

Dorset farmer fined after failing to comply with slurry notice

25.2.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

There had been multiple pollution incidents involving the farm since 2012, but the defendant failed to increase slurry storage at the farm as required.

A Dorset farmer has been prosecuted by the Environment Agency for not increasing his slurry storage to prevent the risk of pollution and comply with Environmental Regulations.

Mark Pearson, of Hanford Farm, Hanford, Blandford in Dorset appeared before Yeovil Magistrates Court on Tuesday 2 December. He pleaded guilty to the offence and was fined £1200.

He was also ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £480 and full costs of £4075.

Additional slurry storage has now been installed.

The Court heard that there had been multiple pollution incidents involving the farm since 2012 and Pearson had failed to construct adequate slurry storage capacity.

The farm is located in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone, an area designated as being at risk from, or impacted by, agricultural nitrate pollution. Excess nitrates can harm the environment and humans by leaching into groundwater and polluting waterways.

Farmers in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones must follow rules governing slurry storage capacity as well as controls over when and how much spreading can take place.

Pearson had initially been given Environment Agency advice and guidance to increase storage.

In January 2019, an Environment Agency officer was out walking his dog when he noticed what appeared to be slurry in a stream. He traced the runoff to a field at Hanford Farm and took photographs as evidence.

During a formal interview under caution, Pearson admitted that slurry spreading at the farm had caused the pollution.

Pearson agreed to an Enforcement Undertaking – an alternative penalty to formal court proceedings – and he paid a contribution to the National Trust of £2,000 as a result as well as making a commitment to increase slurry storage.

Pearson still did not complete the slurry lagoon. The Agency charged with him with the original polluting offence for which he had offered an Enforcement Undertaking and in November 2024 he was ordered to pay a £2,500 fine.

Pearson was finally given an Anti-Pollution Works Notice setting out what improvement works were deemed necessary to reduce the risk of pollution, but he failed to comply with the deadline of 1st October 2024. The notice included a right of appeal, which was not exercised.

A visit to the farm on 16th October 2024 confirmed no new slurry store had been completed.

Chris Westcott of the Environment Agency, said:

Pearson has consistently failed to deliver on his promises to the Environment Agency that slurry storage would be increased. We first highlighted this issue in 2015.

We have been more than patient with the farmer, but the promised improvements never materialised, and the offending continued which left us with no alternative but to pursue enforcement actions.

Guidance for farmers on appropriate storage is available on the Gov.uk site: Storing silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil - GOV.UK

Background

Mark Pearson was charged with the following offence:

- Failed to comply with a notice under Section 161A of the Water Resources Act 1991, dated 26 January 2024, to carry out anti-pollution works, namely the installation and commission of a new slurry storage system at Hanford Farm, Hanford, Blandford, Dorset, by 1 October 2024, Contrary to Section 161D of the Water Resources Act 1991.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dorset-farmer-fined-after-failing-to-comply-with-slurry-notice>