



Managing Manure on Your Farm

MANURE IS A VALUABLE ASSET TO YOUR LAND AND YOUR CROPS

Proper manure management ensures that nutrients are applied at the right rate, time, and distribution to well-established and actively growing plants that can utilize the nutrients in the manure right away.

MANAGING LIVESTOCK MANURE PROPERLY HAS MANY BENEFITS:

- Lower fertilizer costs
- Increase crop yields and quality
- Improve forage density
- Reduce parasite loads and fly populations
- Reduce the volume of the manure by as much as 50% during the composting process

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO STORE A MANURE PILE?

- **The best first step is to cover the manure pile!** This minimizes the risk of nutrients leaching out of the pile into ground water and surface water. It can also speed up the composting process!
- For your structure, plan to **design for at least 6 months of storage** to prevent the need to spread manure outside of the recommended months of the year. There are many storage options—stock pile, dry stack, composting facility. The most important thing is that you build a system that will work for your management style and goals.
- **Locate the manure pile on high, dry, and level ground** away from any wells, low spots, drainage ways, and surface water. It is ideal if a dense strip of vegetation, like grass, grows in between the manure pile and any of the vulnerable areas we want to protect.
- To **reduce mud**, remove manure from stalls and paddock areas often, ideally once a week. The more you pick up manure in those areas, the less mud you will have. Tip: The less bedding you add, the smaller the manure pile will be and the faster the pile will break down.



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WHAT DO I NEED TO CONSIDER WHEN I APPLY MANURE TO MY FIELDS?

- **The right weather conditions are critical!** The right time to apply is when there is at least a 3 day window with no forecasted rainfall or flood events and during the months on the calendar below.
- **The right field conditions are key.** Wait to apply until the fields are dry and the ground is not saturated, frozen, or snow covered. Rule of thumb: if you can drive over the surface without causing significant damage or compaction, it's a good time to spread.
- **The amount you apply and the growth stage of the plant are important.** Plants require a certain amount of nutrients and nutrient demands change during the season. Rule of Thumb for Pastures: Spread a third of the manure pile at a time only when the grass is above 3" tall. If you have a different crop or more than a few animals, we can provide specific guidelines and recommendations for your operation.
- **Pay attention to manure setbacks.** Setbacks refer to the distance between where you spread and where there is any surface water on your land. Setbacks are recommended to minimize risks to ground and surface water in your watershed. Refer to the calendar below for the distances each month and apply manure that many feet away from wetlands, waterbodies, and ponded areas. To protect wellheads, a 100 ft. setback is recommended.

THE 4 GUIDELINES

RIGHT SOURCE: The right fertilizer to deliver nutrients to the plant
RIGHT RATE: The right amount of fertilizer needed for plant production
RIGHT TIME: The right time in the plant's growth cycle to spread fertilizer
RIGHT PLACEMENT: Where and how to spread fertilizer so plants have the best access to nutrients

Manure Spreading Calendar



January	February	March	April	May	June
Not recommended to spread manure at this time	Not recommended to spread manure at this time	Dependent on weather and soil conditions with a recommended 80 ft. setback	Good time to spread manure with a recommended 35 ft. setback	Good time to spread manure with a recommended 35 ft. setback	Good time to spread manure with a recommended 10 ft. setback
July	August	September	October	November	December
Good time to spread manure with a recommended 10 ft. setback	Not recommended to spread manure at this time	Good time to spread manure with a recommended 35 ft. setback	Dependent on weather and soil conditions with a recommended 80 ft. setback	Not recommended to spread manure at this time	Not recommended to spread manure at this time