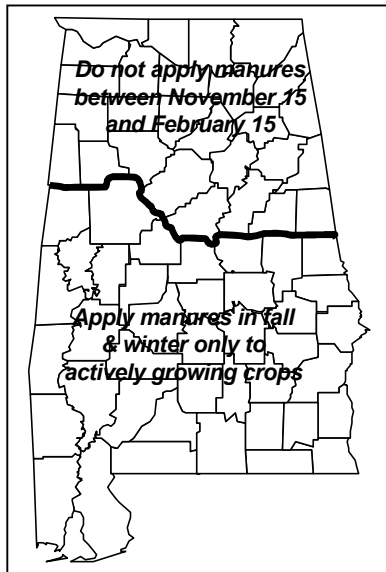


“the scoop on litter”

I CAN'T SPREAD LITTER?



No one likes surprises. That's why this map, created to clarify EXISTING land application standards, drew so much negative reaction from Certified Animal Waste Vendors (CAWVs) and poultry producers

during the fall 2000 training meetings held in North Alabama.

This prompted a December 14 meeting at the Montgomery ADEM office. Present to review the challenges presented by this clarification were representatives of ADEM, NRCS, Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, Alabama Soil and Water Conservation Committee, Alabama Poultry and Egg Association, U.S. Poultry & Egg Association, Alabama Cooperative Extension System/Auburn University, Alabama CAWVs, and individual poultry producers.

Of particular concern is the effect that following this clarification, which is designed to ensure protection of water quality, could have on Alabama's 500 poultry breeder and pullet operations. About 1/3 of these operations must clean out during this November-15-to-February-15 (late fall/ mid winter) period. Many are in North Alabama. Breeder litter and manure can be wet and difficult to store and transport. Because of this much-discussed restriction on

land application in North Alabama (**that historical and current scientific research shows is necessary to protect water quality**) some CAWVs have refused to clean out breeder houses.

Ken Rogers (NRCS state office) noted that the wording and map will become part of the new NRCS Nutrient Management Standard Code 590 which will go into effect sometime in early 2001. **The new wording/map is currently NOT in effect.** However, Charles Mitchell (Alabama Cooperative Extension System) noted that Auburn University has never recommended nutrient application during that time of the year when crops are not actively growing enough (producing significant dry-matter) to utilize all the nutrients applied. Applying animal waste **OR** commercial fertilizer in **late fall/mid winter** significantly increases the risk of polluting streams and groundwater.

It has always been an NRCS Best Management Practice to apply nutrients only to actively growing crops. If a producer purchased fertilizer nitrogen to be applied **late fall/mid winter**, he would probably lose most of his investment to leaching or runoff from winter rains, unnecessarily impacting stream quality.

So, what options does a poultry breeder producer have in December 2000, through February 2001? Since the new wording and map have not gone into effect yet, a poultry breeder operation can follow **existing NRCS Nutrient Management standards**, which state:

Nitrogen should not be applied more than 30 days prior to planting of the crop. For maximum efficiency, nitrogen should be applied as close to the time of crop demand as practical. Livestock and poultry manure will not be applied in the fall or winter unless applied on an actively growing crop.

Richard Hulcher stated that "ADEM will take a **compliance assistance** approach through this

Winter with producers who are actively working with their local Extension and Conservation District offices to prepare and implement an acceptable Nutrient Management Plan and are **taking positive steps** such as **increasing buffers** from streams during application or **using additional acreage** to spread litter at a **reduced rate to lessen potential impacts.**" In other words, ADEM will work with producers who need to make adjustments this winter. However, he noted that the problem won't go away; it is an environmental issue and it is necessary to protect water quality. This issue will be back next year, and while continuing to take a flexible approach where possible, ADEM will gradually shift focus to **compliance assurance** efforts, as necessary, by winter 2001-2002.

THIS WINTER ONLY, producers in North Alabama who must land apply litter may do so as long as the crop is green and growing. However, Ken Rogers pointed out that AAES research in North Alabama showed that fescue and ryegrass will typically produce only about 1/4 ton of dry matter during December, January, and February (late fall/mid winter). This means that the crop normally would only take up about 12 pounds of nitrogen (N) or about **the amount that is available in 1/2 ton of fresh breeder litter.** Applying more than this would be wasteful and potential non-point source pollution. **Also, in many areas, high soil P, not N, may limit the amount of litter that can be applied under the new NRCS standard in 2001.**

ALL POULTRY PRODUCERS MUST HAVE A NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN NOW! This alone will help breeder operators to plan STORAGE NEEDS for winter months. However, only the CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations), must file a formal Qualified Credentialed Professional (QCP) certified plan with ADEM through the local Soil and Water Conservation District Office. All other animal feeding operations (AFOs) can either have a nutrient management plan done by their local NRCS district conservationist or do it themselves with Extension assistance and DOCUMENT following the BMPs. Following a written nutrient management plan is a BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICE.

County Extension agricultural agents have information that may help small AFOs do their own nutrient management plan that will meet NRCS nutrient management standards.

In the meantime, if your customers are unable to move cleanout away from Nov. 15 - Feb. 15:

- 1) **Consider permanent or temporary storage for all manure/litter cleaned out during Nov. 15 through Feb. 15.**
- 2) **Transport litter to South Alabama where land application of litter is less restricted.**
- 3) **Apply BREEDER manure/litter in late fall to mid-winter 2000-2001 only to actively growing crops and at no more than 1 ton/acre.**
- 4) **Respect and increase if at all possible all buffers and filter strips around fields, waterways, wells, etc.**
- 5) **Locate/lease additional spreadable land this winter to reduce the application rate per acre.**
- 6) **As always, do not apply on frozen or saturated soil or immediately before predicted rain.**
- 7) **DON'T PLAN TO SPREAD NEXT YEAR IN NORTH ALABAMA BETWEEN NOV. 15 AND FEB 15.**

ENCOURAGE ALL YOUR LITTER CUSTOMERS TO GET A NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

Possible long-term solutions include considering **construction of permanent storage in a centralized location.** Several breeder farm operators could share this on a rotating basis. Working with your state and federal legislators to **obtain additional cost-share to support private source nutrient management planning and alternative methods of litter management (including transportation over longer distances)** to protect water quality would also help.

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For additional information or assistance, call your local county agent or soil conservationist



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