

The Slurry Lagoon

Spreading slurry on Pierrepont Farm's fields isn't permitted from 1st September to 15th January — usually the wettest time of the year. This period includes some of the months when cattle are kept indoors.

The no-spread period is to help prevent eutrophication, the process whereby the presence of nutrients such as nitrates and fertilisers such as animal waste (slurry) in run-off from farmland can enter a water system — in Pierrepont's case the River Wey — and cause blooms of algæ that lead to hypoxia, a lack of oxygen that kills fish and other wildlife.

That said, slurry is a valuable source of nitrogen, phosphates and potash (potassium) and its use helps reduce the bill for fertiliser.

The slurry lagoon thus has to hold 4½ months'-worth of waste from around 140 cows. It is the same length (50 metres/164 feet) and the same depth (2.8 metres/9.2 feet) as an Olympic swimming pool but 9 metres/29.5 feet narrower (only 16 metres/52.5 feet, instead of 25 metres/82 feet). Nevertheless, it holds an impressive 2,240,000 litres (497,778 gallons) of poo.

The photograph shows the excavation in progress, looking towards what is now the ramp leading down into the lagoon. It also shows that the ground at Pierrepont is very sandy and not the most fertile of soils.



Photo © 2010 Joan Foster

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Pierrepont Farm

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