

Land spreading reminder after operator fined

Press release

The Environment Agency is reminding operators to take precautions to ensure the correct processes are in place when spreading on land.



Waste material was spread on to the wrong land

It follows a case where a farmer was fined and ordered to pay costs totalling more than £2,000 for mistakenly spreading sewage sludge on neighbouring fields.

Richard Taylor, 58, of Great Bavington Farm, Great Bavington, Newcastle, appeared at Peterlee Magistrates' Court last month where he pleaded guilty to breaching an environmental permit by depositing controlled waste.

The court heard that in September 2019, agricultural contractor Richard Taylor's had been contracted to spread sewage sludge on behalf of Northumbrian Water in accordance with the Sludge Use in Agriculture Regulations 1989.

The company's tractor drivers mistakenly spread the sludge on a neighbouring field at Stanley belonging to a farmer who was then unable to cultivate the land for a significant period.

The court decided to reduce the fine to account for the substantial loss in business suffered by Mr Taylor as a result of the incident leading to the loss of the spreading contract.

Timely reminder

Neil Paisley, Senior Agricultural Officer at the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

With land spreading season approaching it's a timely reminder for operators to ensure they follow the correct procedures to ensure they spread safely and in the correct place in accordance with their environmental permits.

Land spreading waste to land is an alternative source to traditional fertilisers. We have environmental permits in place to protect the environment from these activities and will take action against anyone who breaches environmental law. In this case it has proven costly for both the operator and the owner of the land.

Sewage sludge is a waste material that has undergone a number of treatment processes and controls and can be applied to land under The Sludge (Use in Agriculture) Regulations 1989.

Land spreading the waste material to land reduces the reliance on manufactured fertilisers. The activity is permitted by the Environment Agency to ensure it does not impact on the environment, and there is limited controlled wastes that are allowed to be spread.

Pollution incidents can be reported to the Environment Agency on their 24-hour incident hotline on 0800 807060.

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