

Manure Marketing

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By-Products To Profit

Some poultry producers have found a way to turn the by-products of their operation into profit.

At the Elizabethtown, Pa. layer farm of Paul M. Wolgemuth, Jr., a turnkey layer composting system allows the manure generated by a 200,000-bird flock to dry and compost gradually.

The system, built by Salmat, in Germany, was installed in 1991 to move manure from the cages, dry it with special whisking fans above a conveyor, and move to a section of the building. There, three 17-foot by 300-foot lanes support windrows of manure that is gradually turned and dried through a system that runs the length of the house and back.

The system is installed in a 370-foot by 105-foot layer house holding about 142,000 layers. The manure is transferred from the laying area by conveyor every seven days.

The conveyor machine moves at a speed of 5½ inches per minute, or about eight hours through the lane. After dried and composed, a frontloader is used to move the machine to a conveyor, which loads it to a truck, or to a grinder, to be further refined.

Wolgemuth said that he decided to use the system to provide a better environment for the birds.

"We're in Mount Joy Township," he said, "and our township says that before they would give any kind of a building permit for livestock facilities, they want to make sure we are in compliance with a manure management plan."

According to the poultry farmer, the plan indicated the farm had slightly too much manure for the 165 tillable acres covering two separate farms. To add more chickens, said Wolgemuth, "we had to have a plan to get rid of the manure and not put any of it on our existing farm ground."

In 1991, they decided to market the manure. First they installed the Salmat system. The key to the system is drying the manure (fresh layer manure is about 70 percent moisture) right out of the layer house to under 60 percent in order to get the composting to start.

The Salmat system dries the manure without having to add any additional drying ingredients, said the poultry farmer.

"I didn't want a system where we would have to be trucking in other material to add to the manure, such as wood shavings or paper or leaves or whatever," he said.

He said at that point he had several markets for the com-

posted material, but the buyers wanted pure manure, not product that included wood shavings, sawdust, or some other drying material.

The composting machine can be moved in a few minutes to each lane. Six weeks after fresh manure goes in one end, it comes out the other end as dry manure.

The dry manure is then ground up, depending on customer requirements.

Wolgemuth sells about 1,400 tons per year of fertilizer, the majority of which goes to a company called Harmony Products in Norfolk, Va. Harmony markets a retail line of organic-based lawn and garden fertilizers.

He is considering marketing the compst as a bagged product under the Green Tree Organic label. The label indicates the fertilizer is "100% Natural Organic" with a 3-2-2 analysis. (Tests on the manure at any time can differ by a percentage point or so, indicated Wolgemuth, so the label is a guaranteed minimum of the availability based on recent and ongoing analyses. The labeling requires the analysis indicate the breakdown of water soluble and insoluble nitrogen, listing actual availability of nutrients, including phosphorous.)

He is attempting to develop markets for 5-pound, 15-pound, and 40-pound bags of the composted manure. He

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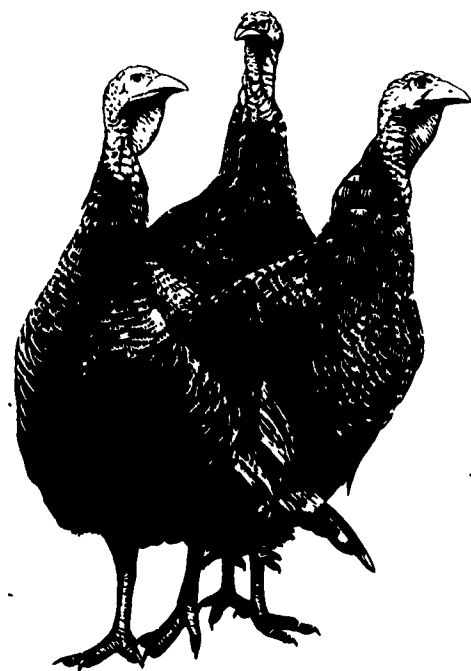
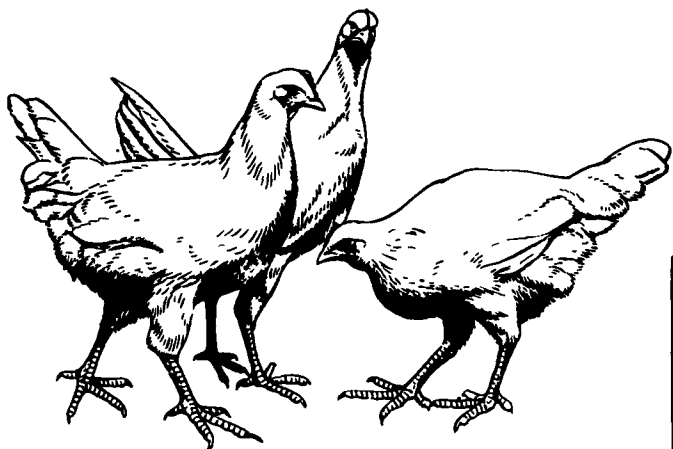
Paul Wolgemuth is attempting to develop markets for 5-pound, 15-pound, and 40-pound bags of the composted layer manure. He indicated he wants to move gradually into local retail markets and do some advertising locally to see what the demand for the product will be.



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