

## NVZ update: responsibilities and help available

Applying the legislation surrounding Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) can be complicated in parts. New rules came into force in January, affecting an increased number of people and bringing additional responsibilities for those who are already in NVZs.

Key things that farmers in NVZs should be starting this year are:

- gathering information for record keeping – for example, the number of livestock kept each month
- providing sufficient storage for slurry and poultry manure
- completing risk maps
- nutrient planning.

A nutrient management plan can save farmers hundreds if not thousands of pounds each year by helping them to apply the right amounts at the right times. Farmers with slurry and manure can make the most of their various nutrients, saving a packet on manufactured fertilisers.

We are not routinely checking for NVZ compliance during this calendar year except where it forms part of statutory cross-compliance visits. Instead we are offering farmers advice and support in a number of ways:

### Technical helpline

The NVZ technical helpline has been a popular source of confidential help so the service has been **extended until 31 March 2010**. Call the helpline on (for England) 0845 345 1302 (Monday-Friday, 8am-6pm) or (for Wales) 01824 704060 (Monday-Friday, 8.30am-5pm).

### Events and workshops

Following the success of our spring/early summer series of NVZ events we are planning more for later this year. Check farming and local press, see <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/nvzs> or call 08708 506506 for information.

### Guidance leaflets

Leaflets 'Guidance for Farmers in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones' were produced by Defra and ourselves. They're available free of charge on Defra's website. They're supported by detailed questions and answers, available at <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/nvzs>. Welsh Assembly Government is currently producing Wales-specific information.

nitrate  
vulnerable  
zones



**Software tools**

Free software tools have been developed to help with the calculations required under the new rules. See <http://www.planet4farmers.co.uk> or phone 08456 023 864.

Farmers can also speak to or arrange a visit from their environment officer by calling 08708 506506 (Monday-Friday 8am-6pm).

Nitrate pollution is a serious threat to our water environment – but compliance with the regulations need not be difficult. And, when farmers achieve the right balance of nutrients in their soil they optimise the quality and yield of the crop and maximise their profits. Not only that, it helps to protect their (and everyone else's) environment at the same time.