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Guidance

Sheep dip: groundwater protection code

Sheep dip is a hazardous substance - follow this code to reduce the risk of groundwater pollution when you use, store and dispose of dip.

Published 11 February 2016

Last updated 28 June 2016 — see all updates

From:

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs>), Environment Agency

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency>), and Natural Resources Wales

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-resources-wales>)

Applies to:

Wales and England

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Groundwater lies below the surface of the ground. If you carelessly use or release toxic sheep dip on your land it could pollute groundwater.

Polluted groundwater can drain into and contaminate drinking water sources such as boreholes, wells and streams.

By following this code of practice you can reduce the risk of causing groundwater pollution. If groundwater is polluted and you're prosecuted, it will help your defence if you can show you followed the guidance.

You could be imprisoned and fined up to £5,000 if you dip sheep without a certificate of competency (<https://www.nptc.org.uk/qualificationschemedetail.aspx?id=267>).

You could be imprisoned and subject to an unlimited fine if you:

- spread waste dip to land without an environmental permit

- allow hazardous substances to enter groundwater
- spread non-hazardous pollutants (eg from purl or bloom dips)

Get a certificate of competency

You must get a certificate of competency (<https://www.nptc.org.uk/qualificationschemedetail.aspx?id=267>) (Level 2 Award in the Safe Use of Sheep Dip) to buy sheep dip or carry out dipping. You'll take a computer-based test, and there's an optional practical test.

Without the certificate you can help someone else, who must have the certificate, with dipping, but you can't do it on your own or buy the dip.

Get an environmental permit

You must apply for an environmental permit (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/discharges-to-surface-water-and-groundwater-environmental-permits>) if you plan to discharge waste sheep dip on to the ground, eg by landspreading.

It can take up to 4 months to get your permit.

If you intend to treat organophosphate dip yourself with a degrading enzyme you'll need to get waste exemption T27 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/waste-exemption-t27-treatment-of-sheep-dip-using-organophosphate-degrading-enzyme>) in addition to your environmental permit.

Before you dip sheep

You need to prepare properly if you want to reduce the pollution risk to groundwater - eg choosing the right location and equipment.

Choose a safe location

Dip baths, drain pens or mobile dipping systems should be at least:

- 10m from watercourses (eg streams) and wetlands - further away if possible
- 50m from any well, spring or borehole
- 30m from a watercourse that drain into a river or wetland designated as a European site or a site of special scientific interest (SSSI)

Avoid sites in a flood plain and with a high water table.

You must contact Natural England (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england#contact-natural-england>) or Natural Resources Wales (<http://naturalresources.wales/about-us/contact-us>) if you plan to carry out dipping on land that's part of a protected site.

You shouldn't use dip baths or drains pens on roads or tracks, or on a slope that drains directly towards a watercourse.

Use the right equipment

Make sure your dip bath:

- doesn't have damage or drain holes that could cause leakage
- won't allow splashes to escape – fit splash screens and lips if necessary
- is circular or rectangular and ideally of one-piece construction to reduce the risk of leaks
- is UV resistant, if made of plastic

Your drain pen should have:

- enough space to hold the batch of sheep being dipped for at least 10 minutes after dipping
- properly sealed floors and built-in slopes - to allow excess dip to drain back to the bath, not soaking into the ground, soil or into a surface water drain
- a cover or roof - to stop rainwater etc running into it
- a filter or trap arrangement to stop dirt draining back into the bath along with dip

The hosepipe you use to fill the bath should be:

- positioned so that its end can't be submerged in the dip bath, to avoid pollution of the water supply due to back-siphoning of dip
- have a double check valve so that dip isn't back-siphoned
- only used for sheep dipping - never for domestic water supply

Make sure your facilities comply with British Standard 5502 (<http://shop.bsigroup.com/ProductDetail/?pid=000000000030262061>).

Buy and transport dip concentrate

Only buy:

- dip concentrate authorised by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (<http://www.vmd.defra.gov.uk/ProductInformationDatabase/Default.aspx>)
- as much as you need for each dipping season, so you don't have to store it for long periods, which increases the risk of leaks and pollution

When transporting dip concentrate make sure:

- containers are secure and can't be punctured
- partly used containers are closed securely and kept upright to prevent spills
- any trays are large enough to hold spills

Store dip concentrate

Store concentrate in its original container, which should be clearly labelled. Keep containers away from drains, in a secure tray or bund, to contain any spills.

Store containers in either:

- properly constructed farm chemical storage (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais16.pdf>)
- an approved metal cabinet that meets the requirements of the Health and Safety Executive's guidance (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais16.pdf>) on storing pesticides for farmers

Your store must be locked when not in use.

If there are spills during storage, you should either:

- pour them into the dip bath
- soak them up with absorbent material, in which case you must get a registered waste carrier (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/access-the-public-register-for-environmental-information#waste-carrier-dealer-and-broker-licences>) to dispose of the material and dip

You also need to be able to store the “absorbed material” in a secure and safe manner to prevent the dip may leaching and potentially polluting groundwater or surface waters.

You shouldn’t pour spills back into the container as this could contaminate your dip. You must not pour spilt dip into drains, watercourses or onto the ground.

When dipping sheep

You must take care when you’re jetting, spraying, showering and dipping sheep in either a static bath or mobile system. Most pollution happens during or just after dipping.

Don’t dip sheep if you expect rain within 24 hours unless you have a ventilated shelter for your flock. Rain can wash off dip that hasn’t had time to dry.

Check the site

Check areas where you plan to dip sheep. Look for ways to reduce the risk of contamination, eg from drain down areas, where you keep sheep after dipping, that don’t connect back to the dip bath.

You should also consider the potential impact of animal behaviour after dipping. For example, make sure there is drinking water available so that sheep don’t rush to nearby streams where dip could be washed off and cause pollution.

Check the bath for leaks

1. Check the empty bath for leaks. Permanently seal any drain holes if you have an older model of bath.
2. Fill the bath with clean water and leave it overnight, making sure rain can’t enter it and affect the water level.
3. Check the water level the following day. If it’s unchanged, you can add the dip concentrate.
4. If the water level has fallen, find any leaks and permanently seal them.
5. Repeat this procedure to make sure the leaks are sealed.

Fill the bath

You should take care to avoid polluting groundwater or surface water when you’re filling the dip bath. Pollution could happen if you:

- allow dip to overflow from the bath
- use the bath in the wrong place
- wash out the measuring jug carelessly

- leave dip concentrate in insecure containers

Fill the dip bath in the following way:

1. Fill the bath with clean water before you add the dip concentrate, taking care not to overfill it. Use a water meter or a container of known volume to fill it so you're sure of the precise volume of the bath and how much dip concentrate to add.
2. Pour and mix the concentrate within the dip area so any accidental spills are contained.
3. Close the dip container after you've finished using it and store it in a flat-bottom vessel or tray.
4. Wash out any jugs or measures you've used to pour the concentrate. Wash them over the bath 3 times with clean water (don't use water from a stream).
5. Store any containers needed to top up the bath in a drip tray and place them where they won't be knocked over.

Keep run-off in the bath

You must make sure all run-off stays inside the dip bath during and after dipping. Take the following measures:

- wash protective clothing and footwear before you leave the dipping pen, making sure all contaminated water drains to the bath
- make sure all sheep are rested beforehand and take care when you put them in the bath to prevent splashes

Transfer the sheep to the drain pen

After dipping the sheep:

- keep them in the drain pen until there are no signs of dip solution dripping from their fleeces (this may take 10 minutes or more) – use double drain pens if needed
- keep the filter or trap clear during dipping and dispose of any waste material along with the waste dip

Anyone carrying out dipping (including contractors) should remember that the drain pen sides and splash boards will be contaminated with dip solution.

Using mobile dips safely

There is greater risk of polluting groundwater from a mobile dip system than from a static dip. Check all equipment thoroughly before use for signs of damage, corrosion or excessive wear, and to make sure it's working properly.

Before using a mobile dip system you should establish whether you or the mobile dipping contractor will dispose of the waste dip. Make sure any contractor who disposes of dip has a waste carrier license (<https://www.gov.uk/find-registered-waste-carrier>) as well as any environmental permits (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/discharges-to-surface-water-and-groundwater-environmental-permits>) for your own activities.

You could be prosecuted for 'knowingly permitting' the landspreading of waste sheep dip (ie a groundwater activity) if your contractor illegally disposes the dip.

