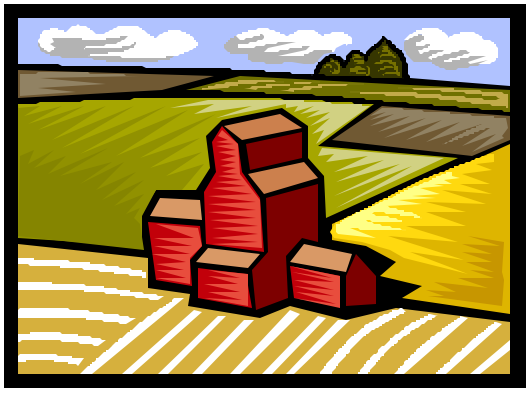
Employee Training: Part 9

Quality: Nutrient and Fertilizer Management



Excessive amounts of nutrients flowing into streams and waterways are currently one of the most common water pollution concerns. Excessive nutrient application and runoff is found in areas where plants are produced, as well as in recreational areas such as golf courses, parks, playing fields, and from neighborhoods. It is also associated with animal agriculture, particularly confined animal operations such as dairies, feedlots and stables. Management of nutrient runoff in plant production includes the management of irrigation, as the two are closely related.

Nutrient Management BMP's:

- Review the nutrient needs of your plants. Not all plant types require the same amount or types of fertilizers.
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- Familiarize yourself with the different nutritional needs of your plants at different times of the year.
- Avoid over watering your plants. Remember that nitrogen is very water soluble, and if there is water running out of the bottom of the pot, it is likely there is fertilizer running out of the pot also.
- Try to adjust the type of fertilizer you use. It may be possible that you can use a material that is considered to be "time released", such as Osmocote, instead of one that is immediately available, such as calcium nitrate.
- If you are applying fertilizer with your irrigation water, you may be able to apply the fertilizer at a different time in the irrigation cycle or adjust your irrigation cycles to allow for maximum uptake of the nutrients.
- Work with your Crop Consultant, Pest Control Advisor or Farm Advisor to determine the best nutrient management scheme for your growing operation.
- Learn how to use a small, hand-held nutrient analyzer to check the amount of nutrients in any runoff water.
- Consider the amount of nutrients already in your irrigation water, and adjust your amount added.

Fertilizer Storage and Handling BMP's:

- Follow label instructions for storage, handling and disposal of fertilizer materials and containers.
- Always have your application equipment in good working order.
- Keep fertilizer materials dry and covered, preferably in an enclosed area.

Take a look around: One of the most common areas for fertilizer leakage and water contamination is near the fertilizer tanks that deliver the fertilizer solutions to your irrigation system. Check that area for leaks, improper fittings, and improper calibration and delivery.