

# Agricultural Runoff in Stormwater

## What constitutes agricultural runoff and how does it reach stormwater?

Agricultural runoff is made up of fertilizers, animal manure, and anything else applied to crops and livestock. When fertilizers are not fully used by plants and animal waste is not fully incorporated into soil, the excess of these products can be washed by rain anywhere downstream, sometimes into stormwater drains. The runoff can then make its way to local water sources.



## Why is agricultural runoff potentially dangerous?

Agricultural runoff with fertilizer contains nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous, which can disrupt aquatic ecosystems. Excess build up of nutrients in water sources can lead to eutrophication, which can then cause hypoxia or “dead zones” which can kill off fish. The nutrient build up can also cause algal blooms, which lower oxygen levels in water bodies and can be toxic to humans and fish. Agricultural runoff that contains manure can carry viruses and bacteria that affect both aquatic and human health. While agricultural runoff is

something that is managed on a policy scale, the same preventative measures can still be applied even on a smaller scale. In order to prevent excess nutrient build up and bacterial contamination of our water sources, try to apply fertilizers on a week that it is not expected to rain and be sure to pick up your pet’s poop!



## Citations

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