

Survey Shows Improvement in Manure Management Practices

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A survey of Michigan livestock producers indicates continued improvement in the adoption of recommended manure management practices have occurred over the past ten years. The survey of randomly selected dairy, swine, beef and poultry producers took place in the spring of 2005. Producer responses were compared to similar surveys conducted in 1995 and 2002. Some of the key findings of the study include:

- Nearly 87 percent of the producers are familiar with the Michigan Right to Farm generally accepted agricultural management practices (GAAMPs), compared to 64 percent in 1995 and 76 percent in 2002.
- Total confinement livestock production systems and vegetative filter strips are the most frequently used practices to control contaminated runoff from the farm headquarters.
- Maintaining manure spreading setbacks and crop residue were the most commonly used management practices to control manure runoff in the field.
- Nearly 80 percent of the producers soil test for nutrients every three years, or more frequently.
- More than half of the producers test manure for nutrient value. Less than one-quarter manure tested in 1995.

- Nearly two-thirds of the producers maintain manure application records today, whereas only one-quarter did in 1995.
- More than one-third of the producers have a written manure management plan. Most producers with manure management plans use their plan to determine rate of manure application and to avoid surface water contamination.
- Almost half of the producers that spread liquid manure monitor field tile outlets for discharges.
- Nearly all producers who spread manure in the winter months consider runoff potential when selecting fields for winter spreading. The most commonly considered field characteristics include slope, presence of crop residue or trash and no or minimal surface water present. When the producer data are split between larger and smaller producers, larger livestock producers are more likely to implement recommended manure management practices (consistent with Right to Farm GAAMPs) than smaller producers.

Based on the findings from the survey MSUE researchers recommended:

1. Public and private livestock serving organizations continue to provide manure management assistance for all

producers, especially smaller producers.

2. The public and private organizations continue to strengthen voluntary pollution prevention programs that provide educational, technical and financial assistance for livestock producers.

3. Under the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP), species workgroups be organized to further evaluate and address the findings from this study.

- Utilize the resources of the MAEAP partnership to assist producers that are not implementing recommended manure management practices.

- Enhance and promote the MAEAP Progressive Planning effort for smaller producers to provide incremental improvements in manure management.

4. Repeat the manure management survey in 3-5 years to evaluate future progress and producer needs in manure management.

The entire manure management practices research report, including data by species, producer comments and the survey instruments can be viewed at:

www.kbs.msu.edu/extension/2005mmps.pdf

To learn more about the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) program talk to your local extension educator or go to:

www.maeap.org