

Farmanac

Farmers Achieving Resource Management



What to know when you use Mushroom Compost by Rita Seidel

Mushroom compost (sometimes called mushroom soil or spent mushroom substrate) can be a valuable by-product on farms. It can improve tilth, aeration, and water-holding capacity of soil; decrease soil erosion potential, provide nutrients; and promote the growth of beneficial soil organisms.

If you are using mushroom compost on your farm, keep the main rules and regulations listed below in mind. For a complete list and general information consult with the Conservation District, the Penn State Agronomy Guide or check the PA DEP Publication: "Best Practices For Environmental Protection in the Mushroom Farm Community".

<http://www.elibrary.dep.state.pa.us/dsweb/Get/Document-91237/254-5401-001.pdf>

Temporary storage

Any temporary storage must ensure that there is no direct discharge of material or runoff to surface or groundwater resources. Storage can take place on soil, on a pad, and under a roof. On any soil base location, the seasonal high water table must be deeper than 20 inches.

The storage location must be at least:

300 feet from a drinking water source;

300 feet from an occupied dwelling, unless the owner agrees to a reduced distance;

100 feet from a stream, wetland, spring or sinkhole.

Duration of storage:

For a storage period of less than 120 days, and at a site that is not continuously used for storage, the base may be soil.

For a storage period of more than 120 days, but less than one year, it must be stored on a pad or under a roof.

For land application, it may be stored on soil (in a field) until the next cropping cycle but in no case longer than 180 days. The maximum volume to be stored in a field cannot exceed the volume that will be land applied in that field.

Storage is not allowed for longer than a year.



Field applications

Each person who land applies mushroom compost must first get at a minimum, an analysis for the N-P-K nutrient content. After the baseline nutrient content is established, repeated analyses are usually not necessary. Compared to manure, N-P-K levels of mushroom compost are generally relatively low.

For first-time applications, a "Field Crop Application Sheet" must be developed. This sheet lists the date of application, the field, the crop and expected yield, and the application rate based on specific reference tables. Depending on the crop and the yield, the application rate can vary between 20 and 60 tons per acre (~ 0.5 to 2 inches per acre).

For subsequent applications to that field, a Nutrient Balance Sheet should be completed.

The Conservation District or a private consultant can assist in developing these sheets.

Setbacks of 100 feet have to be observed for applications near wells, springs, sinkholes, streams or lakes.

Events

Manure Management Workshops

When: Saturday, March 19, 2016– 10am to 3pm

Where: Hoss's Steak and Sea House (FREE Lunch)

When: April 6 & April 8, 2016—6pm to 9pm

Where: Berks County Agricultural Center (Door Prizes)

Berks County Chesapeake Bay Meeting

When: March 24, 2016– 6pm to 8pm

Where: RSVP required for FREE dinner at Kauffman's BBQ Restaurant by March 17, 2016

For all events please register by calling the Berks County Conservation District at 610-372-4657



1238 County Welfare Road

Leesport, PA 19534

Things to keep in mind for this spring! by Christine Griesemer

Winter is not quite over yet and there are a few things you want to take care of before the busy time of the year starts again.

Nutrient Management Plans (Act 38)

If the last year on your Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) is 2016, then it is time to contact your plan writer for an update. Plans for next year have to be approved by the Conservation District Board of Directors by October 1 and since it can take a while to have a plan written and reviewed, an early start of the process is highly recommended. Manure and soil tests are two parts of a NMP that need to be done before the plan writing can begin.

Manure Analysis

NMP: **Each manure group** must have an individual manure analysis completed annually unless the manure storage does not receive rainfall or meets the small quantities guidance. This means, manure storages that receive rainfall and are emptied several times a year, must have a sample taken and analyzed each time.

For manure storages that do not receive rainfall, one annual manure sample is sufficient.

Manure Management Plans (MMPs): Manure tests are *optional*, but if you follow the NMP guidance, you can adjust application rates to meet crop requirements.

Soil Tests

If you did not get to take soil samples last fall, late winter or early spring are still good times to accomplish this.

NMP: Required **every 3 years for each crop management unit**. Soil samples can be combined for several fields with the same history but cannot exceed 20 acres unless the sample is for one field larger than 20 acres.

MMP: This is *optional*, but if you follow the NMP guidance, you may be allowed to increase application rates to meet crop requirements.

Record Keeping- blank forms are available upon request

As always, don't forget to keep records that document that you are implementing your plans. BCCD can provide you with blank record forms.

Note: CAFO operations have additional record keeping requirements which are outlined in the NPDES permit.

If you have any questions please call 610-372-4657 and ask for an Agricultural Conservationist.