

Agriculture Stewardship: Tips for smart application of manure, pesticides

Weather awareness and field application reminders

Minnesota farmers feed us and drive our economy – all through a short growing season. Windows for applying manure and pesticides can be short, making application timing difficult.

Smart application of manure, pesticides, and fertilizers is critical to maximize their value and increase crop productivity. Runoff from fields reduces crop productivity and hurts water quality, which could contribute to fish kills, especially when applied improperly or too close to rain events.

Application tips to reduce runoff

- **Forecast:** When rain is forecast, do not apply. Use caution when applying to saturated soil. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture's [Runoff Risk Advisory Forecast tool](#) can help determine the best time to apply.
- **Location:** Observe all [applicable setbacks](#) to surface waters and sensitive areas. Pay special attention to areas of your fields where water flows after rain or snow melt. Stay clear of steep slopes and surface water locations, such as rivers, streams, or sinkholes and wetlands.
- **Rate:** Follow labels to ensure proper application rates. Use the University of Minnesota Extension's [manure management website](#) to calculate the best rates for your fields.
- **Method:** Reduce nutrient loss by selecting the best application method for your manure and chemicals and incorporate them into the soil immediately to decrease evaporation and runoff.

Visit the MPCA's website to learn more about best management practices for [land application of manure](#).

If runoff does happen, report it to the Minnesota Duty Officer at 1-800-422-0798. Keep the information basic and give the officer your location. The duty officer will contact local authorities.

Extreme weather magnifies everything

Minnesota's weather is changing: We're getting warmer and wetter. Strong storms following long dry periods can increase the risk for fish kills in streams. These weather transitions from extreme wet to dry are also happening more quickly and more frequently, making the timing of any applications that much more critical. Rains can wash away valuable nutrients and pollute downstream waters.

Runoff doesn't just hurt fish

Runoff may pollute drinking water in private and community wells. Geographic land features in southeast Minnesota, such as karst, can deliver pollutants to groundwater through sinkholes and fractured bedrock. Learn more about well testing at the [Minnesota Department of Health's website](#).

Farming is difficult, but your dedication to the land and water makes Minnesota a great place to live, work and play. Use the weather forecast as your guide and avoid applications before rainstorms.

Report any spill, runoff, or fish kill 24/7 by calling the Minnesota Duty Officer at 1-800-422-0798.



Upcoming event

Monday, Aug. 12, 1-2:30 p.m.

"River Nutrient Levels – Updating Minnesota's Nutrient Reduction Strategy"

How are the levels of nitrogen and phosphorus in Minnesota's major rivers changing? Speakers from the U.S. Geological Survey, Metropolitan Council, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency will explain the ongoing water quality monitoring efforts in rivers near Minnesota's borders. These experts, researchers, and scientists are among 50 people working to complete a 10-year update to the [Minnesota Nutrient Reduction Strategy](#). Established in 2014, this strategy guides our state's efforts to reduce nutrient pollution.

Format: Information session with Q&A.

How to register: No advance registration required. Join via the event link.

[Event Link](#)

In the news

USDA offers disaster assistance after flooding in Minnesota

Agricultural operations in Minnesota have been significantly impacted by rain and flooding this summer. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has technical and financial

assistance available to help farmers and livestock producers recover from these adverse weather events. – [USDA](#)

Louisiana sits at end of the line for nutrient runoff

Nutrients from farm runoff in the Mississippi River Basin, from Minnesota down, cause algal blooms in the Gulf of Mexico. The [Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force](#) set a preliminary goal to reduce both nitrogen and phosphorus by 20% by 2025. The U.S. Geological Survey showed that in May 2024, while nitrogen loads in the lower Mississippi River were 7% lower than baseline measurements, phosphorus loads increased by 22%. – [MinnPost](#)

In gardens across Minnesota, the beetle battle begins

In July, Japanese beetles began their annual feast of roses, grapevines, fruit trees and any number of other plants, including soybeans and some other crops. The [U of M Extension says](#) that while the beetles can cause a lot of unsightly damage to leaves and flowers, healthy plants can survive an infestation without long-term effects. – [MPR News](#)