

Livestock waste lagoon owners should be careful monitors

Operators of livestock and poultry waste lagoons need to follow their operations and maintenance plans if their system is to function properly, reports the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The recent heavy rains and several recent failures of livestock waste facilities have brought some urgency to this facet of livestock and poultry production.

Lagoons are designed to temporarily store and treat waste waters prior to land application or other use. There are basically three distinct volumes to a lagoon. A permanent volume provides for bacterial treatment of the animal waste. Liquids are not normally removed from this volume. The second volume provides temporary storage of the animal waste for day to day operations. This volume usually provides six months of storage. These two volumes represent the maximum height in which any livestock waste lagoon should ever reach during normal operations. The third volume is reserved for major storms and extra free-

board - sometimes referred to as a margin of safety. Allowing effluent to rise into the third volume eliminates the designed safety factors and is taking undue risk of overtopping and possible failure.

The maximum storage capacity (volume 1 and volume 2) is available for periods when crops are dormant, such as during the winter, or during periods of extended rains. In order to insure there is adequate storage at these levels during these critical times, it

is important that operators lower or reduce the volume in their lagoons at every opportunity and not wait for the maximum level to be reached.

The operation and maintenance plan identifies the acreage needed for land application of the waste and what crops should be grown on this acreage. This needs to be followed if the operator is going to have adequate land to apply the effluent at the needed times.

Other areas of operation

and maintenance should also be monitored by the operator. A vigorous grass cover should be maintained on the structure's embankments, while undesirable plants like trees should not be allowed to become established. Surface runoff from the livestock waste houses and surrounding landscape should not be allowed to run into the lagoon, unless designed for this additional water.

Livestock waste structures can be well planned, designed,

and constructed, but then the critical item becomes the operation and maintenance on a day-to-day basis. This can not be over emphasized. These structures have been designed with no spillway of any nature to prevent and eliminate uncontrolled discharge. If operating levels are not monitored and controlled the safety factors are eliminated and failure and spills can occur.

The vast majority of the animal waste lagoons in the state have functioned property dur-

ing the recent heavy rains. When operated and maintained correctly there is no reason that this means of handling animal waste can not be done safely.

Livestock and poultry operators needing help or additional information on operating and maintaining their livestock waste lagoons can contact their local Soil & Water Conservation District or their USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office.

Deadline nears for reporting crop insurance acreage

July 15: All North Carolina crop producers should keep this date in mind. It is the acreage reporting date for spring-planted, insurable crops and for all crops eligible under the federal Non-Insured Assistance Program (NAP).

This year, because of the U.S. Crop Insurance Reform Act, it is especially important that farmers remember to go to a Consolidated Farm Service Agency (formerly ASCS) office or to their insurance agent, if they bought insurance from a private company, to report their planted acreage by July 15.

If farmers don't report their acreage by the deadline, they will lose not only their insurance benefits if a disaster occurs, they will also lose their commodity program support payments and some other USDA benefits.

The North Carolina insurable crops subject to the July 15 acreage reporting date are corn, cotton, grain sorghum, peanuts, potatoes, soybeans and tobacco. Crops eligible for coverage under the Non-Insured Assistance Program include any commercial crop grown for human or livestock consumption, any commercially produced aquaculture species, floriculture, ornamental nursery crops, Christmas trees, turfgrass sod, industrial crops and any commercial crop grown for fiber (excluding trees grown for wood, paper or pulp products).

"The complete rules about NAP coverage are still being worked out in Washington, especially those pertaining to how an 'area' is defined, since NAP coverage depends on an area trigger," Perquimans County Cooperative Extension Director Lewis Smith said. "Still, acreage reporting dates have been set across the country. To remain eligible in case of disaster - and there have been several already this year - farmers should report their acreages."

For more information, farmers should contact their CFSA office or the Perquimans County Extension center at 426-5428.

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