

Application of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser

Essential Freshwater Regulations

New government rules for the application of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser come into effect from 1 July 2021. These rules apply, as well as the rules in the Regional Land and Water Plan. If you intend to apply synthetic nitrogen fertiliser, we recommend you check whether you will need a resource consent.

Key points:

- From 1 July 2021 there will be a cap of 190kg/ha/year on the use of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser on land used for pastoral farming. You will need a resource consent if you want to apply more.
- From July 2022 dairy farmers must provide to Council information relating to their use of synthetic nitrogen fertilizer every year.

What is synthetic nitrogen fertiliser?

Synthetic nitrogen fertiliser includes any substance (solid or liquid) that is more than 5% nitrogen by weight, which is applied to plants or soil as a source of nutrition for plants. This includes any manufactured urea, diammonium phosphate, or sulphate of ammonia. It does **not** include compost, soil treatments or fertiliser derived from plant or animal waste or residue that is minimally processed (e.g composted, mixed, dried or pelletised).

What is the nitrogen cap?

The synthetic nitrogen cap applies to pastoral land – that is land being grazed by livestock. It does not include grazing of livestock on crop stubble after harvest as part of an arable crop rotation.

The application rate across all land in a contiguous holding must be no more than 190kg/ha/year, when averaged across all land and when applied to each hectare of land which is not being used to grow forage crops.

A 'contiguous holding' means each area of one or more adjoining parcels of land within a farm.

Do I need a resource consent to apply fertiliser?

After 1 July 2021, when applying synthetic nitrogen fertiliser for pastoral land use you must ensure that you do not exceed the nitrogen cap each year. Exceeding the nitrogen cap will mean the activity requires a resource consent. Substantial technical information is required with any such resource consent application to assess the potential for nitrogen leaching, the use of good management practices and, in some cases, the requirement for a nitrogen reduction plan.





You will also need a resource consent if your fertiliser application and associated activities such as earthworks and grazing do not comply with the rules in the Regional Land and Water Plan or other National Environmental Standards - contact the Council to check.

Dairy farm monitoring and information requirements

From July 2022, the person who is responsible for managing any land used for a dairy farm must provide information to the Council each year on the use of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser for the 12 months ending 30 June.

The information which needs to be included relates to:

- The total area of land being farmed and the area in pastoral land use, the area growing annual fodder crops, and the land uses on the remaining areas
- Receipts for the purchase of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser

- The type of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser applied and how much nitrogen is in each type of fertiliser (as a percentage of the weight component)
- The rate at which the fertiliser was applied and the date on which it was applied.

Council will have a form available on its website, and in hard copy, that dairy farmers can fill in and submit to Council.

Contact us

If you have any questions on the application of synthetic nitrogen fertiliser, please email info@wrc.govt.nz or call our Consents and Compliance team on 0508 800 118.

Our website at www.wrc.govt.nz will also be regularly updated with new information as it comes to hand.

