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OKLAHOMA LITTER MARKET

Promoting a better understanding of the movement and application of poultry litter in Oklahoma

Fact sheets on poultry litter.

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About Poultry Litter

Poultry litter consists of fecal excrement and a manure carrier, which is used as bedding material for absorption, and other components such as feathers and soil. Wood shavings, sawdust, and soybean, peanut, or rice hulls are all common manure carriers added to the poultry house floor and utilized for raising four to eight flocks on a single placement (generally caked-out and top-dressed with new bedding between flocks) prior to complete cleanout. After removal from the house, the litter can be utilized as a fertilizer for pastureland, cropland and hay production. Poultry litter is recognized as an excellent source of the plant nutrients nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. In additlon, litter returns organic matter and other nutrients to the soil, which builds soil fertility and quality. However, due to the concentration of poultry and litter production in areas such as Northwest Arkansas and Eastern Oklahoma, environmental concerns have arisen because of the over-application of litter to farmland. The city of Tulsa in particular is concerned about its Lake Eucha water supply reservoir in Delaware County, located in a major poultry growing watershed. Much of the focus is on phosphorus run-off and how to reduce it by limiting the amount of litter spread in the affected watersheds. Avoiding excess litter application protects water quality. Land application of poultry litter should be managed to recycle plant nutrients rather than for disposal.

About Phosphorus

[Read ***"About Phosphorus"***, by Mitch Fram]

What is It Worth?

The fertilizer value of litter is variable. It depends on the type of bedding used, the number of flocks grown between house clean-outs, moisture content and other factors. Producers are required to sample their litter and have it analyzed for nutrient content every one or three years, depending on location. They must provide their most recent litter test results to buyers. Contact your County OSU Extension Ag Educator for advice on obtaining a good sample of your litter (or go to the fact sheet page). Litter analyses are done at the OSU Soil Test Lab.

The real value of litter in your farming operation depends on your anticipated crop, your soil test results, and the proportion of litter nutrients that are actually available to plants in a season. Further information is available at the Division of Agriculture website.

[Read ***"Micronutrient Value"***, by Bob Woods]

[Read ***"Current Value of Poultry Litter as a Fertilizer Source"***, by Josh Payne]

[Worksheet ***"Calculating Value of Litter"***]

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