Put animal wastes to work

NEWARK, Del. - The farmer of bygone days knew the value of animal waste. But as inexpensive commercial fertilizers came on the market, manure became less attractive as a fertilizer because of handling problems and odor.

With the rising cost of commercial fertilizers, animal waste is again being considered as a nutrient source for crops. "Farmers aren't talking about waste disposal these days. Now the team is 'animal waste utilization'," says University of Delaware Extension specialist in environmental quality, Ross Harris.

"Animal wastes are still one of the best slow release tertilizers known to man," he says. But using them effectively calls for special know-how.

"First of all, you need to know their nutrient content. Applying manure to the land without first knowing this is like buying and applying Brand-X fertilizer," says Harris. "It's likely to be no bargain at all."

Nutrient values of animal waste can vary greatly, depending on time of year, feed ration, storage methods, age of material, and method of application. To use

manures efficiently you need to know their specific nutrient content. Don't just rely on a chart that gives approximate values, have an analysis done, he advises. There are a number of laboratories which can do this for you.

Finding out the exact nutrient content of manure is just the first step. You've also got to put down the right amount. Rates of application vary greatly among spreaders. So find out how much yours applies. Too much manure may cause plants to lodge. And excess nutrients may run off into streams or leach into the groundwater.

To determine the rate of ap-

plication for your spreader, tollow this procedure:

Calculate the spreader's capacity in cubic feet;

Weigh a given volume of manure to find out its weight per cubic foot:

Multiply the spreader's capacity by the weight of a cubic foot of

Convert the total weight to tons by dividing by 2000;

Measure off a plot of land 209x209 teet. (This will give you an area roughly equal to an acre);

Drive the spreader through the plot, applying manure to the entire

Count the number of loads that go on;

Multiply the total number of loads by the tons of manure in a single load. This will tell you roughly how many tons per acre you applied.

Making these calculations will help you make better use of livestock waste in crop production. The improved efficiency should result in reduced overhead costs and increased profits for you.

"Improper use of animal manure is a waste of valuable nutrients," says Harris. "This is dollars lost." Improper use can also have an adverse effect on surface and groundwater quality.

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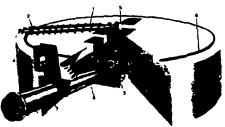
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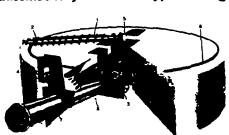
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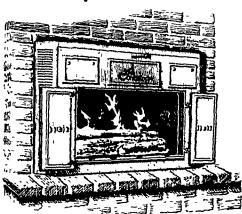


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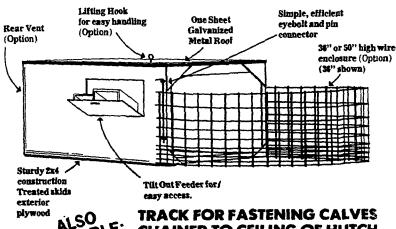
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