



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of Resource Conservation

Nutrient Management Program

Regulatory Update: Nutrient Management Plan Duration Extended to 5 years for Certain Operations

What's Changed?

The Maryland Department of Agriculture has extended the duration of certain nutrient management plans from 3 years to 5 years for qualifying agricultural operations. This change revises the current 3-year plan duration specified in **COMAR 15.20.07** and only applies to:

- **No-Land Operations**
- **Pasture-Only Operations that do not apply nutrients**
- **Organic Poultry Operations**

Who Qualifies?

No-Land Operations

A no-land operation is an agricultural operation that has no land available to spread nutrients to produce agricultural crops. These operations may include no-land CAFOs, AFOs, and other livestock operations that meet the minimum legal thresholds for requiring a Nutrient Management Plan. Nutrient management plans for eligible no-land operations are now valid for 5 years, aligning with the Maryland Department of the Environment's 5-year CAFO permit cycle.

Pasture-Only Operations

Pasture-only operations may qualify for a **5 year** nutrient management plan if:

- The operation consists entirely of pasture.
- No nutrients are applied manually or mechanically.
- Soil test results are less than one year old at the time the plan is written.

Organic Poultry Operations

Organic poultry operations may qualify for a 5-year nutrient management plan if:

- Birds are provided grazing opportunities on outdoor pasture in accordance with organic production requirements.
- No nutrients are applied manually or mechanically to any field on the operation.

For qualifying pasture-only and organic poultry operation, soil tests are now valid for the full 5-year plan period, provided the soil tests were conducted within one year of plan development.

Important Exceptions

Agricultural operations *do not qualify for a 5-year plan if any field on the operation receives nutrients through manual or mechanical application, including but not limited to: commercial fertilizer, manure, biosolids or other nutrient sources.*

Note: Nutrients deposited by grazing animals while on pasture do not count as a nutrient application and do not affect eligibility.

Questions?

Contact Dwight Dotterer, 410-841-5877, at the MDA Nutrient Management Program for additional information regarding eligibility and plan requirements.