

DEFRA's 4 Point Plan Explained

You may have heard DEFRA saying all farmers in NVZ's should be following the 4 Point Plan, but what does this refer to?

Peter Slark of P&L AgriConsulting confirms the key areas farmers need to comply with to avoid penalties which start at 5% of Single Farm Payments and also a deduction on ELS and HLS agreements.

The 4 Point Plan relates to the 4 different steps farmers have to complete before they are compliant with current NVZ regulations.

Step one is to assess the organic nitrogen production of your stock to see if you have enough land available to spread on. The total amount of organic nitrogen applied to land must not exceed 170kg/ha in each calendar year, averaged over the total farm area. If this is exceeded then you need to reduce livestock numbers, export muck, increase the land available to you or apply for a derogation to apply 250 kg/ha.

Step two is to ensure you have 5 months storage for livestock slurry or 6 months storage for pig and poultry manure and this should now be place as from January 2012. This calculation should include any rain that falls on the store or enters from dirty yards etc.

Step three is the fields records which need to kept. These should be done on an individual field basis and show what fertiliser and organic nitrogen has been spread and when.

Step four is the fertiliser plan for the coming year. You must plan all applications of nitrogen from organic manures and manufactured nitrogen fertilisers to each crop in each field. The plan must show that you have followed the following four steps:

1. Calculated the amount of nitrogen in the soil that is likely to be available for uptake by the crop during the growing season.
2. Calculated the optimum amount of nitrogen that should be applied to the crop.
3. Calculated the amount of nitrogen that is likely to available to the crop from any planned applications of organic manure.
4. Calculated the amount of manufactured nitrogen fertiliser required.

There are several programmes available to help with these records, particularly the planning process, and with new areas being designated as NVZ's in 2012 and new rule changes in January 2014 coming into force keeping these records is becoming increasingly burdensome.

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