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Guidance

Manage waste on land: guidance for land managers

How to deal with waste, including hazardous waste, and prevent pollution.

From: [Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities](#) and [Environment Agency](#)

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You have a legal [duty of care](#) to make sure your waste does not harm the environment, such as pollution of surface water or groundwater.

Types of waste

As a land manager you'll produce certain types of waste. These may include:

- green waste such as grass cuttings or hedge trimmings
- biobed waste
- waste silage wrap
- pesticide washings
- empty pesticide or chemical containers
- waste oil
- waste sheep dip
- waste medical containers or equipment

Read about the special controls if you deal with [animal by-products](#) or handle [packaging waste](#).

Hazardous waste

If you produce hazardous waste you must follow specific rules including maintaining records of [waste movements](#). The following types of waste may be hazardous:

- oil containers
- unrinsed pesticide containers
- animal health packaging
- fertiliser bags
- smoke canisters
- sheep dip
- certain unused animal medicines
- syringes, needles, disposable gloves and dressing used on infected animals
- aerosols with an orange hazard symbol
- lead acid and nickel or cadmium batteries
- fuel and lubricating oil
- brake fluid

You can manage pesticide containers as non-hazardous if they've been triple rinsed according to [industry best practice guidance](#).

Keep hazardous waste to a minimum. Mixing hazardous waste with non-hazardous waste is illegal unless you have a permit covering this.

Find out about [identifying and managing hazardous waste](#).

Moving waste

If you regularly transport waste, whether it's your own waste or waste belonging to others, you must be [registered as a waste carrier](#). You'll need to pay a registration fee if you want to transport certain types of waste.

Find out about your [responsibilities as a waste carrier](#).

If you ask someone else to move your waste you should make sure that they're [registered](#). If you do not check that the person taking your waste is authorised and it's fly-tipped, you could be liable and may be fined.

When you pass your waste onto a waste carrier or waste management site you must give them a transfer note. You must keep a copy of the transfer note for at least 2 years. Different rules apply when you move [hazardous waste](#).

Waste use, treatment, recovery and disposal

You usually need an environmental permit from the Environment Agency for any waste treatment, recovery or disposal. It's illegal to bury waste on your farm without an environmental permit.

When you do not need a permit

You can carry out certain low risk (exempt) activities without a permit. However, you'll need to meet the limits and conditions of the exemption, and you'll usually need to tell the Environment Agency before your begin the activity.

There are exemptions for:

- [treating waste](#)
- [using waste](#)
- [disposing of waste](#)
- [storing waste](#)

You must be able to meet the conditions set out by each exemption. You must register each of these waste exemptions with the Environment Agency before you carry out the activity.

If you cannot manage your waste within the set restrictions you may need to apply for a permit.

When you need a waste permit

You need an environmental permit for certain waste activities. These could be simple ('standard rules') permits for activities such as composting, anaerobic digestion, landspreading or use of waste. You need an environmental permit for disposing liquid wastes.

Find out more about [when you need a permit for a waste activity and how to apply](#).

Common land management waste activities that may require a permit include:

- [on-farm anaerobic digestion using farm wastes only, including the use of resultant biogas](#)
- [recovery or use of waste on land](#)

Giving or receiving waste for composting

If someone else takes your waste for composting you must:

- check they can prove that they are [authorised to carry waste](#)
- make sure that the waste is being taken to a registered exempted site or permitted site
- give them a transfer note including a description of the waste, signed by both parties - you must keep copies for at least 2 years

If you take waste from someone else for composting on your farm you must:

- make sure you are allowed by law to take it - you can check this by contacting the Environment Agency on [03708 506 506 \(see call charges\)](#)
- make sure both parties have completed and signed a waste transfer note, including a description of the waste

Catering waste and animal by-products must not be brought onto premises where livestock are kept.

Storing and managing waste for composting

The Environmental Protection (Duty of Care) Regulations state that compost material must be stored securely and kept safe from accidental spills or leaks. You must not allow liquids to escape into watercourses. You must keep liquid waste in a sealed container for recycling or disposal.

Nitrate vulnerable zones (NVZs) and groundwater source protection zones (SPZs)

If your land falls within an NVZ or groundwater SPZ, there may be additional rules that affect your waste and recycling. Find out about:

- [NVZs](#)
- [groundwater protection](#)

Fly-tipping on private land: landowner responsibilities

Fly-tipping is the illegal dumping of liquid or solid waste on land or in water. It's against the law to allow fly-tipping on your land as fly-tipped waste can harm human health or the environment.

If you find waste dumped illegally on your land or water (for example in a river, stream, pond or ditch) you must:

- arrange to remove the fly-tipped waste safely - see the [waste duty of care code of practice](#)
- pay for the removal and disposal

Your local council or the Environment Agency may take enforcement action (for example your local council may serve you a notice to remove the waste) if you do not get the waste removed.

Report the incident

You should report the incident to your [local council](#) or the [Environment Agency](#).

Give details (if you have them) of the date, time, location and description of the waste and of any vehicle involved.

When your council will clear waste

Your council has a duty to clear the waste when the fly-tipping incident is on [land councils must keep clear](#). Your council might charge you if it removes fly-tipped waste from your land.

When the Environment Agency may clear waste

The Environment Agency has no duty to clear waste. It will only consider clearing waste in limited circumstances, for example if there's an immediate and significant risk of harm to the environment or human health.

Burning stubble or crop residues

You're breaking the law if you burn cereal stubble or crop residues, such as oilseed rape, unless allowed by the [Crop Residues \(Burning\) Regulations 1993](#).

Instead of burning stubble and crop residues you should bale and cart straw from the fields, or chop the straw and plough it into the soil before establishing the next crop.

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