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UNL's Livestock Environmental Issues Committee
Includes representation from UNL, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Natural Resources Districts, Center for Rural Affairs, Nebraska Cattlemen, USDA Ag Research Services, and Nebraska Pork Producers Association.

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Marketing Manure - Part 2

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This is part 2 of a two part series discussing the results of a manure marketing survey conducted by the University of Nebraska.

Manure Export Services Provided.

The survey attempted to identify those services that were packaged with the export of manure to off-farm customers. At this time, many producers do not offer any services to enhance the value of manure (Table 4). Of those exporting manure to off-farm users, 40% offered no agronomic services, 51% provided no nuisance avoidance services, and 70% offered no manure processing services.

However, there were a number of feedlots that offered services designed to enhance the value of manure. Most producers offered one or more agronomic services with manure sampling, measurement of manure application rate, and adjustment in application rate for individual crop and field conditions being the most common. Of those marketing manure, 12.5% provided one agronomic service, 12.5% provided two services, 30% provided three or more services. To minimize nuisance issues, daytime application to avoid noise nuisance and setback distance were the most commonly reported efforts. Composting of manure was reported by almost one-quarter of the feedlots exporting manure. Most feedlots are providing those services with resources from within the feedlot and have not partnered with other businesses or individuals to export manure (90%). Two feedlots indicated that they were working with a crop consultant.

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Table 4. Services provided with the export of manure by feedlot.

Agronomic Services	
No Services	40%
Manure sampling	38%
Measure of application rate	38%
Adjustment of rate for individual fields/crops	31%
Soil testing	24%
Crop consulting services	20%
Customer report of nutrient appl.	16%
Incorporation of manure within 24 hrs. to conserve ammonia & reduce odor	9%
Deep tillage to address compaction from manure application	4%

Nuisance Prevention Services	
No services	51%
Daytime application to avoid noise nuisance	33%
Maintain setback distances	19%
Advance notification of neighbors	9%
Same day incorporation to avoid odor & fly nuisances	9%
Morning manure appl. limit odor	5%
Notification of local governments in advance of application	2%

Manure Processing	
No Processing Services	70%
Composting of manure	23%
Supplement with commercial nutrients	5%

Environmental/Nuisance Problems Encountered.

Most feedlots exporting manure (60%) have encountered some form of environmental or nuisance related concern. The three most common issues encountered were odors (28%), road traffic (26%), and road maintenance (24%). When asked who expressed these concerns, homeowners were the most common response. 41% of feedlots indicated that no one has raised concerns with them.

Composting is an effective practice used to minimize environmental nuisances associated with livestock manure. Ten feedlots indicated that composting was used for manure exported to off-farm users. Four and three of these responses indicated that odor and fly complaints, respectively, were encountered. However, other written comments suggested that composting had been very effective in minimizing nuisance concerns.

Lessons Learned.

Experience of most producers currently exporting manure to off-farm users has been sufficiently positive to warrant continuation of this practice. 83% of feedlots currently exporting manure indicated they intend to continue or increase the marketing of manure despite recent changes in Department of Environmental Quality regulations. Of those feedlots not previously exporting manure, only 11% planned to begin this practice.

Many individuals shared a number of lessons learned as a result of their efforts to export manure. Some of the more common lessons that enhanced efforts to export manure included the following:

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"It has become a valuable product for farmers. I can usually get a lot hauled at another's expense. Similar comment shared by 9 feedlots.

"Go the extra mile to establish good relationships with neighbors." The importance of community relations was shared by 5 feedlots.

"Work very closely with the customer." Four feedlots stressed the importance of customer relations.

"Provide as many services as possible to enhance the value of the manure being spread." Eight feedlots emphasized the importance of enhancing the value of manure with additional services.

Comments provided by those surveyed also highlighted several take home messages about issues that hampered the export of manure:

"Most people look at manure as being a nuisance and don"t want to pay anything for it." Cost and neighbor willingness to pay was a concern expressed by seven feedlots.

"Make sure transporting equipment is in tip-top shape. Manure spills or traffic accidents are very detrimental to public opinion." The importance of preventing public nuisance issues was stressed by seven feedlots.

Producers identified critical information needs related to establishing or maintaining a manure marketing program. The three highest priority information needs included: 1) practices for avoiding environmental/nuisance problems; 2) procedures for estimating agronomically-based manure application rates; and 3) pricing manure for competitive and profitable marketing of the manure resource.

The survey illustrated that many feedlots do not export manure to off-farm users. Of those that do, many give the manure away. However, the survey identified a number of producers who have successfully marketed manure to neighbors and created a demand for this product. As one feedlot manager stressed, "My neighbors ask for manure."

<u>Marketing of Manure as a Valued Product</u>

Approximately half of the feedlots who exported manure believed manure had sufficient value to warrant charging users for the product. Most were likely trying to recover some of the associated handling costs. However, it was obvious that a small number of those responding were taking a more entrepreneurial approach and attempting to market the manure as a product with value.

An example would include three feedlots that were similar in their efforts to assemble a package of agronomic services to help crop producers take advantage of the crop production value of manure. Many feedlots who exported manure to off-farm customers for no charge complained of the unwillingness of crop producers to pay for manure. Assisting crop producers in realizing the nutrient and soil building value of manure is apparently critical to successfully marketing of manure as a valued product. Some of the more common services offered included manure nutrient sampling,

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measurement of application rate, and adjustment of rate for individual situations. Of the above entrepreneurial feedlots, one provided a report to the crop producer of nutrient application rate while another included soils testing service.

Marketing of manure to off-farm users has the potential to expose a large number of additional rural residents to many of the nuisance related concerns associated with manure. One feedlot relied on composting to limit those concerns and reported road traffic as the only nuisance issue that had been encountered to-date. Properly composted feedlot manure should be free of odor and fly concerns. While at the same time, another feedlot encountered the whole range of nuisance and environmental concerns raised by neighbors and local government. This lot has assembled a package of nuisance avoidance services to respond to these problems, including advance notification of neighbors and county government of spreading plans and same day incorporation of manure to minimize exposure to odor and flies. Successful manure exporting programs should include an appropriate set of services designed to limit neighbor and community concerns.

Conclusions:

1. The majority of feedlots do not export manure to off-farm customers. However, most feedlots lack the land base to utilize the nitrogen and phosphorus in manure.

2. Approximately half of the feedlots exporting manure are charging for the manure or the services associated with its application. A wide range of pricing structures has been used to-date.

3. Many feedlots have included a wide range of agronomic and nuisance avoidance services with the manure that is exported to off-farm users. These services are designed to assist the crop producer in realizing agronomic value from the manure and avoiding community concerns with manure related nuisances.

4. A small number of producers are actively marketing manure as a product with value. These individuals are packaging agronomic and nuisance avoidance services with the manure in an effort to bring value added to livestock production.

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