

Nutrient Management Inspections Underway

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Representatives of Ontario Pork and the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition (OFEC) have been meeting with staff from the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAFRA) over the past several months to discuss a risk based approach to completing nutrient management inspections.

The MOE has 16 Agricultural Environmental Officers (AEO's) positioned around Ontario who will be completing farm inspections to assess compliance of any producer that falls under the Nutrient Management Act.

With a little over 1200 approved Nutrient Management Plans and Strategies approved in Ontario, there are fairly high odds of an inspection at some point over the next 3-years for every producer impacted by the Nutrient Management Act.

These officers will be integrating MOE risk methodology with Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) principles to encourage the adoption of management practices that will improve a farm's environmental performance.

Inspection Planning:

Farms to inspect will be selected using both random and prioritized approaches.

Targeting factors will include: size of operation, available hectares per nutrient unit, compliance history, previous inspection results, type of manure storage, and presence of sensitive features.

An inspection is performed using a set of modules which will include such things as: primary storage – transfer to storage systems – secondary storage – transfer from storage – field application.

- An inspection module is filled out for each control point.
- Risk management questions in each module identify where environmental performance could be improved and give credit for practices that are already implemented.
- The risk management score for each control point will contribute to an overall inspection score.

Report Card

To better communicate the results of an inspection, a report card format has been developed which provides; a summary of the score, the program priority questions, and an assessment of each control point.

It clearly identifies which items are recommendations, and which are requirements for compliance.

The control point sections show where a farmer could improve their environmental performance.

Of course we are aware that protocols and processes that look fine on paper may have in-field operational challenges. We would like to hear from any of you that have had direct experience with an Agricultural Environment Officer following the new Nutrient Management Inspection protocols. We are looking for all types of feedback; both good and bad. We need to hear and balance both types of experiences in order to improve the program and ensure the smooth operation of necessary Nutrient Management inspections. Although at this point in time we have every reason to believe that you will be treated fairly by the MOE staff, we may be able to provide some assistance if you feel that you have been treated unfairly.