

# proAction® Environment Module Factsheet

## proAction® Environment Module Benefits

### On the farm:

- Identify and mitigate environmental risks
- Make more efficient use of resources
- Enhance soil health and biodiversity
- Preserve land and water quality

### For the industry:

- Demonstrate the value placed on environmental health
- Provide assurance to consumers

### For society:

- Reduce environmental impact
- Maintain consumer confidence

The Environment Module requirements are mandatory on **September 1, 2021**

The 5 requirements aim to mitigate environmental risks and promote positive action:

- 1) Individual Environmental Farm Plan
- 2) Environmental Questionnaire
- 3) Reduce the risk of contamination from wastewater
- 4) Reduce the risk of contamination from manure
- 5) Make the best use of manure and other nutrients on the farm

## EN 1: Do you have a valid individual Environmental Farm Plan (EFP; Major/Minor)

An EFP will help you evaluate areas of strength and potential environmental risk associated with your operation. The EFP will provide a management plan to help address these areas of risk. Your proAction validator will be looking for a valid EFP email confirmation or certificate.

In Alberta, an EFP is valid for 10 years and is facilitated by the Agricultural Research and Extension Council of Alberta (ARECA). Your EFP can be completed on-line by visiting <https://www.albertaefp.com/>. Online training workshops are also available.

To start a new EFP:

- Register on-line and a technician will contact you to assist and review your EFP
- Complete your EFP online (this may take 3 to 5 hours)
- Receive your email confirmation and certificate (this may take 2 to 4 weeks)

To renew an EFP:

- Contact Alberta EFP for your account information and your farm's current EFP expiry status (inquiries@albertaEFP.com; 1-587-200-2552)
- Renew your EFP online (length will depend on the amount of changes to your farm)



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## EN 2: Have you completed the Environmental Questionnaire (Major/Minor)?

The questionnaire lists voluntary actions that may or may not be undertaken and is intended to help farms identify where they are and where potential adjustments could be made.

Farmers must complete the questionnaire **every 2 years** and have confirmation of completion available for validators.

The questionnaire can be completed on the National Electronic Administrative System (NEAS). Contact [proaction@albertamilk.com](mailto:proaction@albertamilk.com) for account information and setup.

## EN 3: Is your milking centre wastewater managed with proper storage or a regulatory approved treatment system (Demerits)?

Farmers must dispose of milking centre wastewater in a manner that does not contaminate soil, ground or surface water. It should not go into a ditch or stream.

Provincial regulations anticipate 30L of wash water per cow in liquid manure systems.

For information on storage and treatment options visit:

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/4851540> (download pdf and go to page 25).

## EN 4: Is your manure storage adequate to avoid contamination of surface and ground water and to avoid spreading manure on frozen, snow-covered or saturated ground (Demerits)?

Provincial regulations:

- at least 9 months of manure storage capacity is required.
- If more than 500 tonnes of manure is stored for more than 7 months over a 3 year period, a NRCB permit is required for a manure storage facility.

For more information on manure storage, visit: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/4851540> (download pdf, Chapter 3, page 19-28).

## EN 5: Do you manage nutrients on your farm to make optimal use of manure and/or fertilizer on land (Demerits)?

Farmers who produce greater than 500 tonnes of manure annually, must have either a valid provincially approved nutrient management plan **OR** meet soil electrical conductivity and nitrate-nitrogen limits and test soil at least every 3 years for all lands receiving manure and use the results to make optimal use of manure or fertilizer applied on that land.

For more information on Nutrient Management Plannings in Alberta, visit:

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/7086752> (download pdf guide for provincial regulations see Chapter 4.4 Manure Application, page 169-175).

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## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

### EN 1: Do you have a valid provincial (individual) Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) to identify and address environmental risks on your farm?

1. **How do I complete an EFP?**
  - a) Contact AlbertaEFP at 1-587-200-2552 or visit [www.albertaefp.com](http://www.albertaefp.com).
2. **How do I provide proof to the validator that my EFP is completed and valid?**
  - a) Upon completion/renewal of your EFP, you will receive a certificate of completion from Alberta EFP, likely via email.
3. **How long is my EFP valid for?**
  - a) Your EFP is valid for 10 years.

### EN 2: Have you completed the questionnaire on soil health, greenhouse gases, biodiversity, silage seepage and plastic waste?

1. **How do I complete the questionnaire?**
  - a) The questionnaire must be completed through the National Electronic Administrative System (NEAS). For account access, contact [proaction@albertamilk.com](mailto:proaction@albertamilk.com).
  - b) If you do not have access to NEAS, you will need to complete the questionnaire on paper and send it to [proaction@albertamilk.com](mailto:proaction@albertamilk.com). There may be a fee.
2. **How do I provide proof to the validator that my questionnaire is completed?**
  - a) Once the questionnaire is submitted in NEAS, a record of completion will be generated.
    - i. It can be printed or saved on your computer.
    - ii. You can also show the validator your NEAS account which will indicate the questionnaire has been completed.
  - b) If you submitted a paper copy to Alberta Milk to enter on your behalf, Alberta Milk will provide you with the record of completion.
3. **Why does the questionnaire need to be completed on NEAS?**
  - a) Dairy Farmers of Canada will be using the anonymous national aggregate data to help describe on-farm practices undertaken across Canada to advance environmental stewardship.
4. **How often do I need to complete the questionnaire?**
  - a) The questionnaire needs to be completed in conjunction with your regularly scheduled full proAction validation, every 2 years.

### EN 3: Is your milking centre wastewater managed with proper storage or a regulatory approved treatment system?

1. **What is an acceptable treatment system in Alberta?**
  - a. Most dairy operations in Alberta are releasing milking centre wastewater into manure storage or into a properly constructed septic system – these are both acceptable.
2. **What is an unacceptable treatment system in Alberta?**
  - a. Any system that directs discharge of milking centre wastewater off property into a water body or county ditch.

### EN 4: Is your manure storage adequate to avoid contamination of surface and ground water and to avoid spreading manure on frozen, snow-covered or saturated ground?

1. **In Alberta, what is adequate manure storage to protect surface and ground water?**
  - a) Surface water must be diverted around a manure storage.
  - b) A manure storage must have either a naturally-occurring protective layer or a constructed liner that satisfies the hydraulic conductivity and thickness requirements to protect ground water.
    - i. These requirements are found in the Standards and Administration Regulation under the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act (AOPA)*.
  - c) An operation that has a permit issued by the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) for the facilities and animal numbers at the operation will have been found to have an adequate manure storage to protect surface and ground water.
2. **What is the minimum manure storage capacity to avoid spreading manure on frozen, snow-covered or saturated ground?**
  - a) In Alberta, the minimum storage capacity for new or expanding manure storages is 9 months.
    - i. A producer can apply to the NRCB for an exemption to this requirement (i.e., Manure Handling Plan) if they can demonstrate that manure will not create a risk to surface and ground water or require spreading on frozen, snow-covered ground.
    - ii. An operation that has a permit issued by NRCB for the facilities and animal numbers at the operation will have been found to have adequate manure storage to avoid spreading on frozen or snow-covered land or have an approved Manure Handling Plan.
3. **What is considered frozen, snow-covered ground?**
  - a) In Alberta land is considered frozen if more than one third of the top 15 cm contains frozen water and land is considered snow-covered if more than 50% of the field is covered by an average snow depth of more than 5 cm. Technical Guideline “Definitions for Frozen and Snow-covered Land” can be found at <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/096-70>.

4. **If I need to spread liquid manure on snow-covered, frozen ground, what do I need to do?**
  - a) A “Grandfathered” operation that does not have a minimum 9 months of storage may spread on frozen, snow-covered ground without permission from the NRCB if this practice was used on the operation prior to 2002 and **does not contaminate ground or surface water.**
  - b) All other operations (one that has 9 months of storage or more) must contact their local NRCB field office to request written permission.
    - i. Field Office Service Areas can be found at <https://www.nrcb.ca/about/field-office-service-areas>.
    - ii. Retain the written permission form for proAction validation purposes.
5. **What does it mean for a farm to be “Grandfathered”?**
  - a) If your dairy operation existed prior to 2002 and you have not made any modifications (including increased herd size and/or manure storage) to your operation since 2002, your operation is considered to be “Grandfathered”.
6. **How do I provide proof to the validator that my farm is “Grandfathered”?**
  - a) If you believe that you are a “Grandfathered” operation, you will need to contact the NRCB to request a stand-alone determination decision.
    - i. This request should be sent to Kevin Seward at [Kevin.Seward@nrcb.ca](mailto:Kevin.Seward@nrcb.ca).
  - b) The validator will request to see the decision letter from NRCB that indicates your farm’s grandfathered status. This letter will specify: farm footprint, number of head, type of animals and a list of facilities.
7. **How long does it take to get NRCB grandfathering documentation?**
  - a) It may take up to 3-4 months for NRCB to provide you with the requested documentation.
8. **What if I have increased my herd size and/or manure storage since 2002 and have not notified the NRCB?**
  - a. Any expansion or manure storage modification could require a permit from the NRCB. You will need to contact the NRCB (<https://www.nrcb.ca/about/field-office-service-areas>) to see if a permit is required.

## EN 5: Do you manage nutrients on your farm to make optimal use of manure and/or fertilizer on land?

1. **What is optimal use of manure and fertilizer on land?**
  - a) This is the deliberate management of manure and fertilizer resources to ensure that the applied nutrients are being used as efficiently as possible.
    - i. Nutrient losses during and after manure application are minimized.
    - ii. Nutrients are applied at rates that do not result in their accumulation in the soil.
    - iii. Nutrients are applied in such a manner that minimizes their risk of loss and ensures they are available for crop use.

**2. What are the regulatory nutrient management requirements in Alberta for manure application?**

*Manure Spreading Regulations:* <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/7329239>

*Manure Management Record Keeping Regulations:* <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/6066220>

- a) Soil tests for fields receiving manure that are less than 3 years old.
- b) A one-time analysis for soil texture for each field receiving manure.
- c) Manure application must not result in soil exceeding soil electrical conductivity and nitrate-nitrogen limits.
  - i. These limits are found in the Standards and Administration Regulation under AOPA.
- d) The NRCB can approve Nutrient Management Plans (NMPs) that allow the limits above to be exceeded.
- e) Setbacks from common bodies of water, water wells and residences must be followed.
- f) Records must be kept for the production, transfer and application of manure.

**3. How often do I need to soil test for proAction purposes?**

- a) At a minimum every 3 years (This will be applicable for most producers in Alberta). The regulations require a soil test used for manure management cannot be more than 3 years old. This allows producers time to soil sample based on the manure spreading frequency. Producers using a field for manure application every year up to every third year will have to soil test at least every 3 years. Fields used less frequently will have to a soil test completed no more than 3 years before the application.
- b) The exception to soil testing is that you must have a provincially (NRCB) approved Nutrient Management Plan (NMP).

**4. What land do I need soil tests for?**

- a) Soil tests are only required for the fields that will have manure applied to them.