

Learn From Others to Prepare for Tighter Nutrient Restrictions

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the solids or compost off of the farm. Years of unmonitored manure application have left their soils saturated with P, especially those areas close to barns or slurry gun discharge.

At one dairy, the producer collected all runoff from the farm including rainwater from concrete lots, as well as all manure. It was then separated, and the solids were either spread, or sold to an area vegetable farmer. The separation process allows for timelier and site specific application of manure. Plans are to develop more outside uses for the solid manure, to adapt to new P regulations. He had also reduced P ration levels to .4 percent for the 150 head of Holsteins, feeding slightly over NRC for a "safety factor".

At another dairy, the previous owners had overused the slurry gun on the area around the main farm, and consequently, P levels in the soil are very high. They also use a separator system in conjunction with composting to dispose of waste from their herd of 700 Holsteins. However, under a P-based management plan, they will no longer be allowed to spread the compost on the home farm due to its P content. Plans are to export the compost to an area corn silage supplier.

The problem is not limited to conventionally fed Holsteins, either. One of the farms visited was a

smaller dairy using intensive grazing on 55 acres, with 65 dairy cows. Careful monitoring of pasture soil last year showed that the ground had accrued 15-20 lbs of P per acre in one year. P is fed at a moderate .35 percent of the ration DM, and no additional supplement is used. They are actively monitoring and controlling P waste. Much of the manure stored in the pit will have to be exported from the farm.

The last stop of the tour was a farm milking about 1,200 cows and farming roughly 1,400 acres of land. Nutrient regulations were not of any concern at the moment. The facility is equipped with a separator system, enabling them to reclaim sand for bedding. Also, ground is double cropped with corn and small grains every year, so nutrient (mostly nitrogen) is used quickly. However, the producers were first to admit that this cropping system would not remove excess P. When asked what the plans were for the new P regulations, they stated that ration levels had been reduced to .38 percent, but that they would have to find an off-farm place to spread manure. They are hoping to set up an agreement with a vegetable producer, orchard, custom grower, etc., to perhaps sell some of the solid manure.

I found it interesting that in the first area of the Northeast to be faced with tougher P management

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