

Report on Updates to the Spreadmark Code of Practice For Groundspread NZ Members

Date: March 2025

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1. Introduction

The Spreadmark Code of Practice has undergone a comprehensive three-year review to ensure it better reflects good practice and the high standards that most Groundspread NZ members are already meeting.

Groundspread NZ has played an integral role in this process, with members contributing valuable input at every step. This revised document is the result of extensive industry collaboration, ensuring that it is both practical for operators and aligned with environmental and regulatory expectations.

We extend our sincere thanks to all Groundspread NZ members who participated in the consultation and provided feedback. Your contributions have been essential in shaping a stronger, more effective Code of Practice that supports both industry professionalism and environmental stewardship.

This report provides a comparative analysis between the new COP and the previous versions, highlighting the modifications that Groundspread NZ members need to be aware of.

2. Key Changes and Updates

2.1 Certification and Testing Requirements

- **More Frequent Testing for Spreading Units:**
 - Previously, spreaders required certification testing every two years.
 - New COP: Now mandates an annual verification check by a competent person, with formal Spreadmark certification tests every two years.
 - Implication: Operators must ensure annual self-checks are recorded, or certification may lapse.
- **Updated Testing Specifications for Spread Patterns:**
 - The Coefficient of Variation (CV%) limits remain at:
 - $\leq 15\%$ for nitrogenous nutrients
 - $\leq 25\%$ for all other products
 - However, new measurement techniques and collector layouts have been introduced to improve testing accuracy.

- Implication: Spreader operators should familiarise themselves with new spread pattern testing methods.
 - **New Requirement for Digital Tracking (GPS Systems):**
 - Mandatory GPS tracking for all certified spreading units.
 - The tracking system must ensure nutrient placement is verified and no spreading occurs in environmentally sensitive areas.
 - Implication: Companies must upgrade their equipment if they do not yet have GPS-enabled tracking.
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2.2 Wind Speed and Direction Recording

- **New Mandatory Recording of Wind Conditions:**
 - Operators must record wind speed and direction during spreading operations.
 - The updated COP specifies that wind speed should not exceed 15 km/h, with a maximum deviation of ± 15 degrees from the direction of travel.
 - Implication: Operators must ensure wind conditions are monitored and recorded, using an anemometer or visual indicators (e.g. smoke, trees, water movement).
 - **Revised Wind Risk Management Guidelines:**
 - A risk management table has been introduced to classify high and low wind hazard conditions, guiding operators on safe spreading conditions.
 - Implication: Operators must assess wind conditions before application and take necessary measures to prevent drift and off-target application.
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2.3 New Responsibilities for Product Owners and Fertiliser Suppliers

The new COP introduces explicit responsibilities for both fertiliser suppliers and product owners to ensure improved transparency and application efficiency.

- **Fertiliser Suppliers Must Now:**
 - Provide accurate product specifications, including Size Guide Number (SGN), Uniformity Index (UI), and Bulk Density (BD) for each fertiliser blend.
 - Ensure that nutrient compatibility and potential storage hazards are clearly communicated to product owners.
 - Supply Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for all fertilisers upon request.

- **Product Owners (Farmers/Growers) Must Now:**

- Confirm application rates, spreading boundaries, and buffer zones before spreading.
 - Provide clear instructions on exclusion areas (e.g. waterways, organic land, sensitive sites).
 - Maintain records of fertiliser application and spreading conditions, ensuring compliance with regional environmental rules.
 - Implication: These changes promote greater accountability across the supply chain, ensuring better coordination between suppliers, operators, and landowners.
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2.4 Operator Training and Certification

- **Increased Training Requirements for Operators:**

- The new COP requires that at least 75% of operators in a Spreadmark-certified company hold a Spreadmark training certificate (up from previous lower thresholds).
 - Training should now include environmental risk management and GPS mapping skills.
 - Implication: Companies must ensure operators complete the latest training programmes.
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2.5 Environmental and Compliance Updates

- **New Rules on Buffer Zones & Sensitive Areas:**

- The updated COP introduces stricter buffer zones for spreading near:
 - Water bodies
 - Public places
 - Organic farms
 - Protected flora/fauna areas
- Implication: Operators must identify sensitive areas before spreading and ensure compliance with new regional environmental rules.

- **Washdown and Spillage Management:**

- New mandatory washdown protocols to prevent fertiliser runoff into waterways.
- Spreader cleaning and maintenance records must now be kept and reviewed during audits.

- Implication: Companies must have documented washdown procedures to remain compliant.
 - **Revised Environmental Care Policy Requirements:**
 - The new COP requires companies to have a written environmental policy, subject to audit.
 - Implication: Non-compliant companies risk losing their Spreadmark certification.
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2.6 Administrative and Compliance Changes

- **Stronger Auditing and Compliance Measures:**
 - Spreadmark auditors now have discretion to increase audit frequency for:
 - Companies not meeting environmental standards
 - Repeat offenders with compliance issues.
 - Implication: Companies need to maintain compliance year-round to avoid unscheduled audits.
 - **Stricter Certification Transfer Rules:**
 - Spreader certification is now non-transferable when a machine is sold to a non-Spreadmark registered company.
 - Implication: Companies purchasing second-hand equipment need to re-certify the spreaders before operation.
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3. Summary of Implications for Groundspread NZ Members

Change	Previous Requirement (2021 COP)	New Requirement (2025 COP)	Impact on Members
Spreader Testing Frequency	Every two years	Annual self-checks, full test every two years	Increased testing workload
GPS Tracking	Recommended	Mandatory for all spreaders	Need for digital tracking upgrades
Operator Training	Some operators trained	75% of operators must be certified	Training compliance essential
Environmental Policy	Not audited	Must be documented and audited	Risk of non-compliance
Buffer Zones	General guidance	Strict exclusion zones for sensitive areas	Spreading boundaries must be updated
Washdown Procedures	Not mandatory	Mandatory with documentation	Need for washdown record-keeping
Spreader Certification Transfer	Allowed when selling equipment	Only transferable within Spreadmark-certified companies	Extra certification cost for new purchases
Wind Speed & Direction Recording	Not required	Mandatory wind recording during application	New monitoring equipment required

4. Action Steps for Members

To ensure compliance with the new COP, Groundspread NZ members should:

1. Schedule annual self-checks for all spreading units.
2. Upgrade spreaders with GPS tracking if not already installed.
3. Ensure at least 75% of operators complete updated Spreadmark training.
4. Review environmental policies and washdown procedures to meet new audit requirements.
5. Map sensitive areas on properties to avoid compliance issues.
6. Verify certification status when purchasing second-hand spreaders.

7. Implement wind speed and direction monitoring for all spreading operations.
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5. Conclusion

The new Spreadmark Code of Practice introduces stricter environmental standards, increased training requirements, mandatory wind recording, and advanced tracking systems to improve the accuracy and sustainability of fertiliser application in New Zealand.

Groundspread NZ members must take proactive steps to update their operations to meet the new compliance standards before their next Spreadmark audit.

For further details, refer to the full Spreadmark Code of Practice (2025) at www.fertqual.co.nz. If this is not available by the time that you are reading this update, please email me if you would like to receive a copy at eo@groundspreadnz.com

This report serves as a guideline for Groundspread NZ members to align their operations with the latest Spreadmark COP standards and maintain certification compliance. Let me know if you need further clarifications or specific implementation guidance.