



A clear solution for farmers

CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

CSF and EA Officers working together

Downs Farm, Amberley

Arun and Western Rother Catchment (41)

CSFO: Greg Howarth

Farm Description

As small scale dairy farm, NVZ regulations on slurry storage and closed periods are going to be difficult to comply with for farmer Paul due to the lack of money available for the huge investment and improvements in farm infrastructure needed. Downs Farm was identified by the local Environment Agency agricultural officer as being high risk for non-compliance with NVZ regulations with only temporary slurry storage and therefore the necessity to spread slurry every few days.

Downs Farm has a mixed enterprise including a dairy unit of 140 cows along with 75 suckler cows, 100 Holstein steers and some arable production. The farm yard its self is located high up on the chalk of the South Downs and the farm land includes the majority of Amberley Wild Brooks SSSI in the Arun Valley below.

Pollution Issues

Concerns were raised by the Environment Officer to the CSFO about Downs Farm regarding the lack of slurry storage, and also the impact that the silage clamps directly on the chalk might be having on the local ground water quality. Due to the unusual nature of the farm, with a sensitive SSSI wetland in the valley and a chalk based farm yard high on the South Downs, a solution to infrastructure issues such as building slurry storage has been difficult to resolve for Downs Farm.



New and permanent slurry storage is required as well as a general improvement in the farm yard infrastructure in order to manage clean and dirty water effectively to comply with NVZ regulations and reduce diffuse agricultural pollution. The farm has a manure management plan and risk map in place, but with only temporary slurry storage on the farm, the farmer may be forced to spread during high risk conditions, increasing the risk of water pollution occurring.

Pollution Solutions

An infrastructure audit and report has been provided free through Catchment Sensitive Farming and offers 3 potential solutions and their cost/benefit to the infrastructure issues at Downs Farm. These solutions include a cost/benefit analysis of the best slurry storage method for the farm and calculations to show how improved clean and dirty water separation can reduce the burden of NVZ requirements. This report has proved an invaluable decision making tool for Paul, especially as it has given him access to a specialist to discuss ideas with, something which the Environment Agency would not have been able to offer.

The work of Catchment Sensitive Farming and the Environment Agency have similar objectives and this case study exemplifies the importance of joint working between the two organisations in order to improve water quality. Although the Environment Agency is a regulator, here the advisory role of Catchment Sensitive Farming has acted to compliment the regulation of the Environment Agency to the benefit of both Downs Farm and the Environment. This case study is also an example of how confidence and trust can be built between farmers and the Environment Agency's Officers.

Farmer Engagement and Motivation

Paul first engaged with Catchment Sensitive Farming when he attended a Soil Management Workshop in February 2009. He filled in a postcard given to him at the workshop and the CSFO subsequently contacted him. It was apparent to the CSFO on the phone to Paul and also to the Environment Officer, Emma on a farm visit that Paul saw compliance with NVZ regulations as a huge obstacle to Downs Farm, and potentially the end of their business in the dairy industry.

Paul would now like to continue improving the infrastructure on his farm and will maintain his engagement with Catchment Sensitive Farming. He is attending a nutrient management workshop in the Autumn and has requested a meeting with the CSFO and Emma (EA) to agree on the best way forward both in terms of NVZ regulations and diffuse agricultural pollution reduction.

Catchment Sensitive Farming Officer (CSFO)

Greg Howarth

Natural England, Worthing

07785 721214

greg.howarth@naturalengland.org.uk

www.naturalengland.org.uk/csf

Catchment Sensitive Farming (CSF) is delivered in partnership by Natural England, the Environment Agency and Defra.



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



Environment
Agency



Funding is from the
European Agricultural
Fund for Rural
Development: Europe
investing in rural areas.