

Manure Storage Study Finds Farmers Risk Safety

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Thompson blamed a lot of the problems on farmers who do not install safety features, such as adequate fencing, pushoff/safety gates, shields on the gutter cleaner or PTO shafts of the pump. "Or eventually the safety feature wears out or is removed," he said.

"One of the recommendations that we made here was to provide cost-share money to update these manure storages that were possibly not first installed with safety features," said Thompson. "Maybe 10 years ago we didn't look at safety features closely enough; maybe we overlooked some things." About half of the farms surveyed did not have adequate fencing installed, according to the report. Many of the fences were either fallen down or in disrepair, according to Bowers, and many of them lacked proper signs.

Standard sign

"That's an area that we have not developed — a standard sign that says, 'Warning. Toxic Gases Present. Do Not Enter.' I guess we thought that was sort of second nature, but we found it's not," he said.

The SCS is working with the Pennsylvania Agriculture Safety Council to develop a sign similar

If farmers would install safety gates and keep them adequately maintained, many farmers who died as a result of drowning in manure storage ponds or lagoons might be alive today.

to the one that says 'Warning, Surfaces Not Solid.' Sam Steel, senior project assistant in the Penn State ag safety and health program, is working with the SCS and other agencies on creating a safer environment for farmers and to "keep kids, pets, children, and everyone else from the manure storage area," he said.

The Council is examining the need assessments for safety signs about non-solid surfaces and warnings about toxic gases, according to Steel.

"We're going to get to more

signs and the discussion of the safety issues regarding being overcome by the gases," said Bowers.

Had a problem

"It was very obvious in the beginning that farmers were happy with their structures," said Frank Goodlander, who served on the Ag Advisory Steering Committee for the manure storage study. "They

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were working well. And when we started looking at the parts on safety and management, we saw that they really had a problem there."

Farmers get caught up in wanting to get rid of the problem of manure in the quickest way and don't think about the consequences of handling it and working with it wisely, according to Goodlander.

"But our priorities, when it comes to manure, all we can think about is, 'I want to get the pens cleaned up, push it out, get it out of

the pen, and if it's in a pile, we'll take care of it as soon as we can.'" Farmers must take time to closely examine the safety features, for their own sake, according to Goodlander.

But the safety aspects of structure maintenance were only part of the overall picture. The study began, according to Bowers, from a need to look at manure storage facilities for various reasons. Perhaps the results of the study may help in the update of the DER manure manual.

Rash of problems

From the years 1988-1989, according to Bowers, there "seemed to be a rash of problems with structures. Either they were overtopping or the picket fences were falling down," he said.

The SCS decided there needed to be an organized effort to return to the sites and look at the maintenance and performance of the

existing structures. The DER Ag Advisory Committee, a consortium of farm organizations, extension personnel, conservationists, and others, endorsed the study. Funding from the SCS office and the Bureau of Soil and Water Conservation was obtained, and the surveys began.

But "we didn't want this to become just an SCS study," said Bowers. "We're concerned enough about fences — that's a very important thing that we're really putting a lot of emphasis on."

"But for some reason, 50 percent of the farmers surveyed don't have adequate fencing," he said.

Don't talk

Farmers don't like to talk about manure, even when given a chance, such as SCS did at a manure safety demonstration program

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during Ag Progress Days last summer. Only 40 farmers attended the one-hour sessions held on each of three days, according to Bowers.

"How do you get their atten-

tion?" he said. "Most farmers would rather go look at tractors and combines than manure. I mean, it's just not a very exciting subject. But that's 40 more people that we reached than we didn't before."

Many of the structures have been in existence for 20 or more years, according to Bowers.

"One of the things that really drove the whole study was concern that, do we have a bunch of pits ready to fail? Structurally fail? Walls to fall down, earth to erode



Signs such as this to warn visitors about manure storage are available from equipment suppliers or from the Pa. Ag Safety Council, 204 Agricultural Engineering Building, University Park, PA 16802.

and go out?" said Bowers. "So there were a number of questions asked about that, and I think that was one of the very positive things about the report — there were very few major structural problems."

Nutrient management issues were also addressed as part of the questionnaire. But those questions had to relate to the use of the structure as part of an overall nutrient management plan.

Editor's note: Many maintenance and operation aspects were overlooked by many of the farms interviewed for the report. Overtopping, the location of the manure facilities, and general maintenance were in question. Next week, Lancaster Farming will examine some of the ways farmers can look into their manure storage management practices and ways in which SCS and the local conservation district can help solve many of the problems related to manure safety and management.



The manure structure study found that more than one-third of the farms surveyed did not use any type of safety equipment when entering sealed reception pits. A self-contained breathing apparatus must be used when entering a sealed manure storage facility.

October Milk Price \$13.01

NEW YORK — Dairy farmers who supplied milk plants regulated under the New York-New Jersey marketing orders during October 1991 will be paid on the basis of a uniform price of \$13.01 per hundredweight (28 cents per quart).

The price for the corresponding month last year was \$13.10 per hundredweight. Market Administrator Ronald C. Pearce also said the price was \$12.45 in September 1991.

The uniform price is a market-wide weighted average of the value of farm milk used for fluid and manufactured dairy products.

The seasonal incentive plan has been suspended for 1991. For October, the plan would have added to the uniform price value 30 percent of the total monies that would have been deducted during the spring months.

A total of 12,473 dairy farmers supplied the New York-New Jersey Milk Marketing Area with 889,998,509 pounds of milk during October 1991. This was a decrease of .02 percent (about .2 million pounds) from last year.

The gross value to dairy farmers for milk deliveries was \$117,571,680.54. This included differentials required to be paid to dairy farmers but not premiums, deductions authorized by the farmer, or assessments.

Regulated milk dealers (handlers) used 391,226,264 pounds of milk for Class I, 43.9 percent of the total. This milk is used for fluid milk products such as homogenized, flavored, low test, and skim milks.

For October 1991, handlers paid \$13.92 per hundredweight (29.9 cents per quart) for Class I milk compared with \$15.64 a year ago.

Handlers used 141,971,792 pounds of milk for Class II products, 16.0 percent of the total. Class II products include fluid

cream, eggnog, cottage cheese, ice cream, and yogurt. Handlers paid \$12.37 per hundredweight for this milk.

The balance (356,800,453 pounds or 40.1 percent) was used to manufacture Class III products including butter, cheese other than cottage cheese, and dried milk. Handlers paid \$12.56 per hundredweight for this milk.

The uniform price is based on milk containing 3.5 percent butterfat. For October 1991, there was a price differential of 10.8 cents for each one-tenth of one percent that the milk tested above or below the 3.5 percent standard.

All prices quoted are for bulk tank milk received from farms in the 201-210 mile zone from New York City.

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