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Poultry Pointers

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COMPOSTING DAILY POULTRY MORTALITY

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Multi-County
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Several years ago, poultry researchers at the University of Maryland and University of Delaware began looking for a new method for disposing of daily poultry mortality on farms.

This new method had to be environmentally safe, inexpensive, fit into daily management chores of the farm, be simple to operate, produce no offensive odors, pose no health problems for poultry or people, and produce a useable product. As a result, a composting system was developed.

Composting is an old organic gardening practice to transform organic wastes into a useful end product — compost. It is a controlled natural process using beneficial microorganisms — bacteria and fungi. Since aerobic bacteria (bacteria requiring oxygen) are involved, very little odor is produced.

Heat and time are the essential processes for composting. To work properly, temperatures in excess of 130 degrees F. have to be achieved and maintained for 15 to 20 days.

Exposure of all bird tissue to these conditions requires a minimum of two 10-day cycles of composting. Thus, a two stage compos-

ter was designed. The primary stage consists of bins not exceeding 8 feet wide, 6 feet deep, and 5 feet high. The secondary stage may be one large bin not exceeding 5 feet high.

It requires 1 cubic foot of primary and secondary capacity for each pound of daily poultry mortality. To calculate daily poultry mortality weight, multiply farm capacity times market weight times percent daily mortality. Percent daily mortality is the number of dead birds per day divided by the number in the house.

The compost mixture is 1 pound dead poultry, 1.5 pounds poultry manure, and 0.1 pound straw. The three materials are layered in the bin. Once the temperature drops (usually after 7 to 10 days), the compost is turned and transferred to the secondary phase bin. It takes an average of 20 minutes per day to load and manage the composter. Most of this work is performed from the tractor seat.

When constructing a composter, make sure you place a roof over the bins, have a concrete floor, and use rot-resistant building materials. The concrete floor is essential to protect the composter from rodents and dogs while allowing year-round operation.

As with any dead animal disposal system, strict biosecurity needs to be followed. This includes not transporting dead poultry from one farm to another, not taking shortcuts in loading the composter, and daily monitoring the temperature of the bins.

Ag Dept. Calls For Alternative Projects

DOVER, Del. — The Delaware Department of Agriculture is calling for new proposals for its Alternative Crops/Marketing Research Program, a program that began as an experiment to encourage agricultural diversification in Delaware but now is heading into its third year.

The program was launched in 1988 with a \$50,000 allocation from the General Assembly. The money is used to help fund selected projects that meet program criteria. In most cases, project sponsors match state funding in kind or cash.

"The program has been successful beyond our expectations," said Secretary of Agriculture William B. Chandler Jr. "We've been able to continue the program for the past two years because of pre-

vious year success stories, and we'll continue to support the program objectives as long as funds are available."

Program successes include introduction of Honey Sips, honey snacks in a straw marketed by Lewes beekeeper Brooke Freeman; the explosive rise of aquaculture in part because of information gained in projects funded by this program that studied aquaculture technology, production, and marketing; studies on sorghum which have paid off in cash for farmers who already have converted over to the drought-resistant crop; and the beginnings of promotional programs for commodity groups that have never before attempted marketing campaigns.

Project proposals for this year are due in to the Department of Agriculture office by Nov. 2 at 4:30 p.m. Semi-finalists will be notified by Nov. 21. Complete proposals of semi-finalists are due

by Dec. 7, and final selections will be made not later than Dec. 28. Programs may begin immediately thereafter.

Agribusinesses, food and agricultural product processors, non-profit institutions, commodity associations, and individuals are all eligible to submit proposals.

Proposals will be judged on the following criteria: 1) discovers new and/or better uses for existing products; 2) identifies alternative food or fiber commodities which have positive market potential for Delaware producers, including commodities with industrial uses; 3) reduces production and or marketing costs; and 4) explores innovations in packaging.

Questions regarding the alternative crops/marketing research program should be referred to the marketing and product development section, Department of Agriculture, (302) 739-4811 or (800) 282-8685.

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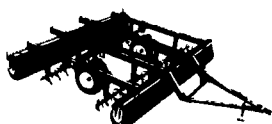
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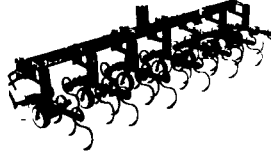
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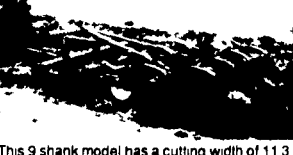
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