
A Quarterly Poultry News Update

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“the scoop on litter”

ADEM WEB PAGE SHOWS CAFO REGISTRATIONS

ADEM's WEB page www.adem.state.al.us/ shows the latest listing of CAFO registrations. All of these are potential customers of Certified Animal Waste Vendors. On this Home Page, click on **NEWS**, then **CAFO REGISTRATION POSTINGS**. As of March 3, 2000, 176 CAFOs have registered. Of these, 153 are broiler operations, 80 of which have been approved. Two combination swine/broiler CAFOs have registered but neither has been approved. Three poultry layer operations have registered but none approved. The next largest CAFO category is swine. There are 12 registrations with 3 approvals. Three beef cattle CAFOs have been registered. Two of these, beef cattle stockyards, have been approved. Dairy is the smallest CAFO category at this time with 2 registered and none approved.

-Ted W. Tyson,
Extension Agricultural Engineer

SPRING WINDS BRING CHANGE

Even though the ADEM AFO/CAFO rules have not been in effect for a year yet, winds of change are beginning to blow. The AFO/CAFO Work Group has already met one time in December 1999 and is expected to meet again some time this March. Two areas that will probably be addressed are odor concerns surrounding swine operations and stream setbacks for land application. Odor concerns will probably be addressed by changing the way swine animal units (AU) are figured and by increasing production facility location setback from property lines based on number of animals. Stream buffers for land application of all types of animal waste may be increased. This includes land application of broiler litter. If and when any of these changes take place we will use this newsletter to let you know.

-Ted W. Tyson,
Extension Agricultural Engineer

MOVING IT OFF THE MOUNTAIN

Some pasturelands on Sand Mountain, Brindley Mountain and Lookout Mountain are already overloaded with nutrients. Although there are plenty of poultry houses, Alabama's new AFO/CAFO rules will make it difficult to justify continued application of litter. When litter can't be used close to its source, economic concerns for operators and vendors come into play.

Moving litter off the mountains is a solution. But some vendors say they just can't afford to haul litter more than a few miles and still make any money. Agricultural economists have often used 50 to 100 miles as the farthest point one could afford to haul litter as a fertilizer. Roy Kendrick with the State Soil and Water Conservation District office in Montgomery said there was an innovative idea passed around about a year ago, but it didn't get very far. Why not cost-share some of the expense of moving the litter from counties of intense poultry production (e.g. north-central and northeastern Alabama) to counties with very few animal feeding operations (e.g. the central Alabama Black Belt)?

There are places where litter is being moved. Cotton farmers are using litter as fertilizer in Marengo, Macon, and Limestone counties. Cattlemen are feeding litter to stockers in Choctaw, Sumter, and Chilton counties. We just have to figure out a way to make it more profitable to "move it off the mountain." Right now a lack of funds and anticipated administrative problems are holding up the cost-share proposal.

It should be kept in mind that by moving the litter off the mountain both the poultry producer and the environment could be better off. By selling litter to a CAWV, the producer can then buy just the nutrients needed for his pastures and cropland thereby protecting surface and ground water in the area. Poultry producers who have little or no land would be able to abide by AFO/CAFO regulation and continue production.

-Charles Mitchell,
Extension Agronomist-Soils

MOVING LITTER – THE BIG CHALLENGE

The Situation: Nutrients (primarily N and P) are being concentrated in poultry producing counties as Alabama's broiler industry expands. Poultry producing counties tend to be in areas with small farms and less intensively cropped farmland. Soils tend to be shallow and environmentally sensitive.

The Problem: Excess nutrients combined with increasing human populations are leading to both surface and groundwater contamination problems especially in poultry producing regions

The Solution: Move the nutrients to areas where they can be more efficiently utilized by cropland.

Since we aren't going to move the poultry houses and processing plants in the near future, the most practical solution is to move the litter. Many have proposed solutions. Some may work; others may not. Here are some that have been discussed.

- **Send the nutrients back where they came from.** This means loading the litter on barges and trains and sending it back to farms in the Midwest where the grain is grown. After all, this is where the nutrients came from to begin with.
- **Use it in Alabama.** We have lots of farmland in Alabama that needs the nutrients – especially phosphorus. For a while anyway, we need to be shipping it to the Black Belt area where most soils are low in phosphorus. Only problem is, will Black Belt farmers pay the shipping and handling? Probably not. They grow cotton, corn, and forages, too. For this to work, either the poultry industry or the public will have to pay the transportation costs. For Appalachian Plateau poultry producers, Tennessee Valley cotton farmers are a nearby, easily accessible, and convenient market for excess litter. Traditionally these growers haven't used much litter.
- **Use Alabama's Waterways.** Let's use the Tennessee-Tombigbee waterway for something other than fishing and recreation. Docks at Demopolis and Mobile could spread a lot of litter throughout Southwest Alabama.
- **Treasure Forests.** Alabama's pine plantations are being fertilized with ammonium phosphate fertilizers. Can you imagine what a good shot of 3-3-2 poultry litter would do? And, South Alabama is covered in forests.
- **Value-added products.** Processing poultry litter into pellets usually adds costs and not much more value to the final product if it is used as a farm fertilizer. But opportunities abound for specialty, high-value fertilizers, processed animal feeds, etc. Marketing is the name of the game here!

Please add to this list by contacting the editor with your ideas.

-Charles Mitchell,
Extension Agronomist-Soils

HOW IS A CHICKEN LIKE A CAR?

Actually, the question is how is the poultry industry like the automotive industry? The answer is their development has followed a similar course, only forty years apart. During the early 1900's the automobile industry was built on cheap fuel and the idea of getting people where they wanted to go, with little regard for the consequences of pollution caused by the internal combustion engine. However, when people began to get seriously concerned about the

clouds of smog hanging over major cities and the "tunnels" of smog that covered major highways during the rush hour, car manufacturers responded by building cleaner, more efficient vehicles. This environmental awareness, along with technological advances and the American driver's willingness to pay higher prices, continue to prompt the car industry to make clean, smooth running, efficient vehicles.

The poultry industry has been following closely the same path. Cheap labor, plentiful land, and a waste by-product that seemingly disappears when spread on fields has led to the production of a bountiful, cheap food supply. Unfortunately, also like the automobile industry, we are now learning that the waste by-products from the poultry industry have not been totally disappearing. Nitrate accumulations in groundwater and eutrophication of surface waters from excess phosphorus have become just as undesirable to American society as the smog banks of years ago. Unlike smog control devices that are installed at the car factory however, solutions to the poultry industry's problems must be applied at each individual producer location--not a simple, cheap, or easy task.

The first step toward a long-term solution for the poultry industry is to implement a much higher level of conservation planning than in the past. Soon many land application sites will adopt phosphorus-based application rates and those fields that remain on nitrogen-based rates will require more intensive planning. To aid in this effort the Natural Resources Conservation Service is revising two Conservation Practice Standards – Nutrient Management, Code 590 and Waste Utilization, Code 633. Local NRCS personnel will receive training on the new policy and producers will be given sufficient time to implement the new planning requirements.

The changes will immediately require more detailed planning for animal waste management, which will include soil testing on each field and manure testing on each operation as routine activities. New guidelines coupled with a high level of conservation planning will help insure that the poultry industry continues providing a cheap, clean, and bountiful food supply and at the same time maintaining a clean agricultural environment.

-Bill Prince,
NRCS State Environmental Engineer

“Scoop” WINS NATIONAL RECOGNITION

This newsletter, “the scoop on litter,” has been awarded a certificate of excellence by the American Society of Agronomy in the newsletter division of the Educational Materials Awards Program. Charles Mitchell accepted the certificate on behalf of the team of waste specialists who write and compile the quarterly publication. The award was presented at the annual ASA meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, in November of 1999.



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

-Ted W. Tyson,
Extension Agricultural Engineer
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