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# Guidelines for Growing Strawberries in Fytocell Flakes.

- Lay the bags down on a flat and even surface with the Fytocell logo upright, so you can read it. The breather holes in the bags should therefore be on the top.
- It is recommended that at least 3 or preferably 4 drippers are used per 1 metre Fytocell flake bag (22 litres). The drippers should be placed evenly across the bag. (Recommendation of:- 3x 2 litre drippers, **or** 4x1.5 litre drippers per bag).
- Due to the slight differences in the wetting up procedure, compared to peat or coir, it is advisable to have the Fytocell bags on a separate irrigation valve if possible.
- **Do not** slit the bottoms of the bags at this stage.
- Saturate the flake bags with the strawberry starter solution at an EC of 1.4 mS and pH of 5.8 and keep them saturated for at least a 48-hour period. (e.g. if the flake bag is 22 litres, then at least 13 litres of water must be given evenly and allowed to saturate the flakes over a 48 hour period). The amount of solution required to saturate the bag equates to around 60% of the volume of the bag).
- As Fytocell behaves as an inert material, it needs to be given a complete feed solution at the time of wetting up so that there are nutrients within the substrate to aid development of the young plants. For small trial plots, where nutrient solution will need also to be applied to plants in peat or coir based substrates as well, this will not generally be a problem.
- The nutrient requirements of Fytocell are thought to be midway between that of coir and peat, so recipes designed for either substrate should be OK.
- Once the bags have been saturated for at least 48 hours, make small slits in the bottom to allow free drainage of excess solution. (One small slit in each of the bottom corners, should be adequate).
- Add, a further 6-10 litres of starter solution through the drippers to thoroughly flush the bags, and allow to drain freely.
- Check the pH and EC of the drain water coming out of the bags falls within the recommended levels before planting. The pH should be between 5.5 – 6.5, and the conductivity (E.C) between 1.2 – 1.5 mS.
- Place the strawberry plants in the planting holes and ensure that the Fytocell flakes are firmed around the roots allowing a good substrate / root contact.
- Start with overhead misting as for other substrates, and during the life of the crop, give frequent drip irrigations relating to the transpiration of the plants, with at least an average of 20-30% drain.

**Note: Peat based substrates can become too wet if over watered resulting in poor root growth or even root death. When Fytocell is fully saturated it will hold around 60% of its volume with water, but there will always be around 40% air, providing an ideal medium for healthy and vigorous root growth. Therefore if the drainage of the bags is not impeded, it is not possible to over water Fytocell.**