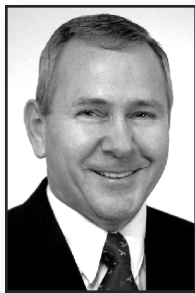


Manure Is Valuable Commodity

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Livestock manure is a valuable commodity when properly applied and credited as a plant nutrient on cropland. A well-managed manure nutrient plan will reduce the cost of purchased fertilizer in addition to helping maintain a quality environ-

ment. Field application of manure should be based on the crop nutrient needs, and fields should be prioritized to get the most efficient utilization of manure nutrients.

Livestock producers can use a nutrient management plan to improve their profits while protecting the environment; this also gives producers a stronger defense in case of a pollution complaint. Nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) are the primary nutrients of concern. Excess nitrogen in soils can leach down to the groundwater, thus raising the nitrate levels in drinking water. Surface movement of nitrogen and phosphorus in runoff increases the potential for surface water pollution. A well planned and executed manure management program will reduce the loss of nutrients by applying the correct amount of manure per acre based on crop needs. In addition, an effective plan will reduce the dollars dairy producers spend on purchased fertilizers.

Manure is a cost of production. The cost will

vary from farm to farm depending on the type of manure storage and handling system. Emphasis needs to be placed on maximizing the value of livestock manure. As energy costs continue to increase, so will the cost of commercial fertilizers. It is important to credit manure applications as a prime source of N, P and K for the growing crops. By using commercial fertilizer only as a supplement, costs of crop production can be reduced, and the increased value of these manure nutrients can be credited to the livestock enterprise.

Developing field maps showing current soil fertility levels and plans for future crops will help identify which fields should receive manure application. Producers who have a limited land base will need to seek out other landowners on which cropland is available for manure application. Manure needs to be applied on the crops which will use the nutrients most efficiently. Manure nutrients, especially nitrogen, are used more efficiently by corn and cereal grains than by legumes. Following is a priority order of fields for manure placement based on nitrogen needs: 1 – corn acres from which corn silage was harvested; 2 – corn acres from which corn was harvested for grain; 3 – small grain acres which were in corn; 4 – corn acres which were in legumes; 5 – soybean acres which were in corn; and 6 – older alfalfa stands or other legumes. Δ

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