

Press release: £28,000 penalty for Nottinghamshire farming companies who caused serious pollution

Two Nottinghamshire farming companies have been fined a total of £28,800 for causing pollution to a pond through the discharge of maize silage effluent from Sutton Grange farm in Sutton-cum-Lound near Retford.

The pollution incident resulted in the death of 35 fish and at the time caused a significant impact on the local groundwater.

Sutton Grange AD Ltd and Sutton Grange Services Ltd were successfully prosecuted by the Environment Agency in a case heard at Mansfield Magistrates Court on Friday 10 May.

The excessive amount of maize stored coupled with the manner in which it was kept, caused a runoff of highly polluting maize silage effluent. There was also a failure to comply with the silage, slurry & agricultural fuel oil regulations on the part of Sutton Grange Services Ltd in relation to a second pile of maize.

The two companies pleaded guilty to three charges of breaching environmental regulations following a number of pollution incidents in October and November 2015, all arising from a maize storage/clamping operation at an anaerobic digestion plant at Sutton Grange farm.

Sutton Grange AD Ltd were fined £6,000 and Sutton Grange Services Ltd were fined a total of £2,800. Each company was ordered to pay costs of £10,000, as well as a victim surcharge of £170.

The court heard how Sutton Grange AD Ltd, which holds an environmental permit for the operation of its anaerobic digestion activities, failed to ensure that proper systems were in place to ensure that only uncontaminated surface water was discharged into the ponds.

Sutton Grange AD Ltd stored a significant amount of maize on a purpose built clamp which was built on top of a manhole linked to a stone outfall at Bluebell pond. Sutton Grange Services had been contracted to carry out clamping operations.

Following an earlier report from a member of the public about a possible fish kill at the lake behind Sutton Grange Farm on 19 October 2015, on 24 October 2015 officers received a further notification of a pollution incident at the same pond. The officers attended and found dissolved oxygen levels in the pond were extremely low. They also found the maize clamp was blocked and contained yellow liquid. The liquid was flowing downwards across the farmyard.

Further inspections of the site showed silage effluent had escaped the

shallow perimeter drain surrounding the maize mound and was leaking into the manhole which discharges to the stone outfall in Bluebell pond, resulting in the fish kill and significant impact on groundwater quality.

In mitigation, the court heard that both companies had taken a number of steps to improve operations at the site to ensure that no further incidents such as this would happen again. Neither company had any previous convictions and were given credit for their early guilty pleas.

An officer speaking on behalf of the Environment Agency said:

Sutton Grange AD Ltd and Sutton Grange Services Ltd have failed to act in accordance with environmental laws and as a result they have caused pollution to a pond in the close vicinity of the farm and the local groundwater.

Pollution of any watercourse is a serious offence because of the devastating impact it can have on fish, wildlife and ecosystems. These were entirely preventable incidents, which led to the pollution of watercourses in the area and we hope this case sends a strong message to the farming industry that their activities have the potential for serious impacts on the environment.

We will always take action against anyone who fails to act in accordance with environmental laws and if anyone spots an environmental incident they can report it to the Environment Agency's 24-hour incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.