

# Wisconsin DATCP: Don't risk manure runoff; check the risk advisory forecast, conservation officials say

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MADISON - The rainy planting and growing seasons have stretched into the harvest season, making farmers eager to get crops off the fields and spread manure. But impatience can lead to spreading in high-risk conditions, state conservation officials advise.

Storage facilities may be getting full, because many farmers haven't spread manure since spring, and all the rain this summer and fall raised the level of open manure pits. But spreading manure when rain is on the way and soil is already saturated could carry it to streams, threatening water quality and depriving crops of nutrients.

One way farmers can judge when to spread manure is to check the Runoff Risk Advisory Forecast, available online at [manureadvisorysystem.wi.gov](http://manureadvisorysystem.wi.gov). The runoff forecast provides maps showing short-term runoff risk for daily application planning, taking into account factors including soil moisture, weather forecast, crop cover, snow cover, and slope. It is updated three times daily by the National Weather Service.

"We discourage spreading manure during high-risk runoff times, but if farmers must

do so because of lack of storage space, they need to avoid high-risk fields,” says Richard Castelnuovo, chief of nutrient management and water quality with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. “We know manure pits may be getting full, especially with all the rain, but it’s vital to spread manure when and where it will remain to fertilize crops, and protect lakes, streams and groundwater.”

Farmers should contact their crop consultants, county land conservation offices or the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for help identifying alternatives to high-risk spreading, such as stacking manure away from lakes or rivers, drinking water wells, or areas with sinkholes or exposed bedrock. If farmers must spread manure, crop consultants and county conservationists can help identify fields where the risk is lower. You can find contact information for county conservation offices in the WI Land + Water Directory at <http://wisconsinlandwater.org>.

Farmers should always have an emergency plan in place in case of manure spills or runoff, says Ben Uvaas, DNR CAFO enforcement/compliance coordinator. The plan should include who to call and what steps to take if runoff or a spill occurs, how to clean it up, and perhaps most important, how to prevent it from happening. Information about preventing and planning for manure spills is available at <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/agbusiness/manurespills.html>.