

Tips given on spreading poultry manure

NEWARK, Del. — A 20,000-bird broiler house produces approximately 130 tons of manure a year with a nutrient value worth about \$4,200. That's enough fertilizer for 35 acres of corn land — provided it's handled properly.

"By using poultry manure wisely farmers can substantially reduce their fertilizer bills," says University of Delaware extension environmental quality specialist Ross Harris. "This is also an efficient way to use a valuable waste product and reduce a potential pollution problem."

According to Harris, a ton of cleanout broiler manure (70 percent dry matter) contains an average of 50 pounds of nitrogen, 80 pounds of phosphorus and 45 pounds of potassium worth a total of about \$38. Crusted manure (50 percent dry matter) contains an average of 25 pounds nitrogen, 35 pounds phosphorus and 25 pounds potassium worth a total of \$18.50.

These figures reflect the nutrients available to crops the first growing season after applications. In addition, the specialist says residual nitrogen will be carried over into the next two years.

He suggests following these steps when using manure as fertilizer:

— Analyze nutrient content of the manure. (For information on how to have this done, contact a county extension agent.)

— Determine nutrient needs of the crop to be fertilized, based on realistic yield goals for specific soil type and cropping practice.

— Base manure application rate on crop needs and soil test recommendations. This will indicate how many tons to apply per acre.

— Calibrate manure spreader to the desired application rate.

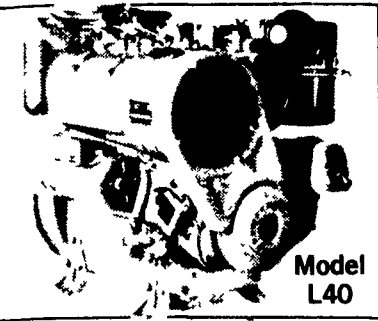
"Take care to spread the manure as uniformly as possible throughout the field," advises Harris. "And if cropping practices permit, incorporate it as soon after spreading as possible to reduce ammonia loss."

Fact sheets on manure spreader calibration are available in Delaware from county extension offices in Newark (451-2506), Dover (736-1448) and Georgetown (856-5250). For further information on the profitable use of poultry and other livestock manures for crop production, call one of these offices or Ross Harris at (302) 736-1448.

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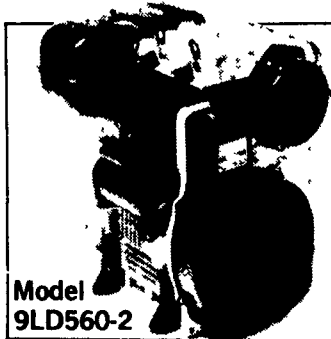
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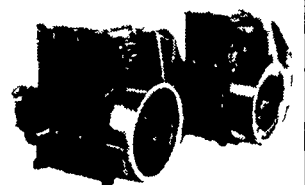
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