

Management of Farm Plastics & Agrichemicals

Spring is a good time to sort out the farm Haz Shed and with the new options available now for the collection of farm waste, you could also be thinking about how/where you store materials awaiting collection.

The Haz Shed

Is your storage shed lockable and secure, large enough to allow for segregation of incompatible chemicals, and your shed clearly marked with NO Smoking and HAZCHEM 2WE agrichemical sign?

When placing the chemicals within the store, to reduce risks and spills place

- Large liquid containers on the floor
- Powders, granules and other dry formulations above liquids
- Vaccines and other heat sensitive products in the fridge

Always keep

- Insecticides and fungicides away from herbicides
- Drenches away from dips
- Fumigants away from other chemicals

Always store the following in a separate building from agrichemicals

- Fertilisers
- Fuels and lubricants
- Any animal or human foodstuffs
- Explosives

HSNO Emergency Management Regulations require that an accurate record must be kept and that this information must be available within 10 minutes.

What to do with those empty Agrichemical containers

Triple rinse or power wash all containers, disposing of the rinsings in the tank so all the chemical is used for the intended purpose. Then puncture the container three times - on each side and the bottom of the container works best as this provides every opportunity for any residual water to drain.

After this the preferred option is to recycle the containers rather than bury or burn. Check with your District Council about this or join a scheme which makes regular farm collections.



Photo: WCRC Collection

What to do with Balage Wrap

Collection services for used balage wrap are now available for West Coast farmers so it is no longer necessary, or preferable, to bury or burn balage wrap. Once the silage is used, keep the wrap as clean as possible, store as per the method used by your choice of collection service and then call them when you need a pickup. Your used wrap will then be recycled.

You may also be able to use the same collection service to recycle other farm plastic waste such as silage pit covers, small feed and fertiliser bags and plastic packaging.

For more information try these links

- www.agrecovery.co.nz
- www.plasback.co.nz

Photo is from Agpac Ltd's first balage wrap collection West Coast in 2009. Agpac are now part of the Plasback Group, who were accredited under the Waste Minimisation Act 2008 in May 2010.



If you do opt to bury or burn used farm plastics then there are a number of steps to be taken to minimise environmental impacts.

Before burying plastics, triple rinse all agrichemical containers (to prevent chemicals leaching into groundwater) and make sure other material is as clean as possible. Choose sites well away from any waterways to help keep groundwater clean.

Note that burying plastics has been calculated as expensive in terms of time and operational cost and that unless the plastic is tightly packed and buried deep, it has a tendency to work its way to the surface within a year or two. This creates problems of unsightly plastic blowing loose around the farm and the possibility of stock ingesting it.

Before burning plastics, check that you are able to meet all the following requirements:

- Your farm incinerator is capable of reaching and maintaining 600 deg C +
- Any fumes or gases given off from burning do not impact on neighbours
- Plastic balage wrap will be burned separately from other plastics because of the potential toxic fumes
- All plastic balage wrap is as clean and dry as possible
- Plastic balage wrap must be fed into the incinerator progressively so the fire is not smothered
- You have ensured that all other plastic items to be burned, e.g. triple rinsed farm chemical containers, are made from non-PVC, non-halogenated material (check markings on containers).

NOTE:

Burning tyres in the open to aid combustion of farm plastics is no longer tenable. The practice is banned as per MFE regulations in place since 2004. Burning tyres in the open emits significant quantities of hazardous air pollutants, including carbon monoxide, particles, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), dioxins and volatile organic compounds.

For more information see:

<http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/rma/user-guide-draft-oct05/html/page2.html>



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