

Farmers Can Sign Up To Buy Or Sell Manure

ROCKSPRING (Centre Co.)—Public concern about nitrate pollution from agriculture has forced farmers to eliminate the spreading of excess manure on their land or face fines from local governments.

At Ag Progress Days farmers can attend a presentation on manure management and can add their names to a directory for buying and selling manure. Leon Ressler, agriculture and environment

extension agent in Lancaster County, will give the presentation at 1:00 on Wednesday afternoon in the College Exhibits Building.

Farmers with large livestock operations often produce more manure than they can use. "At the same time, growers with few or no livestock want to buy manure," says Ressler. "Poultry manure, for instance, is in big demand with mushroom growers."

In 1989, Penn State Cooperative Extension began promoting redistribution of manure as part of the Rural Clean Water Program and the Chesapeake Bay Program. Ressler surveyed farmers in eight southeastern counties to find out whether they would buy or sell manure. Interested participants received a directory of buyers and sellers.

"About 100 farmers in the region said that they have manure to

sell, and about 300 want to buy manure," says Ressler. "This shows a real marketing opportunity and an excellent way to dispose of excess manure."

The smaller number of sellers doesn't indicate a limited supply. "Many farmers are reluctant to advertise that they have excess manure because they don't want to risk repercussions in their communities," says Ressler. "Others already are selling it through their

own channels. The directory could open up additional marketing opportunities.

"Anyone can add their names to the directory at the presentation," says Ressler. "They will receive an updated copy in the mail in about two weeks."

Ressler also will discuss nutrient management and the advantages and disadvantages of using manure. "Manure is costly to transport and sometimes contains weed seeds," he says. "Another problem is that phosphorous and potash levels are fixed. It's not like buying bags of commercial fertilizer, where you can specify levels."

"But manure contains organic matter and micronutrients that are important to soil composition. Nitrogen releases slowly from manure, and that's better for crops. Manure also is inexpensive if you can keep transportation costs down."

Video Supports Pork Improvement Project

AMES, Iowa — Health-conscious consumers told the livestock industry if they were going to eat meat, it had to be lean.

The National Pork Producers Council responded by kicking off its consumer-oriented "Pork — The Other White Meat" campaign. Joining the "let's get lean" trend, the National Farmers Organization (NFO) decided its members needed a "campaign" to fatten prices by producing leaner pigs — so it kicked off its Pork Improvement Project.

"Hog producers must produce leaner hogs for consumers," said Merle Sunken, director of NFO's hog division. "The Pork Improvement Project gives them the opportunity to do that by focusing on producing leaner hogs through improved genetics and marketing those leaner hogs for substantial quality premiums."

Sunken says genetics account for 35 to 40 percent of profits for hog producers.

To help its members identify sources of genetically superior boars and gilts, NFO produced a video on genetics with three purebred seedstock companies — DeKalb, Farmer's Hybrid, and Pig Improvement Company (PIC).

"The video production isn't an endorsement of three companies," Sunken said. "It's an endorsement of top-quality hogs, regardless of their source. It's immaterial to the NFO where members get their boars and gilts as long as the final product coming through NFO is top quality. That's what it takes for our negotiators to bargain for better prices and contract terms."

The video explains each seedstock company's genetic program, as well as NFO's program benefits. "NFO offers market premiums, professional negotiators, trained field staff, livestock service centers, and several risk management programs to its members," said Sunken. "Those benefits, along with quality, quantity and consistency, give our members bargaining power in the marketplace."

The video will be used at Pork Improvement Project informational meetings conducted by specially-trained field staff. "The field staff gives the hog division a two-week notice before the meetings are held. NFO then notifies the three seedstock companies, as well as any other seedstock company representatives who want to attend," said Sunken.

At the meetings, producers are asked to fill out a survey on marketing methods and operation type and size. The survey results are distributed to the seedstock companies and NFO's field staff. The NFO staff makes follow-up calls to current and prospective members to discuss the project.

"Another integral part of the project is marketing," Sunken said. "Since the packers are the pro-

ducers' buyers, producers must deliver the type of hogs demanded, he said.

"Packers demand lean hogs and producers must market lean hogs," said Sunken. "It's the producer's responsibility to produce lean hogs. If they don't, packers may refuse to buy the hogs

because they don't meet the standards."

Sunken says most packers pay premiums for the lean hogs they want. "Some packers pay a \$7 to \$10 premium for high-quality hogs," he said. "That price differential can mean the difference between profit and loss, prosper-

ing on the farm or leaving it."

"Today's high-quality hogs are 51 percent lean, have a 5-1/2 to 6-inch loin eye, and have 0.7 to 0.8-inch backfat," said Sunken. "If producers want to raise and market that type of hog, they must start with genetics, but also remember it takes excellent management and excellent nutrition."

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