around half of slurry stores in England are not fit-for-purpose, forcing farmers to spread slurry when there is no crop need, wasting valuable fertiliser and causing preventable air and water pollution. This means many farms can end up failing to comply with their legal obligations for storage and spreading of slurry.

Investing in good slurry management is an important step that farmers can take to protect the environment. Slurry is a valuable source of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium which can be used to grow crops.

The first round of the Slurry Infrastructure grant, which will be administered by the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) and opens for applications on Tuesday 6 December, will make £13 million available for livestock farmers to build six months of slurry storage capacity.

[Guidance for the grant](#), which will run over multiple years, has been published today, with farmers able to apply for grants of £25,000 – £250,000 towards the cost of slurry stores, covers and supporting equipment. Grants can be used to build, replace or expand storage. They can also contribute towards a range of solutions like lagoons, steel and concrete ring tanks and large slurry bags.

Farming Minister Mark Spencer said:

We know livestock farmers want to invest in slurry systems that support quality food production and protect the environment, but many are put off by high infrastructure costs and difficulty accessing finance.

The Slurry Infrastructure grant will tackle this, helping farmers to invest in future-proof slurry storage that supports thriving farms while cutting pollution and allowing nature to prosper.

When badly managed, the nitrate and phosphate in slurry end up in rivers, streams and the sea and can cause harmful algal blooms which block sunlight and deplete oxygen, causing damage to natural habitats and wildlife. Slurry also releases large amounts of ammonia into the atmosphere, which returns to the land as nitrogen. The build-up of nitrogen causes certain plants to thrive, limiting species diversity and harming vulnerable habitats.

Enlarging and covering slurry stores will help reduce the 60% of nitrate

pollution, 25% of phosphate pollution and 87% of ammonia emissions that come from agriculture. It will also help farmers to cut costs on artificial fertilisers, delivering long-term productivity benefits through improved nutrient management and soil health.

Paul Caldwell, CEO of the RPA, said:

Improving slurry storage offers farmers an opportunity to reduce the environmental impact of their businesses and cut input costs.

We hope this scheme, which is the result of months of work with farmers and industry, will receive a significant number of applications for this first and future rounds.

The grant is the result of months of co-design with farmers and experts from across sectors. It builds on support Defra already provides for slurry equipment and best practice through the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund and Countryside Stewardship, and will offer farmers an opportunity to build storage systems that exceed storage regulations, support spreading regulations, and improve nutrient use on farm.

Full guidance for the grant has been published today before applications open on 6 December. The guidance explains what the grant offers, the scheme rules and how to apply. It also includes resources to help farmers plan their storage and information for Local Planning Authorities. The online application window will run until 31 January 2023. All applicants will be told whether they have been shortlisted for full application.

Depending on demand in the first round, applicants will be prioritised in areas where action is most needed to reduce water and air pollution from agriculture.