

Two pollutions cost Chippenham farm more than £18,000

10.3.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

JD Spencer Farm Partnership was fined £7,000 and £8,944 of legal costs after two slurry pollution incidents impacted the Bristol Avon river.

A Chippenham-based farming partnership has been hit with £18,744 in penalties after two slurry spills polluted the Bristol Avon river in Chippenham.

In a prosecution brought by the Environment Agency, JD Spencer Farm Partnership of Manor Farm, Langley Burrell, Chippenham, Wiltshire pleaded guilty at Swindon Magistrates' Court to four offences on 6 March 2026.

The partnership was fined £7,000, a victim surcharge of £2,800 and costs of £8,944.

The farm was charged on two counts of illegal water discharge activities and two charges of failing to plan the spreading of slurry.

The first incident, which occurred in November 2023, led to slurry entering a tributary of the Bristol Avon. Downstream water samples showed very low dissolved oxygen levels and the presence of significant quantities of ammonia in the water.

During a formal interview, co-owner of the farm, Winston Spencer, denied that he had been recently spreading slurry or that he had pumped from the farm's slurry lagoon onto the fields.

He did, however, admit that his slurry and parlour washings stores were full and that slurry run-off had occurred. He suggested this had been due to heavy rainfall washing off slurry which he had spread the previous month.

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The second incident, in March 2024 resulted in slurry pollution to a watercourse at Langley Burrell, Chippenham.

Following a report from a member of the public, Environment Agency officers tracked the pollution along several watercourses, eventually identifying the source to be slurry deposits in three of Manor Farm's fields.

In another interview, Spencer admitted that wet slurry had been deposited, stating that he believed it had entered the field drains and run into the stream.

Spencer also said the partnership had no land drainage plans for the fields in their holding.

The Environment Agency used one of their drones to photograph the areas where slurry had run off.

David Womack, senior environment officer, said:

This incident was avoidable and should never have happened. Farmers have a

responsibility to ensure their organic manures are properly stored and spread.

If farmers have concerns about not having sufficient slurry storage capacity, we recommend they contact us. We can give advice on current legislation, help ensure slurry calculations are accurate and reduce the pollution risk by identifying non-compliant structures.

If an incident does occur, we would urge those responsible to report it as soon as possible to the Environment Agency. This can help reduce any environmental impact. Incidents can be reported 24hrs a day on 0800 80 70 60.

Guidance for farmers on appropriate storage is available at Storing silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil.

Background

JD Spencer Farm Partnership was charged with the following offences:

- On and before the 10 November 2023 you, the J D Spencer Farm Partnership, did cause an unpermitted water discharge activity, namely the discharge of poisonous, noxious or polluting matter from Manor Farm, Langley Burrell, Chippenham, Wiltshire into inland fresh waters Contrary to Regulations 12(1)(b) and Regulation 38(1)(a) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.
- On and before the 10 November 2023 you, the J D Spencer Farm Partnership, did fail to plan the application of organic matter, namely slurry, to agricultural land at Manor Farm, Langley Burrell, Chippenham, Wiltshire so as to give rise to a significant risk of agricultural diffuse pollution Contrary to Regulations 4(1)&4(2) and Regulation 11 of the Reduction and Prevention of Agricultural Diffuse Pollution (England) Regulations 2018.
- On and before the 26 March 2024 you, the J D Spencer Farm Partnership, did cause an unpermitted water discharge activity, namely the discharge of poisonous, noxious or polluting matter from Manor Farm, Langley Burrell, Chippenham, Wiltshire into inland fresh waters Contrary to Regulations 12(1)(b) and Regulation 38(1)(a) of the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016.
- On and before the 26 March 2024 you, the J D Spencer Farm Partnership, did fail to plan the application of organic matter, namely slurry, to agricultural land at Manor Farm, Langley Burrell, Chippenham, Wiltshire so as to give rise to a significant risk of agricultural diffuse pollution Contrary to Regulations 4(1)&4(2) and Regulation 11 of the Reduction and Prevention of Agricultural Diffuse Pollution (England) Regulations 2018.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/two-pollutions-cost-chippenham-farm-more-than-18000>