

An Update for Alabama CAWVs

and others involved in animal waste management

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“the scoop on litter”

Poultry Litter Unavailable

NRCS's Poultry Litter Distribution EQIP Program has been so successful that program participants can no longer find the litter they need. Bill Prince, Environmental Engineer with the state office of USDA-NRCS, says that at present no funds will be allocated to the litter distribution program in 2008 because so many producers simply cannot get the litter they need. However, existing contracts will continue to be funded until their expiration. Over the years, estimates of poultry litter produced in Alabama have ranged from 1.2 to over 1.8 million tons annually, almost 3 times the tons of fertilizer distributed in Alabama. Yet vendors tell producers they cannot find the litter the market demands. Where is this litter going? See the following article for one expert's ideas.

~Bill Prince, USDA-NRCS

Why Litter is Hard to Get

Dr. Bert Bock, an independent consultant working with poultry waste in North Alabama has two hypotheses concerning why poultry litter may be unavailable. “In the short term, part of the reason may be that growers are cleaning out less often; however, the overall amount of manure nutrients produced per bird doesn't change with frequency of cleanout. If growers are applying litter to supply a given amount of nutrients, then there will be fewer manure nutrients cleaned each year until a new steady state

is reached. Once the steady state is reached again, the amount of nutrients cleaned out overall each year will be roughly the same as when most growers were cleaning out every one or two years. The implication is that over the slightly longer-term (probably two to three more years at most) less frequent cleanout shouldn't be a factor in itself. A more likely factor is that because of higher fertilizer prices, more litter is being substituted for commercial fertilizer, both in and outside the concentrated poultry areas. It is my guess that inaccurate estimates of the quantity of manure nutrients being produced overall is not a major part of the explanation. One thing we can be certain of is that soil P levels will continue to build up since most of the litter is being applied on a N basis. It also seems pretty clear that if the rules regarding winter application, 72-hour rainfall, applying according to nutrient plans, and covering of stored litter were strictly enforced, the litter demand situation would change dramatically. I would encourage folks not to be short sighted concerning the need for alternative uses of poultry litter. Our survey indicates that three fourths of growers are still cleaning out to the ground at least every two years and that nearly one-half are still cleaning out every year.”

~Bert Bock

Waste Management System Plans Need to Include Catastrophic Loss

A summer thunderstorm knocks out the power. The back-up generator fails. A few hours of 100+ degree heat and a broiler operator is facing a catastrophic loss of birds. With no plan to handle the burial of such a large quantity of animals, a real problem can develop quickly. Be sure your growers are aware of the need to include “catastrophic loss” in a plan so they will know what to do when such an unexpected event happens.

~Bill Prince, USDA-NRCS

It's All About Records

Having records to document how animal waste is land applied is the most important thing a CAWV can do. James McAfee, an inspector with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) has observed that

many regulatory problems can be avoided if the vendor and owner/operator would keep good records showing how the animal waste was handled and how it was land applied. McAfee notes that. The lack of records indicating transport/land application activities and/or not having a NMP plan during land application has been the most prevalent problem.

QCP Vendor Program Operating Smoothly

During the year July 1, 2006 through June 30, 2007, the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries in a joint program with the NRCS state office reimbursed 309 Alabama CAFO owner/operators to help cover the cost of paying a qualified credentialed professional (QCP) for conducting an annual inspection. A total of \$59,100 was distributed. Inspections included 280 poultry operations, 20 swine operations, 3 dairies and 6 stockyards. The Alabama Dep. of Ag. & Industries allows up to \$200 reimbursement per inspection. There are over 500 registered CAFOs in Alabama who are required to have an annual inspection.

~Ray Hilburn, ADAI

In-house Composting Takes care of Disease Problems

Reusing litter after a disease outbreak is never something that you want to do, but the cost of new shavings, its lack of availability, the cost of cleanout, and restrictions on land application of contaminated litter, make salvaging this contaminated litter an attractive alternative. Recent research on in-house, windrow composting has shown it to be a very viable alternative to cleanout. It can be done in 5 to 10 days, and the heat generated kills most disease-causing organisms including the highly infectious ILTV virus. More information on this process can be found at the following website:

<http://www.aces.edu/dept/poultryventilation/documents/Nwsltr-47WindrowComposting.pdf>

~Gene Simpson, Extension Economist

On-line CAWV certification and recertification and CAFO continuing education available on web at

<http://www.aces.edu/dept/aawm/CAWV.php>

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

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