

Queensland REEF WATER QUALITY Program



Reef protection regulations in the Great Barrier Reef regions Agricultural advisers frequently asked questions

Record keeping

When should advisers/resellers start keeping records?

Agricultural advisers must keep records of tailored, property specific advice. Fertiliser resellers are not required to submit fertiliser sales records to the Department of Environment and Science. More information on record keeping requirements for advisers can be found in the [factsheet](#) available online at www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations.

Fertiliser application method (sugarcane)

What are the limits on broadcast fertilising, and what methods of application are allowed?

Application of any fertiliser containing nitrogen must occur on the crop row only using surface-banded or sub-surface application methods. You can still broadcast mill mud and fertiliser containing phosphorus but not nitrogen, during the fallow as long as it's incorporated into the soil within three (3) days of application.

Mill mud

If mill mud is applied at a rate of 250 t/ha but it is only applied to a small area rather than the whole farm, does this area have to be treated separately?

Yes, the area will need to be treated and recorded as a separate zone under the N&P budget. The area will require its own soil test and calculation of fertiliser rates because of the requirement to make deductions from fertiliser for the nitrogen and phosphorus contained in mill mud or mud ash mixes when applying more than 100 wet tonnes per hectare. Deductions for mill mud can be found in the [Prescribed methodology for sugarcane cultivation](#) available online at www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations.

Soil testing

If a paddock is divided into three equal-sized zones based on soil mapping, how many soil cores should be taken per zone (if each zone is < 15 ha)?

The [Prescribed methodology for sugarcane cultivation](#) outlines acceptable soil sampling methods. In brief, for an area less than 15 hectares, at least 20 core soil samples need to be taken and mixed together to form the composite sample. For an area greater than 15 hectares, at least 40 core samples must be taken and mixed together to form the composite sample. The methodology also recognises the *Fertcare guide for fit for purpose soil sampling* for planning appropriate sampling procedures.

How are old ratoons accounted for in N and P calculations? For example, if you put down a crop cycle's worth (five years) of P, but ratoons will be older than five years, can you put more P down after five years?

Ideally you would take a new soil test; however, you can continue to use the soil test originally used to inform nutrient rates for that block.

Fertiliser application

If new research becomes available that indicates greater output can be achieved with a higher fertiliser application rate, would the regulations then restrict farm performance?

The regulations are based on science and have been guided by industry experts and industry's own accepted standards. To ensure consistency, the Queensland Government has committed to not substantially changing the regulations until 2024. New research that becomes available can be assessed in preparation for possible regulation changes after that time.

Farm Nitrogen and Phosphorus Budget (N&P Budget)

When do growers need to have a Farm Nitrogen and Phosphorus Budget by?

Every sugarcane farm in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions is required to have a N&P Budget. The N&P Budget must be developed prior to the time you plant and fertilise.

The [Farm Nitrogen and Phosphorus Budget Guide](http://www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations) available online at www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations outlines one possible example layout, however growers may record the N&P Budget in any format of their choice, as long as it contains all of the required elements.

How does the N&P Budget work across several farms with different farm ID numbers?

The farms can be covered by one N&P Budget if they are managed as a single entity and are located within the same sugarcane growing district. Alternatively, separate N&P Budgets can be developed for each farm if the grower wishes to manage them separately.

Can the N&P Budget be updated to account for unforeseen circumstances?

Yes, the N&P Budget can be updated at any time.

New cropping

Is a conversion from sugarcane (or another row crop) to fertilised pastures captured under the new cropping regulations?

A grazier does not require an environmental authority (permit) to grow improved pastures to feed their own cattle.

The permit requirement applies to new or expanding commercial cropping and horticulture in the Cape York, Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary regions on five hectares or more of land that does not have a cropping history. More information, including what is meant by cropping history and a checklist to help determine if a permit is needed, is available online at www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations.

Further information

Information on the Reef protection regulations can be found at www.qld.gov.au/ReefRegulations.