

Nothing like watching the harvesting of sweet corn!



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Manure Planning

by Henry Kelsey

Corn harvest is upon us, and, for those with livestock operations, with that comes manure spreading. If he hasn't been there already, your crop consultant will be around shortly to deliver fall manure recommendations. These recommendations will guide your manure spreading operations from now until spring. In addition to providing rates of application based on agronomic crop needs and/or P-index restrictions, they lend guidance on the timing of the application. Although fall may provide opportunities to spread on most fields the farm possesses, it may be prudent to plan ahead and save certain ones for winter application.

As last winter's long, cold season demonstrated with a record number of manure incidents, frozen or snow-covered soil increases the potential for runoff to surface water. Frozen soils have limited or no infiltration, so immediate runoff occurs if there is rainfall before the soil thaws. Designating winter spreading fields with your crop consultant now gives you alternatives once the snow flies. If manure must be applied in the winter, choosing appropriate fields can reduce the potential for environmental impact. **Select fields covered by a living crop or crop residue.** The vegetation and/or residue act as a barrier to particles moving across the soil surface. **Select fields located away from surface water or tile inlets** to reduce the chances that materials will be discharged into surface water. **Do not apply to any land subject to flooding or where water collects, then flows into surface water. Sloped fields leading to surface water or tile drains are not suitable.** Fall tillage on a few fields can provide an area for surface spreading during frozen conditions with limited runoff potential. Fields can also be set aside for temporary field stack (or piles) of pack manure.

In addition to designating certain fields for winter application, using increased caution when applying in adverse conditions can further limit the potential for run-off. **Increased setbacks and reduced rates are recommended.** If more nutrients are required for the planned crop, a second trip across the field can be made in the spring.

A few items of high concern to take note of are manure setbacks, P-Index, nitrogen leaching index, karst soils, shallow to bedrock soils, or gravel soils. Any and all of these concerns should be addressed with your crop consultant and shared with your operators. By planning carefully now, perhaps we can break out of the tendency to apply winter manure primarily to fields that are close in proximity to the farm, regardless of the crop needs, and create a more environmentally responsible approach to spreading.

**United States Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Conservation Service
Web-Based Tools For Farm Planning**

by Jim Seiler

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offer public access to several of the web based planning tools that are routinely used by the personnel at county field offices. Websites and mobile apps have become an important aspect in farm management, particularly when decisions are made away from the farm office in field locations.

The NRCS Web Soil Survey allows access to county soil survey mapping and data produced in customized reports. Access the Web Soil Survey at websoilsurvey.usda.nrcs.gov. The mapping viewed in the Web Soil Survey may include updates since the original published County Soil Survey for some counties.

The recently introduced Soil Web App combines the Web Soil Survey with the GPS capability of smart phones. NRCS mobile apps may be downloaded at the NRCS National website, www.nrcs.usda.gov, or the NRCS NY website, www.ny.nrcs.usda.gov.

Other information that may be of interest is available on the NRCS National Website. To review cost share/incentive programs, including EQIP or the Conservation Stewardship Program, click on the Financial Assistance tab. Program applications may be downloaded, but must be taken to the local USDA–NRCS Field Office. The Science & Technology Training Library, accessed through the USDA– NRCS East National Technology Support Center, offers multidisciplinary webinars. The webinars are conducted the last Wednesday of every month from 2-3 PM Eastern Time. **The next webinar, on 10/29/2014, is entitled 'Planning and Design of Stream Crossings'.** You can also sign up for email updates.

Lastly, the NRCS New York Website provides local office locations, information on National Centers, the complete list of available web application tools, access to program applications and links to other technical and program information.

WNY Crop Management also has apps and web-based services that have been created to help farmers get up-to-date field information, setback maps, and recommendations at their fingertips.

Webmaps: Your farm's field maps and information can be accessed through any browser on any device or computer. You can access this link by going to www.wnycma.com and clicking on the webmaps link or going to <http://wnycma.azurewebsites.net/>.

Mapapp: This downloadable app for field maps and information is available for Android phones and tablets. You can go to the play store and search wnycmapp.

Grower Database: This database allows farmers to enter their own manure applications, fertilizer applications and planting information, among other options. You can find the links to download this application on our website, www.wnycma.com. Click on "Record Keeping Software" in the right hand column.

If you have any questions or would like training on how to use these applications/programs, we can help. A knowledgeable staff member can provide training at your farm, or you can bring your mobile device to our office. Visit our website, www.wnycma.com, for the links and more information.

KEY DECISIONS ON COVER CROP CHOICES

by Jason Post

The key to effective cover cropping is picking the right cover for your situation. There are many different cover crop species to choose from. Using a cover crop that does the job you need is important for getting the most out of it. There are many benefits to be realized from cover cropping.

Cover crops can help reduce fertilizer costs. Some, like clover and other legumes, fix nitrogen which will carry over to the next year's crop. Others, like cereal rye, annual ryegrass and forage radish, collect nitrogen as it becomes available in the soil and will hold it until terminated. As they decay, the nitrogen is released again to help feed next year's crop.

Cover crops can also help reduce herbicide costs. Certain species grow rapidly and shade out weed species. Rye, oats and clover can all do a good job in this role. When the cover crop is killed, some species, like cereal rye, will form a mulch that suppresses weed growth even further into the season.

A less obvious benefit of cover crops is found in soil health improvements. These come by reducing erosion, increasing organic matter and potentially reducing compaction problems. Any cover crop with vigorous growth will reduce the amount of erosion on soil, both by shielding the ground from rain and by holding the soil in place with root mass. Any cover crop can help build organic matter, but perhaps the most promising species are vigorous grasses and legume species. Relieving compaction is another potential benefit, particularly from the long taproots found on forage radish.

Aside from figuring out what you need from a cover crop, there is also a question of when you plant. Cover crops can be frost-seeded into wheat fields in early spring or planted shortly after harvest. If corn or soy crops come off early, there is an opportunity to seed directly after harvest and establish a cover. Shade tolerant cover crops can be seeded into standing corn up to 8 leaves, with the proper equipment, allowing them to sprout and take hold as the corn canopies, then grow rapidly after harvest. In soybeans, it is possible to fly on cover crop seed as the leaves begin to yellow and fall.

One final concern is how the crop will be terminated. In some cases it may be desirable to have a crop that will winter-kill, saving the time and trouble of using herbicides or tillage to remove it in the spring. Oats and radishes can both be relied on to die out over the winter months. In other scenarios, it may make more sense to have a crop that will resume growth in the spring, producing a larger amount of biomass and smothering winter annual weeds until it is time for planting. Winter grains and red clover can be reasonably expected to return after winter and continue vigorous growth until they are terminated.

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CAFO NOTES

By Jim Booth, Certified Planner

Don't forget required operation and maintenance on Best Management Practices that have been installed. If a practice is no longer functioning the way it was designed, the DEC will consider you to be out of compliance during an inspection. Your CAFO planner should inform you of necessary maintenance if it is discovered during a farm visit. Depending on how severe the problem is, you may need the assistance of an engineer to make necessary corrections. It is better to discover and fix minor problems before things get to this stage. You should also be keeping notes on when you perform required maintenance such as mowing, repairing gutters, or reseeding kill zones in your bunk's grass treatment strip.

Your CAFO planners are busy taking water samples, conducting farmstead reviews and beginning assembly of the 2015 Farmstead Record Keeping Books. These books will be delivered during November and December. As you are probably aware, the DEC is implementing a new electronic annual compliance reporting system that will replace the old paper submittals of Annual Compliance Reports and Appendix D's. While not mandatory for 2014 reports, we would like to electronically submit some reports so that things will go smoothly when it is required. You will hear more on this topic as the process is refined by the DEC.

WNYCMA would like to welcome Paul Redmond and Lauren Sharp to our staff as technicians and congratulate Mike Youngers on earning his CCA credentials and Josh Harvey on being promoted to Crop Consultant. It is exciting to see our staff and employees grow!



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