

## **Animal Waste Management and Tennessee Agriculture**

George F. Smith, Professor Agricultural Economics and Resource Development

As a livestock or poultry producer you have many responsibilities - animal health and welfare; feeding and nutrition; selection and breeding; housing; financial management...at times the list may seem to be endless. Waste management is an important one of these responsibilities. It deserves your best efforts.

The wastes you have to deal with depend on the kind of animals you keep and your management system. They may include:

- Manure
- Bedding or litter
- Water from wash down, lot run-off, spills and so on
- Disinfectants and cleaners
- Spilled feed
- Dead animals
- Product wastes like spilled milk or broken eggs

Wastes can be found in many places. This complicates proper management. Locations can include:

- Housing; including barns, stables, poultry houses and milking parlors
- Loafing areas and yards
- Milk houses and egg houses
- Feedlots
- Manure storage, handling and application areas
- Pastures

The amounts of waste to be managed can be considerable. A mature dairy cow, for example, produces an average of 82 pounds of feces and urine every day. Bedding, water and wasted feed add to the volume to be handled.

Because of these factors, waste management can be a major challenge for today's livestock or poultry producer.

## **Problems**

Inadequate or improper waste management can create severe problems, including:

- Pollution of both surface and ground water
- Unsightly conditions and obnoxious odors
- Health problems for people, domestic animals, fish and wildlife
- Enforcement actions by regulatory agencies
- Financial problems. Fines and the costs of quick corrective actions can be burdensome.
- Also, the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) cannot cost-share with a producer who has been cited by a regulatory agency.

## **Good Waste Management**

These problems can be avoided with adequate waste management. Other reasons for sound management include:

- Stewardship. Tennesseans have long been good stewards of our natural resources. Protecting and improving water quality is the right thing to do.
- It's the law. Livestock and poultry producers have a legal obligation to manage wastes in ways that do not damage the quality of the state's waters.
- Resource Utilization. Some wastes can be used as a fertilizer, a livestock feed source or a product that can be sold to other businesses and individuals.

## **Waste Management Systems**

The best system is one designed specifically for your operation. It will take into account your production system, the wastes produced and their locations. The system may include:

- Waste collection methods
- Waste storage areas
- Methods for land application of wastes
- Means to control or collect runoff from lots and waste storage areas
- Methods to direct clean water away from lots and storage areas
- Means to dispose of dead animals

## **Assistance is Available**

Assistance is available to help you develop a good waste management system. Cost share funds are also available for some practices from both federal and state sources. For more information, contact any of the following offices in your county:

- Agricultural Extension Service
- Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service
- Soil Conservation District
- Soil Conservation Service

Properly managing the wastes from your livestock or poultry operation will help you meet your legal obligations and take advantage of this potential resource. It will also help protect our environment and maintain its quality for future generations.

This publication was made possible, in part, through cooperative arrangements with the Agricultural Institute of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

A State Partner in the Cooperative Extension System The Agricultural Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex or handicap and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

#### COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and county governments cooperating in furtherance of Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914 Agricultural Extension Service

Billy G. Hicks, Dean