

**Land Application of Manure for Beneficial Reuse**  
**L. M. Risse, M. L. Cabrera, A. J. Franzluebbers, J.W. Gaskin, J.E. Gilley, R. Killorn, D. E.**  
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**Executive Summary:**

The concentration of animal production systems has increased efficiency and improved overall economic return for animal producers. This expansion in animal production concentration, along with the advent of commercial fertilizers, has led to a change in the way many animal producers view manure. Manure, once valued as a resource by farmers, is now often treated as a waste. Air and water quality concerns that arise primarily from the under-utilization or improper management of manure contribute to these changing views. However, when properly utilized, manure is a useful resource and should be regulated as such. In the United States, the *USDA/EPA Unified National Strategy for Animal Feeding Operations* outlines how animal feeding operations should be regulated and acknowledges that land application at proper agronomic rates is the preferred use for manures. However, many limitations such as water quality concerns, uncertainty in manure nutrient availability, high transportation costs, and odor concerns cause some to question existing land application policies. This paper documents the benefits of land application of manure, discusses limitations that hinder greater manure utilization, and outlines research and extension needs for improving manure utilization.

Manure is an excellent source of major plant nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium and the secondary nutrients that plants require. Plant nutrients in commercial fertilizers are mostly water soluble and readily available for plant uptake, while the nutrients in manure are less available. This complicates the determination of application rates but the slower release contributes to improved plant utilization and decreased nutrient losses to surface and ground water. Many studies have demonstrated that crop yields on land application areas are equivalent or superior to those attainable with inorganic fertilizers. Crop quality has also been improved by manure additions. These improved responses are usually attributed to manure supplied nutrients or improved soil conditions not provided by inorganic fertilizer. Manure, especially poultry litter, can also neutralize soil acidity and raise soil pH. This liming effect can further increase the value of manure.

Research has shown that manure application can have a significant impact on the chemical, physical and biological properties of the soil. Most of these effects are due to an increase in soil organic matter resulting from manure application. The ability of manure to promote formation of water stable aggregates in the soil has a profound effect on soil structure and physical characteristics. Water stable aggregates increase infiltration, porosity, and water holding capacity and decrease soil compaction and erosion. Through improvement in soil physical properties, manure application also reduces the energy required for tillage and the impedance to seedling emergence and root penetration. Soil organic matter is known to affect a number of soil chemical properties such as the cation exchange capacity and the soil buffering capacity that enable manure treated soils to retain nutrients and other chemicals for longer periods of time. Soil organic matter is known to affect activity, degradation, and persistence of pesticides, and several studies have shown reduced pesticide losses from manure treated fields.

The land application of manure can affect soil erosion and surface water runoff. Several laboratory and rainfall simulator studies on manure amended soils indicate runoff and erosion

rates are influenced by manure characteristics, loading rates, incorporation and the time between application and the first rainfall. The broad range of research objectives, underlying assumptions, manure types, and environmental conditions create differing results. Field plots established to collect runoff from natural precipitation events consistently indicate that manure can substantially reduce both runoff and soil erosion when solid manures are land applied. Results using lagoon effluent or slurries are less conclusive. Nevertheless, this is a substantial benefit that should be considered when determining the water quality impacts of land application.

Land application of animal manures can help mitigate potentially negative consequences of rising atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> on the global climate by contributing to greater sequestration of carbon in soil. In general, soil organic carbon sequestration on an area basis appears to be greater with an increased rate of manure application. Climate appears to affect potential retention of applied carbon in soil with warmer regions tending to have lower carbon retention rates from manure (7±5%) than temperate or frigid regions (23±15%). Methane is also a significant contributor to global warming and animal agriculture is a significant contributor of methane emissions globally. Land application of manure can significantly decrease the net quantity of methane emitted to the atmosphere compared with stockpiling or long-term lagoon storage of manure.

The benefits of utilizing manure through land application are apparent. However, there are several impediments that discourage greater use of manure nutrients in cropping systems. These include potential water quality problems associated with runoff, uncertainty associated with nutrient availability, high transportation and handling costs that discourage transport and greater utilization, and public perception or odor issues.

Potential pollutants of concern in livestock wastes are organic materials, nutrients, and pathogenic microorganisms. Surface water is primarily affected through soluble contaminants in runoff or insoluble pollutants carried on soil particles during runoff events. Ground water can be contaminated with excessive pollutants from percolation, seepage, and direct infiltration. Nutrients are the most common pollutant associated with animal waste. Several studies have documented that watersheds with predominantly animal agriculture tend to have higher nutrient levels in their drainage systems. Over-application of manure to crops or grasses can result in leaching of nitrate to ground water or high levels of N in surface waters resulting in eutrophication and low dissolved oxygen levels. Research has shown that the concentration of P in runoff increases as the P concentration in the topsoil increases. Land application presents a special problem because the N-to-P ratio in manures is lower than that needed by crops. As a result of the low N-to-P ratio in manure, excess P builds up to environmentally harmful levels in fields that receive repeated applications. Compared to N and P, much less research has been done on bacteria and pathogens in manures and their impact on water quality.

The primary means to reduce the risks associated with land application of manure involves addressing the manure application rate, timing, and location. These issues are commonly addressed through nutrient management planning. The *USDA/EPA Unified National Strategy for Animal Feeding Operations* establishes a national performance expectation that all AFOs should develop and implement technically sound, economically feasible Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs). Traditionally, nutrient management has involved optimizing the economic return from nutrients used for crop production. Today, the agronomic and economic requirements of nutrient management remain central, but the planning process is

being expanded to include the potential environmental impacts of nutrients on the entire farm operation. This increases both the cost and complexity of these plans. Few studies have documented the effectiveness of nutrient management plans and some studies suggest it is difficult for farmers to reduce environmental impacts even with well developed plans. As an educational tool nutrient management plans do result in benefits for farmers and society; however, implementation of these plans has not been as great as desired.

Even under ideal conditions, there is still a significant risk of environmental impact on the environment. Manure storage and application systems are not perfect making elimination of non-point source impacts almost impossible. Therefore, secondary treatment or preventative systems should be incorporated into the design of all land application systems. There are a number of best management practices (BMPs) that can be adopted to reduce the water quality impacts of land-applied manure. The method and timing of manure application can be adjusted to reduce the amounts of constituents transported in runoff. Practices that limit soil erosion or runoff will positively impact surface water quality and procedures that reduce leaching should help reduce groundwater contamination. Conservation tillage, contouring and strip cropping, terraces, and vegetated waterways have all been used effectively to minimize runoff. Narrow grass hedges have also been employed to reduce runoff, control erosion, decrease nutrient transport, and provide wildlife habitat. Secondary treatment systems such as vegetative buffer zones, grass filter strips, riparian zones, and/or other vegetative filters can prevent nutrient and pathogen movement to surface waters. Containment systems like ponds and diversions may also be used. Ultimately, the goal of these systems is not treatment, but is a secondary system that insures that contaminated runoff does not directly enter surface water. The need for these systems is highly dependent on the receiving water body due to their relatively high economic cost. Studies addressing the cost-benefit and efficiency of these systems on the farm and at the watershed scale are needed to aid in producer decisions and help with water quality modeling efforts. Educational programs and policies to inform and to encourage adoption of current conservation technologies and BMPs by farmers is also an immediate need.

Farmers often choose to use commercial sources of fertilizers instead of manure because of variability and uncertainty concerning manure nutrient availability. Although estimates of nutrient content can be obtained through published literature, due to the variability in farming practices, animal diets, climate, and waste storage facilities, manure nutrient analysis is usually recommended. Currently, most farmers sample their manure regularly, but wait extended periods for test results. The development of inexpensive, on-farm nutrient tests would allow for testing at the time of application. Obtaining representative manure samples presents unique challenges depending on the physical nature of the manure involved. In the case of wet manure, one of the main sampling challenges is to obtain a representative sample of the different liquid and solid phases.

Where animal production is concentrated, the land base available for manure application may be limited. This limitation arises from restrictions imposed by the economics of manure transportation. The transport, collection, intermediate storage, and general handling of manure is and will continue to be a problem. Little research emphasis is being placed on the concepts of materials handling and metering for animal manure, yet, the economics of transporting the material to the point of use is often the greatest concern limiting the livestock producers from maximizing the use of this biomass resource. The export of manure from surplus to deficit areas

for use as a fertilizer is often economically viable at larger scales. However, large-scale transfers of manure are not occurring which suggests a need for increases in the incentives given to commercial firms to provide manure brokering. Better integration of farms that produce crops and livestock, and educational programs aimed at showing farmers the economic value of manure as a fertilizer are additional methods of reducing the transport costs. Separation, screening, condensing, and dewatering technologies could also be used to produce more transportable products, however, little research is being conducted in these areas.

Public perception of agriculture in general and land application in particular is critical to continued acceptance of manure application as the primary utilization strategy. Public concerns with animal manures can be broken into three major categories; water quality, air quality, and food quality. Land application of manures has the potential to negatively impact all three of these resources. Improved technical information about environmental, social and political concerns and potential solutions to land application problems should to be communicated to the general public.

## **Land Application of Manure for Beneficial Reuse**

### **Introduction and Historical Perspectives**

Traditional American agriculture often includes a vision of a farm with a diversity of animals and a flock of chickens being raised in addition to other labor demands of the crop production enterprise. It was routine for the farm wife to be responsible for the management of the chicken flock, and to market eggs and fryers as an ongoing source of cash (Miner et al., 2000). Dairy herd size was frequently less than 20 cows. Poultry flocks ran on grounds near the farmhouse. Draft animals placed demands on the resources of the farm for feed production. Agricultural waste was not a serious problem because of the extensive nature of the operations. Manure was viewed as an agricultural resource during the formative years of agriculture in the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Burn, 1889; Murray, 1910). Manure provided nutrients in slow release form (Buckman and Brady, 1969). Manure application helped maintain soil organic matter (SOM), which in turn resulted in increased water infiltration and reduced soil erosion. The land application of manure helped the farmer grow feed as well as other crops for export off the farm.

World War II brought about profound changes in American life and agriculture. The farm labor supply was very limited during the war. The end of the war resulted in an excess capacity for fuel and nitrogen-based munitions that could be converted into inorganic fertilizer. production capacity. Urban populations, with their promise of regular hours and better pay, grew at unprecedented rates in the middle of the last century. Urban population growth, farm labor shortages, the ingenuity of the American farmer with the support of Land Grant Agricultural Experiment Stations, abundant energy and nutrients, excellent soils and favorable climate, provided the ability to produce feed, food and fiber with great efficiency. The American farmer and consumer now have a consistent and high quality supply of meat, dairy and poultry products, largely due to efficient production methods.

Increases in production efficiency resulted in larger concentrations of beef, dairy, swine, and poultry animals. The resulting concentration of manure has created environmental concerns. These problems contributed in part to the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972. Because of the significant imbalance between available manure and available nearby cropland at many livestock production centers, the disposal of manure is now often viewed as a problem. Urban encroachment into historic animal production regions has also created conflicts over water and air quality (issues and odors). These conflicts have caused some to question the appropriateness of land application as a sound manure utilization strategy.

Animal manure is by far the largest by-product of animal production. The total quantity of collectable manure produced in the United States is estimated to be over 61 million metric tons per year on a dry weight basis including approximately 1.12 million Mg of nitrogen (N) and 0.60 million Mg of phosphorus (P) (CAST, 1996; Gollehon et al., 2001). In the United States, the Department of Agriculture USDA and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have determined that land application of manure at proper agronomic rates is the most desirable method for utilizing manure resources (USDA-EPA, 1999). While the utilization of manure offers benefits such as increases in soil fertility and quality, reductions in runoff and soil erosion, and opportunities for carbon (C) sequestration, improper land application can impair water quality and produce odor and air quality concerns. Based on an analysis of manure's potential

fertilizer value, recoverable N in manure represents about 15% of the N and 42% of the P purchased in the United States as crop fertilizers (CAST, 1996). If properly distributed and utilized on productive cropland, manure could substantially reduce commercial fertilizer purchases. However, when applied at excessive rates, manure can cause water quality impairments.

This paper provides a summary of the benefits derived from the land application of manure. It then discusses limitations and concerns involved in manure application, and concludes with a review of research and extension needs to enhance continued land application of manure.

### **Benefits of Manure Application**

Land application of manure provides many benefits to farmers and society. Manure serves as an excellent source of both primary and secondary nutrients required for crop growth. In addition, land application improves overall soil quality which has indirect benefits to the farmer through improved crop response. Land application of manure also results in reductions of inorganic inputs such as fertilizers, liming materials, and pesticides, and reduced soil and water losses. Society can obtain other benefits such as improved water quality and carbon sequestration through proper agronomic use of manure. This section reviews the scientific documentation for these benefits.

### ***Manure Serves as a Fertilizer***

Manure is an excellent source of major plant nutrients such as N, P, and potassium (K) and also provides many of the secondary nutrients that plants require. The actual nutrient value of manure from a particular operation will differ considerably due to the type of animal, its food ration, manure collection, storage, and application procedures, and climate. Estimated nutrient contents for selected manures are shown in Table 1. Nutrients in manure may be lost or transformed during treatment, storage, and handling. This can affect their availability for use by growing plants.

**Table 1. Nutrient analysis of manure for various handling systems (Bates and Gagon, 1981).**

Animal Species	Non-liquid added (kg/Mg)			Liquid systems (Kg/1,000 L)		
	N	P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub>	K <sub>2</sub> O	N	P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub>	K <sub>2</sub> O
Dairy	3-8	1-8	1-16	0.4-6.1	0.2-2.5	0.2-6.9
Beef	2-10	1-7	2-15	0.7-4.4	0.1-3.5	0.6-3.6
Swine	2-14	1-31	1-9	0.1-7.3	0.1-7.5	0.1-5.9
Poultry	2-66	1-48	1-28	4.2-9.0	1.6-10.9	1.6-4.7

Animal manures are important sources of both micro and macronutrients for plants, but

their application rates are usually determined based on the content of macronutrients such as N, P, and K. Plants can only use nutrients that are in an inorganic form. Manure N and P are present in organic and inorganic forms, and are not totally available to plants. The organic forms must be mineralized or converted into inorganic forms over time before they can be used by plants. The availability of K in manure is considered similar to that in commercial fertilizer since the majority of K in manure is in the inorganic form (Motavalli et al., 1989). In general, 90% to 100% of K in manure is available during the first year of application.

### Available Nitrogen

When using manure as a fertilizer, the amount of N that is available to the plant is critical to insuring that plant nutrient needs are met. Even with the establishment of P risk assessments nationally as required by U.S. EPA, most States use the approach of selecting application rates based on nitrogen and determining if the risk of P losses is sufficient to warrant a reduction in this rate (Sharpley et al., 2003). The amount of available N in animal manures can be estimated as (Beauchamp, 1983; Sims, 1986):

$$\text{Available N} = F_i N_i + F_m N_o$$

where:  $N_i$  and  $N_o$  are inorganic and organic N, respectively,  
 $F_i$  is the fraction (0 to 1) of inorganic N that is available, and  
 $F_m$  is the fraction (0 to 1) of organic N that is mineralizable or decomposable to inorganic N.

Inorganic N in the above equation is multiplied by an availability factor because N losses (through nitrate leaching, ammonia volatilization, and denitrification) and microbial immobilization can reduce the amount of inorganic N available for plant uptake. Similarly, organic N is multiplied by a mineralizable fraction ( $F_m$ ) because all of the organic N in animal manure can not be converted to inorganic N and become available to plants. The importance of each of the terms in the model depends on the relative proportion of organic and inorganic N in the manure under consideration. In general, dry and composted manure contains less inorganic than organic N. Expressed as a percentage of total N, inorganic N has been found to make up 1 to 11% in cattle manure, 4 to 15% in swine manure, 3 to 50% in poultry manure, and 1 to 13% in composted manure (Cabrera and Gordillo, 1995). On the other hand, slurries commonly contain more inorganic than organic N. Expressed as a percentage of total N, inorganic N has been found to range from 60 to 79% in cattle slurry (Sommer et al., 1992), from 68 to 89% in swine slurry (Sommer et al., 1992), and from 84 to 95% in poultry slurry (Beauchamp, 1986). Consequently, the most important component of plant available N is usually inorganic N in slurries and mineralizable N in dry and composted manure.

### Available Inorganic Nitrogen

Inorganic N in manure is relatively easy to measure by routine analytical laboratories. Furthermore, there are rapid on-farm methods that can provide fairly accurate estimates of the concentration of ammonium in manure slurries (Van Kessel and Reeves, 2000). Because most of



the N in slurries is present as ammonium (Sommer et al., 1992), these rapid methods are useful for predicting plant available N in conjunction with estimates of the availability of the ammonium N that is present. The availability of inorganic N ( $F_i$ ) in slurries can vary with the method of slurry application because the main mechanism of N loss can change with method of application. In general, the main mechanism of N loss is ammonia volatilization for surface applications and denitrification for injected or incorporated applications.

Surface application of manure slurries has resulted in ammonia losses ranging from 33 to 89% of the applied ammonium (Sommer et al, 1991; Sharpe and Harper, 1997). These losses would correspond to availability factors ranging from 0.11 to 0.67. Injection of slurries has caused denitrification losses ranging from 7 to 21% of the applied N (Thompson et al., 1987), which would correspond to a range of 0.79 to 0.93 in the availability factor. Thus, the availability of inorganic N in slurries may be larger when injected than when surface-applied.

Data on the availability of inorganic N in fresh manure are scarce, but in a study with surface-applied poultry litter, Marshall et al. (1998) measured ammonia losses that ranged from 28 to 46% of the ammonium applied. Considering that ammonium in the poultry litter used made up 65 to 85% of the inorganic N, the corresponding availability factor for inorganic N ranged from 0.60 to 0.82. In a laboratory study with poultry litter incorporated into soil, Cabrera et al. (1994) found denitrification losses that corresponded to 33% of the inorganic N initially present in the litter. This would correspond to an availability factor of 0.67. Although limited in scope, these results suggest that the availability of inorganic N in poultry litter may be similar in surface-applied and incorporated applications. Additional research is needed to develop availability factors for inorganic N in slurries and fresh manure applied using varying methods and under different environmental conditions.

### Available Organic Nitrogen

Transformations of N applied from manure are affected by manure characteristics, soil factors, and environmental conditions. The primary characteristics of the organic material added that influence mineralization rates are the initial N content, the C:N ratio, and N availability. After application to the soil, the transformations of N are largely controlled by three factors: temperature, soil water status, and soil type or texture. Accurately predicting the amount of N made available to the crop by mineralization is complicated by the fact that it is highly dependent on all of these variables. Work with biological methods has generated estimates of the fraction of organic N that is mineralizable ( $F_m$ ) in some manure. Values have ranged from 0.08 to 0.52 for swine manure, from 0 to 0.51 for cattle manure, and from 0.17 to 0.73 for poultry litter (Cabrera and Gordillo, 1995). Gilmour and Skinner, 1999 proposed a model to estimate mineralizable N in biosolids based on C:N ratio, organic N and total N. Composting also influences N utilization as 20 to 40% of the N is lost (primarily through ammonia volatilization) during the composting process and the remaining N does not mineralize as rapidly since it is more stable (Eghball et al., 1997).

Mineralizable N has been traditionally estimated with biological and chemical methods because it is more difficult to measure than inorganic N. Biological methods predict mineralizable N by incubating a manure-soil mixture during an extended period of time and determining the inorganic N released during the incubation (Qafoku et al, 2001). Vigil et al.,

2002 reviewed results from eleven field studies on mineralization rates of native soil organic matter and found that neither soil organic matter or total nitrogen were good predictors of seasonal N mineralization. Pansu and Thuries, 2003 looked at C and N mineralization for 17 different added organic materials in a sandy soil and found that the mineralization rate was highly dependent on the C:N ratio of the added organic materials. Using these findings they proposed a model for N mineralization and immobilization based on partitioning of the added carbon into labile, resistant, and stable pools.

In contrast, chemical methods estimate mineralizable N by extracting or measuring a chemical fraction that is related to mineralizable N (Serna and Pomares, 1991). Although biological methods are more accurate than chemical methods, they are not practical for routine laboratory analysis because they are laborious and time consuming. Chemical methods are faster and thus more desirable for routine analysis but a chemical method applicable to all manure has not yet been developed. For example, mineralizable N in poultry litter has been found to be strongly related to total N and uric acid concentrations ( $r^2=0.91$ ; Gordillo and Cabrera, 1997), and to water-soluble organic N ( $r^2=0.87$ ; Qafoku et al., 2001). In addition, recent work has shown the feasibility of using near infrared reflectance spectroscopy to estimate mineralizable N in dairy manure (Reeves and Van Kessel, 1999) and poultry litter (Qafoku et al., 2001).

#### Available Phosphorus

Available P in manure consists of inorganic P and mineralizable P. Some researchers have reported that the availability of P in manure is equal to or superior to that of inorganic fertilizers (May and Martin, 1966; During and Weeda, 1973); others have shown lower responses from manure than fertilizer P (Goss and Stewart, 1979; Motavalli et al., 1989). Although data on manure P availability are limited, it is currently assumed that 80 to 90% of manure P is plant available because inorganic P commonly makes up 60 to 90% of total P (Gerritse and Vriesema, 1984; Barnett, 1994b; Sharpley and Moyer, 2000). The extent of research on manure P availability has been limited because manure has been typically applied based on the N requirements of plants, which leads to an over-application of P and eliminates the need to accurately estimate plant available P. More accurate estimates of plant available P in animal manure will be needed as current concerns with P contamination of surface waters lead to manure applications based on P requirements.

#### *Crops Respond to Manure*

Animal manure is an excellent nutrient source because it contains most of the plant essential elements (Xie and MacKenzie, 1986; Follett et. al., 1992; Jokela, 1992; Sawyer et. al., 1992). The potential value of manure as a source of plant nutrients for crop production is great although the concentrations of nutrients in the manure tend to be low. Over the last decade, expanded numbers of confined animal feeding operations have resulted in an increase in the amount of manure available. Many studies have demonstrated that land application of manure will produce crop yields equivalent or superior to those obtained with chemical fertilizers (Xie and MacKenzie, 1986; Motavalli et al., 1989). Crop quality has also been improved by manure application (Eck et al., 1990; Pimpini et al., 1992). When crop improvements with manure were greater than those attained with commercial fertilizer, response was usually attributed to manure supplied nutrients or to improved soil conditions not provided by commercial fertilizer (CAST,

1996). Zhang et al. (1998) found that 2 kg of manure-N were equivalent to 1 kg of urea-N in terms of plant uptake and yield response during the first year following cattle feedlot manure application.

Manure improves the physical condition of the soil and increases P and biological activity (Sommerfeldt and Chang, 1985; Chang et. al., 1990; CAST, 1996). The organic matter, total N and micronutrient content of the surface soil are increased as a result of manure application. More studies are needed to quantify the benefits of manure nutrients other than N and the economic advantage associated with these improvements.

### ***Manure Maintains Soil pH***

Most people recognize the value of manure as a plant nutrient source or soil amendment, but the potential of manure, especially poultry litter, to neutralize soil acidity and raise soil pH is less well known. Long term field and greenhouse studies have demonstrated the liming effect of animal manure in acid and neutral soils. The Magruder Plots at Oklahoma State University Agronomy Research Farm in Stillwater are the oldest continuous soil fertility wheat research plots in the Great Plains region (Boman et al., 1996). Animal manure has been applied on some of these plots for many decades. The soil pH of the top six inches of the manured plots (pH of 6.32) is greater than those from control plots (5.83), those receiving annual inorganic fertilizer applications (pH ranges from 5.21 to 5.66), and even those receiving inorganic fertilizer and lime (pH of 5.51). Sharpley et al. (1993) conducted a study in Eastern Oklahoma and found the soil pH of the surface 0.6 m of soil that received swine and poultry manure for five years was significantly higher than the pH of the soils that received no manure during the same period. Eghball (1999) found beef cattle feedlot manure and compost raised soil pH while inorganic N fertilizer application significantly reduced soil pH. Researchers from Alabama studied the impact of long-term (15 years) land application of broiler litter on environmentally related soil properties, and found soil pH was 0.5 unit higher to a depth of 0.6 m under soils receiving litter (Kingery, et al., 1994). Another study in Hawaii compared the growth response of a tropical forage legume to lime and organic manure as amendments to acid soils in a green house. They found that chicken manure was as effective as lime in raising soil pH and in reducing aluminum (Al) toxicity (Hue, 1992). This study suggested that tropical forage legumes were able to absorb more Ca from the manure than from lime.

(The main reason) manure raises soil pH (is) due to materials such as calcium (Ca) and magnesium contained in the manure. For example, poultry litter contains about 50 kg Mg<sup>-1</sup> Ca on a dry weight basis. Therefore, applying manure to acid soils not only supplies needed nutrients and organic matter for plant growth but also reduces soil acidity, thus improving P availability and reducing Al toxicity.

### ***Manure Increases Soil Organic Matter***

Research has shown manure application has a significant effect on the chemical, physical and biological properties of the soil (Sommerfeldt and Chang, 1985; Khaleel et al., 1991; Haynes and Naidu, 1998). Most of these effects are due to an increase in soil organic matter (SOM) with manure applications (Haynes and Naidu, 1998). The organic matter deposited enhances soil physical properties such as tilth, structure, water holding capacity, water infiltration rate, and soil microbial activity (Sweeten and Mathers, 1985). Studies over a wide variety of soil textures,

climates and cropping systems report increases in SOM with manure addition (Vitosh et al., 1973; Tiarks et al., 1974; Fraser et al., 1988; Stewart, 1991; Kingery et al., 1993; Haynes and Naidu, 1998; Aoyama et al., 1999; Kandeler et al., 1999; Kubat et al., 1999; Porter et al., 1999; Brown et al., 2000; Nyakatawa et al., 2001). The SOM increase is due to both the organic matter input from the manure and to greater plant growth (in) response to nutrients, which increases root biomass and residues for incorporation into SOM.

The rate of increase in SOM depends on temperature, moisture and tillage conditions, as well as the amount of manure added. Nyakatawa et al. (2001) reported increases of SOM of 55-80% in the silt loam soils of northern Alabama after three years of poultry litter additions. Most studies indicate at least two years of manure additions are necessary to see increases in SOM (Stewart, 1991). Manure application can also reduce SOM losses in production systems under tillage (Aoyama et al., 1999; Kapkiyai et al., 1999). This may be due to increases in the protected pools of C in small macroaggregates (Aoyama et al., 1999) and microaggregates (Kapkiyai et al., 1999). Manure is also more effective than plant residues in replenishing particulate SOM (Kapkiyai et al., 1999) that is associated with stabilized organic matter in many agricultural systems.

Organic matter is known to influence a number of chemical properties of the soil. One well-known effect is a pH dependent change in cation exchange capacity (CEC) through the dissociation of carboxyl, phenolic, and hydroxyl groups on the organic molecules that compose SOM (Tisdale et al., 1993). The form and size-fraction of SOM affects its contribution to CEC. Research from sandy sub-Saharan soils indicates an increase in CEC due to manure application only when clay-sized particulate organic matter is present (Guibert et al., 1999). Due to the buffering capacity of organic matter, in acidic soils, manure tends to increase soil pH (Brown et al., 2000; Kingery et al., 1993; Wong et al., 1998), and decrease pH in alkaline soils (Wahid et al., 1998). In regions where P is deficient, manure supplies P and also makes P more available by complexing Al. The organic complexing of Al also reduces Al toxicity (Haynes and Mokolobate, 2001). Manure can also be used to improve crop production in saline and sodic soils under certain conditions (Dubrey and Mondal, 1994; Wahid et al., 1998).

### ***Manure Improves Physical Soil Properties***

The ability of manure to promote the formation of water stable aggregates (WSA) has a profound effect on soil structure and soil physical characteristics (Haynes and Naidu, 1998). Numerous studies have shown increases in WSA with manure application (Estevez et al., 1996; Angers, 1998; Barthes et al., 1999; Porter et al., 1999; Brown et al., 2000; Albiach et al., 2001). However, high rates of manure application can disperse soil structure by creating high concentrations of monovalent cations and hydrophobic compounds (Haynes and Naidu, 1998; Paré et al 1999). A high percentage of WSA increases infiltration (Roberts, 2000), porosity (Kirchmann and Gerzabek, 1999), and water holding capacity (Mosaddeghi et al., 2000). Water stable aggregates are also associated with decreased compaction (Mosaddeghi et al., 2000) and erosion (Barthes et al., 1999). Angers (1998) reported that even in silty clay soils with high organic matter contents, the addition of manure increases macro-aggregation, which helps prevent structural degradation. Other research has shown that manure application to fine textured soils (silty clay loams) reduced compaction and increased trafficability (Mosaddeghi et al., 2000). Schjonning et al. (1994) in a study of sandy loam soils in a 90-year fertilization

experiment in Denmark, showed that manured soils had less compaction under large stresses than inorganically fertilized or unfertilized soil at comparable water contents and bulk densities. This study indicated that the greater SOM in manured soils increased soil friability. These changes in soil physical properties allow the soil to be worked under wetter conditions. Through improvement in soil physical properties, manure application also reduces the energy required for tillage and the impedance to seedling emergence and root penetration (Eghball and Power, 1994).

### ***Manure Reduces Pesticide Dependence***

The presence and forms of organic C in the soil affects the structure and complexity of the soil food web, which in turn, affects nutrient cycling and both plant diseases and parasites. Most research indicates that microbial biomass and activity increases with manure additions (Estevez et al., 1996; Haynes and Naidu, 1998; Kandeler et al., 1999; Lalande et al., 2000; Lazarovits, 2001). With larger (increases in) microbial populations, shifts in nutrient cycling occur. Several studies indicate manure additions increase bacteria involved in the nitrogen cycle. Lalande et al. (2000) reported an increase in the nitrogen mineralizer population after application of liquid swine manure. Kubat et al. (1999b) showed an increase in nitrification with manure addition compared to mineral fertilizers on a fallow field. These increases can be beneficial in terms of supplying crop nutrients, but can contribute to nitrate leaching if manure is applied at excessive rates.

Plant diseases can decrease with the increase in microbial biomass and species diversity, because competition between microbial consumers and an increase in predatory species will limit the growth of pathogens. There are two recent studies that report disease suppression with manure by this mechanism. Bullock et al. (1999) found swine manure significantly decreased the occurrence of southern blight (*Sclerotium rolfsii*) in tomatoes and increased populations of bacteria that are antagonistic to *Sclerotia*. Aryantha et al. (2000) attributed the suppression of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* by composted poultry manure to its ability to sustain biological activity of endospore-forming bacteria. This study did not find consistent disease suppression with either fresh or composted cow, sheep or horse manure.

Other work indicates high nitrogen manure, such as that from poultry and swine, can suppress diseases by generating high ammonia and/or nitrous acid concentrations in the soil (Lazarovits, 2001). Preliminary testing of additions of anhydrous ammonia and synthetic nitrite additions indicated these do not provide the same disease control. Volatile fatty acids and acetic acid in swine manure were also shown to be effective in reducing verticillium wilt and potato scab (Lazarovits, 2001). The ability of manure to generate a sufficient concentration of these compounds to suppress disease depended on pH, organic matter content, buffering capacity, and nitrification rate of the soil.

Reported manure effects on plant-parasitic nematode populations are variable. Nematodes play an important role in agricultural systems, both as plant parasites and as important contributors to the re-mobilization of nutrients (Coleman et al., 1984). Griffiths et al. (1994) reported decreases in plant parasitic nematodes with poultry manure, but no effects from cattle manure. Neher and Olsen (1999) reported increases in plant-parasitic nematodes in manure only systems. They indicated the abundance of plant parasitic nematodes were due to a wide variety of factors including quality and quantity of the organic amendment, other soil

fertility factors, the use of pesticides, crop rotations and other management factors. Several studies reported increases in bacterivorous nematodes with manure additions (Bohlen and Edwards, 1994; Griffiths et al., 1994; Neher and Olsen, 1999). This may have the effect of increasing availability of nutrients for plant growth (Ingham et al., 1985).

Organic matter is known to affect activity, degradation, and persistence of pesticides (Bollag et al., 1992; Benoit et al., 1996; Piccolo et al., 1998), and the application rates of some pesticides are based on SOM content. There are several recent laboratory studies reporting manure effects on the leaching and degradation of pesticides. Gan et al. (1998) reported composted manure reduced volatilization of the fungicides - methyl bromide and methyl isocyanate. Poultry litter has been shown to double the degradation rate of atrazine (Gupta and Baummer, 1996). This effect may be beneficial in terms of preventing leaching to groundwater and is thought to be due to an increase in microorganism activity. Guo et al. (1991) showed that manure decreased atrazine leaching in coarse-textured soils, though not as effectively as waste activated C or digested municipal sewage sludge.

Some studies suggest that the agronomic qualities of composted manure are superior to those of raw manure (Rynk, 1994). The stabilized organic matter in high quality composts quickly adds humus to the soil. Land application of composted rather than fresh manure has the potential for reducing weed seed viability and thus reducing herbicides needed (Edwards et al., 1994). Maynard (1994) found that yearly applications of spent mushroom compost and poultry manure compost increased the yields of eight varieties of vegetables when compared to control plots fertilized with equivalent rates of N, P, and K. Part of the advantage that compost offers may lie in the fact that the variety of microbial and biological stimulants in the compost may actually inoculate the soils.

### ***Manure Reduces Runoff and Soil Loss***

As discussed above, soil physical properties such as infiltration, aggregation and bulk density can be improved by manure application (Mielke and Mazurak, 1976; Sommerfeldt and Chang, 1985). These changes in soil properties can have a substantial impact on the runoff and soil loss from fields where manure has been land applied.

Several laboratory studies using rainfall simulators have been conducted to measure the effects of manure application on runoff and erosion (Mitchell and Gunther, 1976; Westerman et al., 1983). Runoff and erosion rates were found to be influenced by manure characteristics, loading rates, incorporation, and the time between application and the first rainfall. The addition of either swine, cattle or poultry manure in these studies caused a reduction in runoff and soil loss from relatively small laboratory test areas. However, Gilley et al. (1999) found that the long term application (55 years) of beef cattle manure at a rate of 27 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> to a Tripp sandy loam soil did not significantly influence interrill erosion. Barrington and Madramootoo (1989) investigated seal formation on two soils using (a) swine manure slurry. They found that manure solids did form seals and the location of these seals was dependent on soil type and the solids content of the slurry. Chandra and De (1983) showed that the effects of manure on soil erosion change with time. In their lab study on several soils in India, soil erosion did not vary on samples where cattle manure was incubated for 15 days while it decreased on samples incubated for 30 days. This may be due to the time required for organic matter in manure to impact soil properties and indicates why longer term experiments under field conditions may be better suited

to show the impacts of manure on runoff and erosion.

Rainfall simulators have also been used to measure runoff and erosion on field sites where manure has been added. Poultry litter applied to fallow soil was found to cause substantial decreases in runoff and soil loss (Giddens and Barnett, 1980). Reduced soil losses are also reported from the addition of dairy manure to corn plots (Mueller et al., 1984). Bushee et al. (1999) found that runoff from simulated rainfall after swine slurry application was lower, but not significantly different from sites with no manure, and that chemical amendments could alter the amount of runoff produced. Sauer et al. (1999) showed that runoff volumes for treatments with dairy manure or poultry litter were higher or not significantly different under simulated rainfall. Gilley and Eghball (1998) found that runoff and erosion immediately following two simulated rainfall events were not significantly influenced by a single application of beef cattle manure or compost under either no-till or tillage conditions. The time period required for beneficial soil properties to develop following manure application is not known. Rainfall simulators have been effectively used to provide valuable data for a given set of experimental conditions. However, repeated rainfall simulation runs would be required to characterize temporal changes in cropping and management factors resulting from land application. Field plots established to collect runoff from natural precipitation events might be better suited for identifying the effects of manure application on annual runoff and soil loss.

When conducting studies of solid manure application and its impact on soil erosion, it is important to distinguish between manure solids loss and soil loss. Westerman et al. (1983) found that solids lost from bare plots treated with poultry litter were between 8 and 92% greater than solids lost from untreated clay and sandy loam plots. However, Giddens and Barnett (1980) found that solids loss was reduced by as much as 50% when up to 22.4 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> of poultry litter was applied to bare plots on a sandy loam soil. Khaleel et al. (1979) developed a soil/manure particle transport model that accounted for different erodibilities of soil and manure particles; however, erodibility values for manure are difficult to determine. Edwards et al. (1994a) looked at the relationships between solids yield and the erodibility of poultry litter and litter application rate, rainfall intensity, and interval between litter application and the first rainfall event using simulated rainfall on a fescue pasture. They found the solids yield increased with both litter application rate and rainfall intensity. The increase was attributed to the relatively high erodibility of poultry litter particles in comparison to soil. They suggested that water quality models could account for this through an appropriate increase in soil erodibility (K values) for the first few post-application storms.

Monitoring soil and water losses from natural precipitation events is labor intensive and expensive. As a result, few studies have recently been initiated in which runoff and soil losses were measured from land application areas. Long et al. (1975) did not report erosion values but did report significantly less runoff over three years from natural runoff (0.04 ha) plots that were treated with 45 Mg ha<sup>-1</sup> of dairy manure. Wood et al. (1999) conducted a study on 33 by 33 m plots planted in corn and rye on a silty clay soil with two rates of broiler litter and a fertilized control. They observed a nonsignificant trend toward reduced runoff on the broiler litter treated plots and significantly lower flow-weighted sediment losses than the fertilizer control in the second year of the study. Vories et al. (1999) found similar results on 0.6 ha cotton fields. Treatments that received poultry litter exhibited significantly less total runoff and sediment losses than treatments of commercial fertilizer; however, they noted that sediment concentrations

tended to increase on the litter treated plots for events immediately following application. Gilley and Risse (2001) reviewed more than 70 plot-years of natural runoff plot data from seven locations under a variety of tillage and cropping conditions. For locations where manure was applied annually, manure treated plots reduced runoff from 2 to 62% and soil loss from 15 to 65% compared to untreated plots. At every location, runoff and soil loss reductions were observed. The amount of reduction was strongly related to the amount of manure added.

Many of the studies on runoff and erosion present mixed or unclear results; however most suggest less runoff and soil erosion when solid manures are land applied. The results using lagoon effluent or slurries are less conclusive. Nevertheless, this is a substantial benefit that should be considered when determining the water quality impacts of land application of manures. Many studies look at the concentration of pollutants coming from fields where manure has been used. These concentrations may be higher, however if runoff is reduced, the total loads may be lower. Recently, increased emphasis has been placed on water quality models to help manage water resources. These models are being used to both assess water quality and allocate non-point source loads. Often these models adequately account for the land application of manure through increased nutrient availability; however, adjustments to runoff or soil erosion are rarely made. If modifications are not made, these models may overestimate the impacts of manure on pollutant loads in surface runoff. Likewise, decreases in runoff may result in greater N leaching that could impact losses to groundwater.

### ***Manure Application can Sequester Carbon***

Global climate change is driven by increased emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). The terrestrial pool of C is dominated by organic C in soil (IPCC, 2000). Fixation of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere into plant biomass via photosynthesis drives the C cycle. Consumption of plant tissue by animals ultimately leads to a partitioning of C into animal biomass, CO<sub>2</sub> respired by animals, and fecal deposition of C in unutilized byproducts. Land applied animal manures are eventually decomposed by soil microorganisms and may contribute to the pool of SOM, if stabilized biochemically or biophysically. Land application of animal manures could help mitigate potentially negative consequences of rising atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> on the global climate by contributing to greater sequestration of C in soil (CAST, 1992).

From a whole-farm simulation of the relative contributions of various agricultural components to soil organic C in Ontario, Beauchamp and Voroney (1994) concluded "...manure contributes a relatively small proportion of the C to soil compared to crop roots and residue, especially in swine systems, unless straw bedding is included." The small contribution of manure to soil organic C is supported by a study in Georgia, where poultry litter applied at rates between 4.5 and 26.9 kg m<sup>-2</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> for two years resulted in a decline in organic matter from loss on ignition and no change in total N (Jackson et al., 1977). However, this interpretation is not supported by several other studies. Table 2 shows the results of numerous C studies that attempted to measure sequestration rates in a variety of locations using differing methodologies, locations, and organic amendments.

Authors	Location	Biomass	C Sequestration Rates (g m <sup>-2</sup> yr <sup>-1</sup> )
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Kapkiyai et al., 1999	Kenya	Maize-bean rotation with application of cattle manure or crop stover (18 years)	10 to 23: 5-12% retention of manure C
Agbenin and Goladi, 1997	Nigeria	Cotton-guinea corn-groundnut rotation with cattle manure (45 years)	20 to 22; about 10% retention of manure C
Franzluebbers et al., 2001	Georgia, U.S.	Bermudagrass pasture with poultry litter (5 years)	26±55 with various harvest strategies; 14±30% retention of manure C
Kingery et al., 1994	Alabama, U.S.	Tall fescue pasture with poultry litter (21 years)	30; 8% retention of manure C
Gupta et al., 1992	India	Pearl millet-wheat rotation with farmyard manure (20 years)	21 to 54; 3 to 5% retention with higher retention at lower rates
Govi et al., 1992	Italy	Range soil with cattle manure (22 years)	20; 53 to 66% higher than non-manure plots
Buyanovsky and Wagner, 1998	Missouri, U.S.	Wheat and Maize with inorganic fertilizer and manure	33 and 53 greater on manure treatments than inorganic treatments
Collins et al., 1992	Oregon, U.S.	Wheat with manure (56 years)	19; 23% retention of manure C and 36% higher than inorganic treatments
Bhogal and Shepherd, 1997	England	Poultry litter application on sandy soil (4 years)	102; 48% of that applied
Authors	Location	Biomass	C Sequestration Rates ( $\text{g m}^{-2} \text{yr}^{-1}$ )
Webster and Goulding, 1989	England	Farmyard manure application (135 years)	50; 17% retention of applied C
Sommerfeldt et al., 1988 and Chang et al., 1991	Alberta	Cattle manure applied to cropland at 3, 6, and 9 $\text{kg m}^{-2} \text{yr}^{-1}$ (11 years)	164, 309, and 400; 32±4% of applied C
Wani et al., 1994	Northern Alberta	Farmyard manure (8 years)	40 to 90; compared with a continuous grain system with inorganic fertilizer
Angers and N'Dayegamiye,	Quebec	Corn with cattle manure; application rates of 4 and 8 kg	146 and 223; 7 to 10% of applied C in soil

1991		$\text{m}^{-2} \text{ yr}^{-1}$ (10 years)	
Liang and Mackenzie, 1992	Ontario	Maize cropping system with cattle manure	$122 \text{ g} \cdot \text{m}^{-2} \cdot \text{yr}^{-1}$ to a depth of 20 cm
Aoyama et al., 1999	Quebec	Long-term crop rotation experiment with manure application (18 years)	56 to 90; about half was found in macroaggregates and half in microaggregates, suggesting that C supplied with manure to tilled soils can be physically protected within water-stable aggregates
Christensen, 1988	Denmark	Manure application to soil (60 years)	15; two-thirds of the increase in the clay fraction and essentially no increase in the sand fraction

In general, soil organic C sequestration on a land area basis appears to be greater with an increased rate of manure application (Sommerfeldt et al., 1988; Gupta et al., 1992). However, high nutrient loading could pose environmental threats to water quality. Climatic regime is another important variable that appears to affect potential retention of applied C in soil. Thermic regions tended to have lower C retention rates from manure ( $7 \pm 5\%$ ) than temperate or frigid regions ( $23 \pm 15\%$ ). Higher temperature would be expected to decompose manure more completely based on thermodynamic mechanisms that control soil microbial activity. Higher moisture would also be expected to accelerate decomposition of applied C to soil, yet C retention rates in moist regions ( $8 \pm 4\%$ ) did not vary significantly from dry regions ( $11 \pm 14\%$ ).

#### Manure Impacts Emissions of Methane and Nitrous Oxide

Climate forcing potential is a function of radiative forcing (i.e., the expected effect from the addition of a unit of gas on the radiation balance of the earth), mean lifetime (i.e., how long the forcing by a unit of gas is expected to continue), and emissions (i.e., total quantity of gas emitted). Of the three main gases that are influenced by land management and that are responsible for the potential greenhouse effect, carbon dioxide ( $\text{CO}_2$ ) has the greatest climate forcing potential (57%), while methane ( $\text{CH}_4$ ) and nitrous oxide ( $\text{N}_2\text{O}$ ) account for 27% and 16% respectively (CAST, 1992). Methane and  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$  emissions on a global scale are only 2 and 0.1% of those of  $\text{CO}_2$ , but since they have 58 and 206 times greater radiative forcing potential, they are of significance to potential climate change issues. A significant portion of  $\text{CH}_4$  emitted to the atmosphere can be sequestered by aerobic soils. Thus, land application of manure could decrease significantly the net quantity of  $\text{CH}_4$  emitted to the atmosphere compared with stockpiling or long-term lagoon storage of manure.

Methane is emitted biologically to the atmosphere via methanogenic bacteria living in anaerobic soils, the rumen of cattle and sheep, and the intestinal tract of termites. Livestock

production of CH<sub>4</sub> (i.e., both from enteric fermentation and from animal waste storage) is estimated to be 20 to 34% of all CH<sub>4</sub> produced globally (CAST, 1992; IPCC, 2000). The fraction of C in feedstuffs converted to CH<sub>4</sub> in high-quality grain diets is less than in low-quality grass diets (Harper et al., 1999). However, how manure is handled could have major significance on the net quantity of CH<sub>4</sub> emitted to the atmosphere from livestock. It remains unclear what the net emission rate would be from cattle fed on pastures (i.e., higher enteric release of CH<sub>4</sub>, but lower manure release of CH<sub>4</sub>) compared with cattle managed in confinement (i.e., lower enteric release of CH<sub>4</sub>, but higher manure release of CH<sub>4</sub>).

Nitrous oxide is emitted to the atmosphere primarily through the process of denitrification occurring in soil. The process of denitrification emits both N<sub>2</sub> and N<sub>2</sub>O, the former being a harmless gas that dominates the atmosphere and the latter being a radiatively active trace gas. The proportion of denitrification occurring as N<sub>2</sub>O increases under more aerobic conditions, with lower soil organic C content, soil pH, and soil temperature (Betlach and Tiedje, 1981).

Potential denitrification is strongly influenced by the water-soluble organic C content of manures, with slurries often containing greater concentrations of this important component than stacked or composted manures (Paul and Beauchamp, 1989). A soil with 3 times greater soil organic C due to long-term manure application resulted in 2.9 g N m<sup>-2</sup> lost via denitrification during the October-November period following barley harvest compared with 0.5 g N m<sup>-2</sup> lost in soil without manure application (Webster and Goulding, 1989). Despite differences in surface SOM, denitrification in the subsoil was unaffected by long-term application of farmyard manure because of the lack of biologically active C deep in the profile (Richards and Webster, 1999). However, on a sandy soil receiving poultry litter, 5% of the total applied C was leached as dissolved organic C at a depth of 1 m, although the extent of denitrification was not determined (Bhagal and Shepherd, 1997).

Liquid manure provides readily oxidizable C and sufficient mineralizable N to activate the population of denitrifiers in soil. Comfort et al. (1990) found that most of the N<sub>2</sub>O emission occurred within the first 5 days following injection of manure into soil when soil CO<sub>2</sub> evolution was greatest. Rainfall to saturate soil at 25 days following injection resulted in little emission of N<sub>2</sub>O despite the presence of significant nitrate, due to much lower microbial activity following exhaustion of readily decomposable C. Rapid, but relatively brief (i.e., within 30 days) emission of N<sub>2</sub>O occurred following swine slurry application to a soil with a history of manure application in Quebec (Rochette et al., 2000). Cumulative N<sub>2</sub>O-N loss was 0.1 g m<sup>-2</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> (0.6% of total N applied) from inorganically fertilized soil, 0.2 g m<sup>-2</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> (1.2% of total N applied) from soil receiving 6 kg m<sup>-2</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> of swine slurry, and 0.4 g m<sup>-2</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> (1.7% of total N applied) from soil receiving 12 kg m<sup>-2</sup> yr<sup>-1</sup> of swine slurry.

### Composting of Manure to Enhance Soil Organic C Sequestration

Composting of animal manure reduces volume, limits odors, stabilizes nutrients, kills weed seeds and pathogens, and reduces volatile organic compounds that can be detrimental to sensitive plants. Chemical changes during composting can affect C cycling processes. Composting of cattle manure doubled the proportion of humic substances from 35% before composting to 70% at the end of 100 days of composting (Inbar et al., 1990). The humic component that increased the most was humic acid (i.e., from 18% before composting to 45%

after composting). Composting of feedlot cattle manure resulted in  $51 \pm 9\%$  loss of C (almost all through biological oxidation) and  $31 \pm 12\%$  loss of N ( $>90\%$  through  $\text{NH}_3$  volatilization) during three different years (Eghball et al., 1999). Composting of poultry litter resulted in 16% loss of C via decomposition during 65 days (Mondini et al., 1996). The loss of N during composting was more substantial (49%), largely due to  $\text{NH}_3$  volatilization during initial aeration and mixing of moist compost. Drying of poultry litter preserved much of the C and N of the original material (8% loss of C, but 21% gain of N), as well as increased the humic fraction with time although not as much as with composting (Mondini et al., 1996). The gain in N during drying of poultry litter was probably due to  $\text{NH}_3$  deposition from air circulated inside the poultry house.

Decomposition of animal manures in soil is dependent upon a number of factors including type of manure, feeding ration, animal age, living conditions of animal, and how manure is handled, as well as moisture and temperature conditions in the soil. The proportion of C in manure that decomposed during four weeks of incubation was  $35 \pm 9\%$  among six fresh manures, but was only  $12 \pm 12\%$  among four composted manures (Castellanos and Pratt, 1981). Similarly, the proportion of C in sheep manure that was mineralized to  $\text{CO}_2$  during four weeks was  $\sim 18\%$  when fresh, but only  $\sim 13\%$  when anaerobically stored (Sørensen and Jensen, 1995). However, during the subsequent eight weeks of incubation, no difference in decomposition occurred between fresh and anaerobically stored sheep manures. The proportion of C in manure that was mineralized during 10 weeks of aerobic incubation in soil was 23% from aerobically composted swine manure, 75% from fresh swine manure, and 105% from anaerobically composted swine manure (Bernal and Kirchmann, 1992). Overall, these results suggest that C in manures is lost during composting, and therefore, the remainder of C is less decomposable when applied to land.

### **Limitations of Land Application**

There are several impediments that discourage greater use of manure nutrients in cropping systems including potential water quality problems associated with runoff from fields receiving manure, uncertainty associated with the nutrient availability in manure, and high transportation, application, and handling costs that discourage transport and greater utilization. Public perception and odor issues also discourage greater use.

### ***Excessive Application Results in Water Quality Impacts***

The EPA has identified agriculture as the leading source of pollution to rivers and streams (USEPA, 1998). Animal agriculture, in particular, has been the focus of increasing regulatory pressure throughout the nation. As with any type of nutrient application to the land, there are environmental risks associated with land application of animal manures. Although land application of manures has many beneficial aspects, there are potentially detrimental effects for ground and surface waters if manure is not managed properly. The primary pollutants of concern are N, P, oxygen demand, pathogens, and hormones. Surface water is primarily affected through soluble contaminants in runoff or insoluble pollutants carried on soil particles during soil erosion events. Ground water can be contaminated from percolation, seepage, and direct infiltration.

Nutrients are the most common pollutant associated with animal waste. Several studies have documented the fact that watersheds with predominantly animal agriculture tend to have

higher nutrient levels in their drainage systems. In fact, an EPA study of 928 watersheds across the nation (Omenik, 1977) found that mean concentrations of N and P in streams draining agricultural lands were nearly nine times higher than streams draining forested areas. Nitrogen and phosphorous compounds are needed for cellular growth; however, excessive amounts in surface waters result in eutrophication, algal blooms, and fish kills (Loehr, 1984).

Major pathways for N losses are ammonia volatilization, emissions of nitrogen gases including ammonia and  $\text{NO}_x$ , leaching of nitrates, and offsite transport by wind and water erosion. The greatest potential for mass transport of N ( $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ ,  $\text{N}_2\text{O}$ ,  $\text{NO}_x$  and  $\text{NH}_3$ ) from agriculture to the environment occurs with conversion of N to  $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$  form in the crop root zone and subsequent leaching to shallow aquifers (Kronvang et al., 2001). Nitrogen leaching losses from common grain production systems typically range from 10% to 30% of the total N applied (Meisinger and Delgado, 2002). Leaching occurs when the soil water pool has a concentration of nitrate nitrogen and an irrigation or rain event causes this soil water to move beyond the plant rooting zone. Strategies that hold N and soil water in the root zone and allow for plant utilization are often the most effective at reducing nitrate leaching losses.

Application of manures to crops or grasses at rates that exceed plant requirements for N can result in leaching of nitrate to ground water. For example, in Sussex County Delaware, which produces more chickens than any other county in the U.S., there is a large area where ground water is contaminated by nitrate (Andres, 1995). Seepage from unlined lagoons can also cause ground water contamination by nitrate (Huffman and Westerman, 1995). Runoff from fields with recently applied, unincorporated manure can result in high levels of N in surface waters. This can cause eutrophication and low dissolved oxygen levels, especially in estuaries where N is more limiting than P for algal growth. Also, ammonium at high concentrations can cause a direct toxicity to fish (Frick et al., 1998).

While both N and P contribute to eutrophication, P is the primary agent in freshwater eutrophication. In most cases, controlling eutrophication requires reducing P inputs to surface waters. Soil P exists in a number of mineral and organic forms, but most of it is adsorbed to iron and Al oxides (Sharpley and Sheffield, 2000). These oxides create a large, but not unlimited, number of adsorption sites for P. When adsorption sites are saturated, there is a potential for increased P dissolved in the soil water. This dissolved P is available to plants, and susceptible to runoff and leaching. As manure and fertilizers are added to soil, P levels at the soil surface increase sharply, but there is typically little increase in subsoil due to P adsorption. In very sandy soils that are low in iron and Al oxides, P can move into the subsoil or shallow groundwater. Ground water is not affected by P because of the absence of algae. Only when ground water returns quickly to a stream, river, or lake, is P leaching to ground water a concern (Sims et al., 1998).

In recent years, research has shown that the concentration of P in runoff from agricultural fields becomes greater as the P content in the topsoil increases (Pote et al., 1996; Andraski and Bundy, 2003). This is partly due to soil particles with high concentrations of adsorbed P being washed off the field through natural soil erosion processes. However, even in grass fields, where there is little erosion, dissolved P concentrations in runoff increase with soil test P. Phosphorus is cycled from roots to aboveground parts of the plant and redeposited in crop residues on the soil surface. When rain occurs there is a thin layer of water near the surface that mixes with the soil water. If the concentration of P in the soil water is high (because most of the adsorption sites

near the surface are filled with P), then the concentration in the runoff water will also be high.

Soil P levels at the surface are unlikely to reach concentrations that will cause environmentally harmful concentrations in runoff unless manures are being used. Even though farmers have been encouraged to increase soil P levels in the past, the cost of fertilizers usually discourages over-application of P. Manure presents a special problem because the N-to-P ratio in manure is lower than that needed by crops. In most crop tissues, there are about 10 lb of N for every lb of P, or a ratio of 10-to-1 but manure usually has a much lower ratio. For example, a typical sample of swine anaerobic lagoon slurry would have 128 lbs of total N and 22 lbs of P per acre-inch of lagoon effluent (Barker et al., 1994). Since only about half of the manure N is available to plants (due to gaseous and other losses), the true ratio of N-to-P is about 3-to-1. As a result of the low N-to-P ratio in manure, residual P builds up to environmentally harmful levels in fields that receive repeated applications.

Dry manures present a special additional problem when they are applied to grass fields and not incorporated. Under these circumstances, there is very little contact between the manure P and the soil. Rainwater mixing directly with the manure can cause a high concentration of dissolved P in the runoff. Some of the adsorbed organic P is transported by runoff as the manure is eroded from the site. Research has shown that runoff P concentrations are unrelated to soil P in these situations (Sauer et al., 2000). Runoff P concentrations can be quite high ( $> 25$  mg/L) when runoff occurs within a few weeks of manure application (Kuykendall et al., 1999).

The oxygen demand created by manure reaching surface water can also be a concern. When organic matter enters waterways, it is degraded by aerobic bacteria exerting biochemical oxygen demand (BOD). Most animal manures have BOD in excess of 20,000 mg/l and chemical oxygen demand (COD) over 50,000 mg/l. This compares with BOD and COD for domestic sewage in the range of 200 mg/l and 500 mg/l respectively. The high oxygen demand associated with runoff from livestock waste can rapidly deplete the water's natural dissolved oxygen supply. This could result in fish kills and reduce the diversity of other aquatic life (Tchobanoglous and Schroeder, 1987; Loehr, 1984). Organic matter also increases the total suspended solids in a stream, thus increasing the turbidity. The decomposition of organic matter contributes to color, taste, and odor problems in public water systems (Tchobanoglous and Schroeder, 1987).

Less research has been done on bacteria and other pathogens in manures and their impact on water quality. Microorganisms occurring naturally in livestock waste can contaminate surface waters making them unfit for consumption, recreational, and industrial use. Pathogenic organisms in wastes may survive for days in surface waters depending upon environmental conditions. Factors affecting microbial survival include pH, temperature, nutrient supply, competition with other organisms, ability to form spores, and resistance to inhibitors. The ability of pathogenic organisms to cause disease depends upon their concentration, virulence, ingestion and resistance (Loehr, 1984). The standard indicator organism for bacteria is fecal coliform (FC) that is harmless to humans, but indicates the presence of fecal matter and other potentially harmful bacteria and viruses. Concentrations of FC in fresh manures are typically on the order of  $10^6$  CFU  $g^{-1}$  (Barker et al., 1994). A number of studies have measured FC concentrations in runoff or in streams from agricultural areas. The concentrations were usually between  $10^3$  and  $10^6$  CFU  $100\text{ mL}^{-1}$  of water (Stephenson and Street, 1978; Doran and Linn, 1979; Jawson et al., 1982; Gary et al., 1983; Thelin and Gifford, 1983; Tiedemann et al., 1988; Edwards and Daniels, 1994; Edwards et al., 1997; Cook et al., 1998). Bacterial die-off is caused by extremes

in temperature, drying, and sunlight. Die-off can generally be described with an exponential decay equation and reported half-lives are relatively short, ranging from (from) one to four and a half days (Crane et al., 1980; Crane and Moore, 1986). A more in-depth review of pathogen related issues associated with manure can be found in Strauch and Ballarini (1994) and Sobsey et al., 2002.

Hormones such as estrogen and testosterone are present at relatively high concentrations in manures, especially poultry manure (Shore et al., 1995). These, along with other similar synthetic chemicals, act as *endocrine disrupters* and high levels in streams and drinking water are thought to cause a number of biological development abnormalities including sterility. Nichols et al. (1997) measured levels of estradiol (the most potent form of estrogen) in runoff from plots receiving different rates of poultry litter using a rainfall simulator immediately after application and seven days after application. Estradiol increased linearly with application rate. Concentrations after seven days were much lower than on first day but still above the control. Finlay-Moore et al. (2000) measured estradiol in runoff caused by natural rainfall from fields receiving poultry litter. Runoff concentrations were between 20 and 2,530 ng/L, depending on the rate of application and the time since application. Peterson et al. (2000) measured estradiol concentrations between 6 and 66 ng/L in spring water draining from an area in Arkansas where poultry litter had been applied to fields. Concentrations above 25 ng/L are thought to have an impact on stream biota.

The principal ways to reduce risks associated with land application involve appropriate application rate, timing, and location (Sharpley et. al., 2000). These issues are commonly addressed through nutrient management planning and best management practices. Even under ideal conditions with a well-planned system, there are still nutrient losses to the environment. Some strategies for reducing nutrient losses that can be applied to land application systems are outlined below as adapted from Mosier et al., 2002; Meisinger and Delgado, 2002; and U.S. EPA, 2002.

### Strategies to reduce nutrient losses from land application systems

#### ***Match nitrogen supply with crop demand***

- Nutrient Management Planning on all areas where nutrients are applied
- Test soil to determine appropriate application rates
- Use site monitoring tools such as pre-sidedress soil nitrate tests, leaf chlorophyll, and tissue nitrate test to minimize excess N rates
- Minimize fallow periods that allow for N leaching through the root zone
- Use realistic yield goals that can be obtained
- Manure and Organic by-product analysis to determine appropriate plant available N
- Utilize all N sources including credits for nutrients from organic materials applied in previous years, accounting for legume contributions, and conserving crop residues
- Properly calibrate and operate application equipment
- Improve application equipment to apply more uniform and precise rates
- Use grass cover crops or scavenger crops in use excess nutrients and water

#### ***Timing of nutrient applications***

- Apply N in phase with crop demand
- Use multiple applications rather than applying all the annual N needs in a single application
- Avoid applications prior to periods of excessive rainfall or periods that are prone to leaching
- Use irrigation scheduling to prevent over application of water

#### ***Optimize tillage, irrigation, and drainage***

- Incorporate N into plant root zone
- Use reduced tillage systems to conserve residues and control soil erosion
- Maintain optimum soil water balance to avoid saturated conditions prone to leaching losses or dry conditions that limit plant utilization
- When irrigating, apply at hydrologic rates that minimize runoff and leaching losses

#### ***Avoid areas prone to losses***

- Avoid applications in areas prone to losses such as sinkholes, drains, lands near surface water, highly erodible soils, and areas with high water tables.
- Use of riparian zones or conservation reserve areas to capture nutrients in shallow groundwater
- Use of N-indexes or crop simulation models to improve N application strategies.

### **Nutrient Management Planning to Reduce Impacts**

Using application rates that provide crops with sufficient nutrients without having adverse environmental effects is one of the most critical land application issues. This is commonly accomplished through the development of nutrient management plans (NMPs). Studies have shown that the best method of avoiding groundwater and surface water contamination and possible crop damage is to limit applied manure to the amount required by the crop (CAST, 1996). This means that the total crop requirement, the nutrient pool in the soil, and the nutrient content of the manure must all be considered. Crop nutrient requirements are generally well known and can be obtained from a variety of sources. The nutrient content of the soil can be determined through soil testing. The quantity and characteristics of livestock or poultry waste are highly variable and differ significantly from the initial values for manure excreted by the animal to the time of land application. Therefore, manure analysis is required.

Nutrients applied from animal manure should match the needs of the crop, but the ratios of N, P, K, and the various micronutrients excreted by animals are generally different from crop requirements. Not only does this present problems for the development of application rate recommendations, but it also produces nutrient imbalances in the soils and crops that receive animal manures (See Daniel et al., 2001 and Zhang et al., 2001). Plans can be based on the N or P content of the manure, depending on which nutrient has the greater impact on receiving waters. Phosphorus-based NMPs will also control N since they call for much lower application rates. Phosphorus content in manure can also be controlled by altering the feed ration by making the P more digestible through the use of phytase or new corn hybrids with a highly digestible form of P (Ertl et al., 1998). Alum can also be used to immobilize P in manure (Moore and Miller, 1994). The long-term solution to excess P is to return to a regional balance where locally grown grain is fed to livestock and the manure P returned to the grain fields. Ideally, the value of animal manures could be maximized if each individual nutrient could be separated and removed from the waste mixture and crop and soil specific fertilizer mixtures could then be reformulated.

By reducing application rates through the use of NMPs, concentrations of FC and hormones are also reduced. Another way to reduce FC and perhaps hormones is by storing manure for a short period of time before applying it to fields. Hartel et al. (2000) found that FC in fresh broiler litter ranged from  $<10$  to  $10^8$  cols/g (45% of samples had FC below the detection level of 10 cols/g). By comparison, all stacked samples had FC concentrations less than the detection level. Because of the relatively high die-off rates of bacteria when manure is applied



to fields, direct deposition of manure in streams by cattle, can have a disproportionately large effect on stream FC concentrations. Therefore, fencing cattle out of streams may substantially reduce FC contamination (Cook et al., 1998).

Proper and timely application of animal manure is important in reducing nutrient losses and pollution potential. Time and method of application depend on climate, cropping system, management system, source and form of animal waste, and equipment and labor availability (Gilbertson et al., 1979). Animal waste should only be applied at periods when the nutrients can be used. For crops the best time is immediately prior to planting, while immediately following each hay harvest or grazing cycle usually results in optimal use in forage systems. More frequent applications of smaller amounts can increase plant uptake and use while decreasing the amount lost to the environment. The method of application is dependent on the form of the manure. Whatever form, the keys to successful application are that a known amount is applied at the proper location with minimal losses. All manure application systems should be calibrated regularly. Incorporation on cropland fields is also a recommended practice as it reduces odors, maximizes nutrient availability, and limits nutrient losses. Injection systems reduce odors and losses of ammonia and may be the most efficient application method; however, they are not used extensively because of the difficulty in injecting solid materials. Considerable improvements could be made in both the application equipment and methods.

The *USDA/EPA Unified National Strategy for Animal Feeding* (USDA-EPA, 1999) establishes a national performance expectation that all AFOs should develop and implement technically sound, economically feasible Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs). It goes on to reference the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Technical Guidance on Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (USDA, 2002) as the primary technical reference on CNMPs. Furthermore, nutrient management is recognized as the internationally accepted strategy to address field nutrient losses (Beegle et al., 2000). Traditionally, nutrient management has been concerned with optimizing the economic return from nutrients used for crop production. Land Grant Universities and crop consultants have been developing and using these types of NMPs for years. Today, the agronomic and economic requirements of nutrient management remain central, but in addition, the process is being expanded to include all of the potential environmental impacts of nutrients in the entire farm operation (Beegle et al., 2000).

As the concept of nutrient management planning evolves, there is considerable confusion over exactly what it entails. Part of this confusion is due to the conflicting goals of the agencies involved in developing and implementing nutrient management plans. The NRCS, a conservation planning and technical assistance organization, states that a CNMP is a grouping of conservation practices and management activities which, when implemented as part of a conservation system, will help ensure that both production and natural resource goals are achieved (USDA, 2002). They define CNMPs to include not only land application but also manure and wastewater handling and storage, land treatment including conservation practices addressing soil erosion and surface runoff, record keeping, feed management, and off-farm utilization. Meanwhile, the U.S. EPA has included requirements for NMP's on all CAFO's as part of their regulations on animal feeding operations (U.S. EPA, 2001a). The stated goals for these plans are to protect water quality and the environment by insuring that a confined animal feeding operation (CAFO) meets effluent discharge limitations and other requirements of the Clean Water Act permits. Some of these standards go beyond those required in CNMPs but the

requirements generally do not include the depth associated with CNMPs. In fact, the EPA defines a NMP as a subset of a CNMP (U.S. EPA, 2001b). Both CNMPs and NMPs go well beyond land application and expand the role of nutrient management planning to track nutrient flows throughout the animal feeding operation. Many of the issues that were covered under State regulations in the permits issued to AFOs are now being addressed through nutrient management plans making them more like a permit than a management plan. This increases both the cost and complexity of these plans; however, there is little evidence that it will decrease nutrient losses to the environment.

Few studies have documented the effectiveness of nutrient management plans and some studies suggest that it will be difficult for farmers to reduce environmental impacts even with well developed plans (Hutson et al., 1998). Often nutrient management plans do result in benefits for farmers and society, especially as an educational process; however, implementation of the plans has not been as great as desired (Beegle et al., 2000). Nowak et al. (1998) in a study of over 1,150 farms in Wisconsin found that very few farmers actually take nutrient credit for manure application and few recognize the economic or soil quality benefits derived from proper nutrient management. They found that, on average, these farmers could save \$38.86 per ha on commercial fertilizer through better utilization of on-farm nutrients. They concluded that a primary reason for this failure to credit manure nutrients was the complexity involved in the determination of these values and that only through the reduction or elimination of these constraints would proper nutrient management be realized. Jackson et al. (2000) looked at ten CAFOs in Iowa and found that operators minimized the area required for manure utilization in plans by underestimating manure N content, projecting above average crop yields, and applying manure to soybeans. Parsons et al. (1998) conducted an in-depth modeling study to examine the economic and environmental impact of nutrient management on dairy and poultry farms in Virginia. Their analysis included three differing approaches; requiring all manure to be incorporated and N and P based application rates. They found that requiring incorporation was not economically or environmentally sound, that an N based strategy would significantly reduce N losses at little cost to the farmers while reducing P losses only 3 to 15%, and that the P based strategy would provide the best environmental benefit but also come with a substantial cost to the farmer. In a similar study, Van Dyke et al. (1999) found that average N and P losses were reduced 23-45% and 23-66% while net income increased by \$395 to \$4,593 on three Virginia farms. Much of this economic data is dependent on assumptions concerning manure markets that are not well quantified.

A NMP must be practical to be effective (Beegle et al., 2000). For example, calculated manure application rates must be achievable in the field and the farmer must understand the principles involved in determining the application rate. As these plans become more comprehensive in nature, often requiring a “certified specialist” to develop them, they often become less practical and more difficult to implement. In fact, the bottom line to most producers is the determination of a recommended application rate. A slightly imperfect, less comprehensive, but practical plan will almost always provide greater results than a perfect one that is not practical to implement. More research is needed to determine the effectiveness of NMPs at addressing water quality concerns and the key components that should be addressed in these plans. This should be done in conjunction with detailed cost benefit analysis to determine key components.

There are also substantial extension needs to establish planning processes and to educate producers on the need for and benefits of NMPs. Currently, there is very little infrastructure in place and the impacts of requiring plans before it is available to farmers would lead to considerable confusion and misinformation (Meyer and Mullinax, 1999). It could also lead to frustration and reluctance on the part of smaller operators who are being encouraged to voluntarily develop plans. Some computer tools have been developed to assist farmers in developing nutrient management plans, however, most of these focus on obtaining proper and economical manure application rates and not developing a comprehensive plan for the farm (Levins et al., 1996; Thompson et al., 1997). Computer tools and decision support systems will be needed to develop CNMPs or NMPs on a national basis. These on-farm tools should attempt to minimize input data requirements and should serve as both development tools and educational aids for nutrient management plans.

Models should also be developed to evaluate manure management alternatives and farm policy. Due to the expense and labor requirements of long term field studies required to reliably quantify agricultural nonpoint source pollutants, computer models of nutrient management are needed to evaluate different management scenarios and application conditions (Shaffer, 2002; Sharpley et al., 2002; Sharpley and Meyer, 1994). These models should be developed at different levels. Research type models that require extensive inputs should be developed to evaluate manure management alternatives for the development of best management practice recommendations and farm policy (Gelata et al., 1994; Tim and Jolly, 1994). However, a major limitation to these models is often the lack of detailed parameterization data on soil properties and climate, crop, and tillage information. There is also a need for on-farm type models that require less input data and can be used as educational tools by farm owners and operators (Sharpley et al., 2003). Shaffer and Delgado, 2002 proposed development of a national nitrate leaching assessment tool, similar to a P-index, that would users to look at hydrologic soil properties, climate, cropping and management factors and off-site effects to determine when NO<sub>3</sub>-N losses should be considered. Clearly tools such as these have utility in improving land application systems. Recent developments in geographical information systems (GIS) and advanced interfaces could make many existing models more user friendly and help them to gain broader acceptance and use. GIS systems also have the potential to be used for targeting sensitive areas and for the development of nutrient management plans for smaller areas under site-specific or “precision” conditions.

## BMPs and Water Quality Protection

There are a number of other best management practices (BMPs) that can be adopted to minimize the water quality impact of manure. Any practice that reduces the amount of soil erosion or runoff from a field positively impacts surface water while practices that minimize leaching should prevent groundwater contamination. Excessive runoff should be avoided on areas where manure has been applied. The principal elements affecting runoff are rainfall characteristics, soil factors, climate, and land use. The total amount, timing, and intensity of rainfall influence the quantity of runoff that occurs from a given region. One of the most effective means of reducing runoff is to maintain high infiltration rates. Areas with a complete ground cover usually have high infiltration rates and are least susceptible to runoff. Conservation tillage, contouring and strip cropping, terraces, and vegetated waterways have all been used

effectively to minimize runoff. Narrow grass hedges have also been employed to reduce runoff, control erosion, decrease nutrient transport, and provide wildlife habitat.

Secondary treatment systems can also be used to prevent nutrient and pathogen movement to surface waters. Riparian buffers are very effective at reducing ground water N inputs to streams where ground water flow is restricted to shallow depths (Lowrance et al., 1995). The ideal streamside buffer consists of an undisturbed forest zone next to the stream and a managed zone next to the field which could consist of trees or a grass filter strip. Grass filter strips remove N and P adsorbed to sediment because they slow down the flow of water and cause the sediment to settle out. They have less of an effect on the P dissolved in runoff. Contour filter strips can reduce FC concentrations (Coyne et al., 1995), but more research is needed in this area.

Secondary containment systems and diversions can also reduce water quality impacts. These types of systems consist of berms or ditches around application areas to keep clean water from coming into contact with manure or wetlands. Sedimentation basins and farm ponds that trap and treat contaminated runoff also serve as effective management practices. The goal of these systems is not treatment, but to insure that contaminated runoff does not directly enter surface water. The need for these types of systems is highly dependent on the receiving water body because secondary systems are not always economically justified.

Studies addressing the cost-benefit and efficiency of secondary treatment systems on the farm and watershed scale are needed to aid in producer decisions and to help with TMDL modeling efforts. Research efforts should focus on developing technologies that use natural and modified drainage patterns to limit off-site transport of nutrients and the development of BMPs to synchronize nutrient availability from manure with crop nutrient needs. Tillage impacts on nutrient and pathogen loads should also be investigated as the trade-offs between nutrient distribution and non-point source loads are not clearly established. Educational programs and policies to inform and to encourage adoption of current conservation technologies and BMPs by farmers are also an immediate need.

For BMPs to be effective, they must be implemented as part of a total management system rather than individual practices because systems minimize the impact of the pollutant at several points: the source, the transport process, and the delivery (Osmond et al., 1995). Properly designed BMP systems must also be site specific and placed in the appropriate locations. Finally, since financial resources are limited, BMP implementation should be prioritized and cost-share money should be used in those locations that will have the greatest impact. Successful adaptation of on-farm BMPs is highly dependent on education. Producers must understand the impact their practices will have on the environment and the mechanism that the BMP uses to reduce this impact. More research is also needed to document the effectiveness of specific BMPs.

While manure treatment is beyond the scope of this text, the environmental impacts of land-applied manure are highly dependent on treatment. Most treatment processes reduce nutrient and pathogen loads and therefore impact the quality of runoff and leachate coming from fields where manure has been applied. Composting manure can reduce its impact on water quality. Most importantly, it will minimize, if not eliminate, bacterial contaminants. If excess N is a problem, composting will reduce available N levels due to ammonium volatilization and N transformations to less harmful organic forms. Unfortunately, composting reduces the available

P content only slightly (due to the formation of stabilized organic forms) (Vervoort et al., 1998). The result is that following composting the N-to-P ratio is even lower than in fresh manure and more out of balance with crop requirements.

### ***Variability in Manure Nutrient Content Limits Greater Use***

Farmers often choose to use commercial sources of fertilizers instead of manure because of variability and uncertainty concerning the nutrient content of manure. The quantity and characteristics of livestock or poultry wastes are highly variable. They depend on the animal type, ration, manure management system, climate, storage system, and time and method of land application (Gilbertson et al., 1979). The amount and type of animal bedding can also influence the nutrient content. More accurate information is needed concerning the effects of modern rations, breeding, and manure management systems on the value of animal wastes. The nutrient composition of manure can vary widely depending on animal species (Barnett, 1994a; Millmier et al., 2000) and management (Rieck-Hinz et al., 1996; Patterson et al. 1998). For example, P concentration has been found to range from 6.0 g P kg<sup>-1</sup> in dairy manure to 30.3 g P kg<sup>-1</sup> in layer manure (Barnett (1994a). Similarly, P concentration in poultry litter has been found to vary from 8.0 to 25.8 g P kg<sup>-1</sup> (Edwards and Daniel, 1994), depending on management. Using these estimates, an application of 5,000 kg poultry litter ha<sup>-1</sup> could provide 40 to 129 kg P ha<sup>-1</sup>. While 40 kg P ha<sup>-1</sup> would supply the P required by most crops, 129 kg P ha<sup>-1</sup> would result in an excessive application. This large difference indicates that it would be difficult to develop useful manure management plans based on average nutrient concentrations. Manure nutrient analysis is usually recommended to overcome this variability. Currently, most farmers must sample their manure regularly and often wait extended periods for test results. The development of inexpensive, on-farm nutrient tests would allow for testing at the time of application. For producers not testing their manure, educational and research emphasis should be placed on developing more site specific and detailed estimates of manure nutrient content as well as the economical and environmental effects of excessive application.

### ***Manure Sampling and Handling Limits Greater Use***

Obtaining representative manure samples presents unique challenges depending on the physical nature of the manure. In the case of dry manures (e.g. poultry litter, beef feedlot manure), one of the main challenges is to collect a representative sample from a material that may contain small fragments as well as large clumps. The ideal sample should contain small fragments and clumps in the same proportion in which they are present in the manure to be land applied. Furthermore, once the ideal sample is obtained, the whole sample should be ground to yield a homogeneous material from which to obtain a representative subsample for chemical analysis. Grinding presents challenges of its own because above a certain water content dry manures tend to cake during the grinding process. This problem leads to the need for drying before grinding, which in turn can lead to losses of N through ammonia volatilization (Gale et al., 1991). Several drying methods have been investigated in an effort to identify those that minimize N losses. In a study with poultry and other animal manures, Mahimairaja et al. (1990) found that overnight freezing, followed by freeze-drying for 3 d, caused minimum losses of N when compared to air drying for 10 d at room temperature, oven drying at 105°C for 48 h, and microwave oven drying at 700 W for 30 min. In contrast, Wood and Hall (1991) found that

freeze-drying poultry litter led to larger losses of total N than oven drying at 40°C for 3 d or microwave oven drying at 40°C for 30 min. Clearly, additional work is needed on sampling and drying methods for dry manures.

In the case of wet manures (e.g. dairy, poultry, and swine slurries), one of the main sampling challenges is to obtain a representative sample from a manure slurry that has different liquid and solid phases. Because the nutrient concentration of manure slurries varies depending on the solid concentration (Odell et al., 1995; Campbell et al., 1997), the ideal sample should contain liquid and solid phases in the same proportion in which they are present in the slurry to be land applied. It would therefore be ideal to take the sample while the slurry is being stirred in the same way in which it will be stirred during transfer to the spreader. Once the sample is collected, homogenization before sub sampling is needed to obtain a representative sub sample for chemical analysis.

Problems inherent to the analysis of manure samples were described in the section on nutrient availability. Chemical methods are faster than biological methods, but they still need to be conducted in the laboratory and require several days to complete. One of the potential problems with methods that require several days is that available N concentration in manure can change between sampling and application (Odell et al., 1995). Consequently, the ideal method would allow a quick determination of available N in the field, just before the manure is applied. Rapid methods are currently available for determination of ammonium in manure slurries (Van Kessel and Reeves, 2000), but are not available for measuring available N in dry manure. Additional research in this area is needed to develop rapid, accurate methods for testing dry manure in the field.

### ***Transportation and Handling Costs Limit Greater Use***

Most livestock farms (78 and 69 percent for N and P respectively) have adequate land to apply manure at agronomic rates; however, the farms where this is not the case account for over half the Nation's manure N and P (Gollehon et al., 2001). Where animal production is concentrated, the land base available for manure application is usually limited; however, there is usually sufficient land available where it would be feasible to apply manure. About 20 percent of the Nation's on-farm excess manure N is produced in counties with insufficient cropland acreage for land application at agronomic rates (Gollehon et al., 2001). In these situations, either transport to distant areas or alternative utilization strategies will be required.

The main barrier to increased transport of manure is economics. The collection, transport, storage and handling of manure to and from the point of processing are economic concerns. Freeze and Sommerfeldt (1985) found that manure from large feedlots could only be economically hauled up to 15 km in single axle trucks or pull type manure spreaders. The economic hauling distance is inherently tied to moisture content as the cost of hauling increases with moisture content. For this reason, off-farm transport of dry poultry litter is relatively common while lagoon effluent is rarely moved away from the farm of origin. Little research emphasis is being placed on the concepts of materials handling and metering for animal manure, yet, the economics of transporting the material to the point of use is often the greatest concern limiting the livestock producers from maximizing the use of this biomass resource (Gilbertson et al., 1984). Bosch and Napit (1992) found that export of poultry litter from surplus to deficit areas for use as a fertilizer in Virginia is often economically viable at larger scales; however,

large scale transfers of poultry litter were not occurring. They suggested that the use of government subsidies to crop producers who purchase litter for use as a fertilizer would encourage more research in transport and increase the incentives for commercial firms to provide litter transfer services. Many European governments do provide subsidized transport cost for manure and these programs have generally resulted in greater use of manure (Conway and Pretty, 1991). Better integration of farms that produce crops and livestock, and educational programs aimed at showing farmers the economic value of manure as a fertilizer are other methods of reducing transport costs. Separation, screening, condensing, and dewatering technologies could also be used to produce more transportable products; however, little research is being conducted in these areas.

### ***Public Perception and Odor Concerns Limit Greater Use***

Public perception of agriculture in general and land application of animal manure in particular is critical to continued acceptance of land application as the primary manure utilization strategy because it generally drives the regulatory process. Public concerns with animal manures can be broken into three major categories; water quality, air quality, and food quality. Land application of manures has the potential to negatively impact all three. The general public is dissociated from agriculture and popular press often is their primary source of information. Many issues not directly related to land application such as the changing scale of animal feeding operations, odor concerns of neighboring land owners, and atmospheric emissions from lagoons are increasingly receiving negative press. Land application of other materials such as municipal biosolids is also generating concerns. Information on the scientific basis for land application and its associated environmental risks, and an open discussion of alternative technologies needs to be communicated to the general public in an easily understood manner so that they are equipped to provide input on policy decisions.

Land application is also hindered in areas of urban and suburban populations by concerns about odors and flies. Air quality issues associated with land application of manure include off-site drift, ammonia emissions, and odor. Odor concerns are drawing increased attention as the urban/suburban areas expand into traditional agricultural areas. Odor problems are the number one complaint against animal growers received by state and federal regulatory agencies (Moore et al., 1995). Odors are a persistent problem near feedlots, loafing areas, and fields receiving land applications of manure. Since a manure odor is the product of complex interactions of many individual odorous components, it is difficult to accurately characterize it in terms of quality or quantity. There are many technologies for reducing the odor associated with land application of manures (See Bicuda et al., 2001). Odor control methods include treatment of manure, capture and treatment of emissions, increased odor dispersion, and diet modification (Sweeten, 1992). While research has documented many control strategies that can be effective in animal facilities, further efforts will be required to incorporate these ideas into land application systems. Odor suppressants, counteractants, masking agents, and numerous chemicals have also been used in animal production to reduce odors. The results have often been less than satisfactory. Further research could refine technologies for reducing odor impacts.

Food quality impacts associated with land application have not received as much attention; however, there is a growing concern among consumers over food quality issues (Strauch and Ballarini, 1994). Organic production, which usually depends on manure to

maintain soil fertility, represents one of the fastest growing segments in agriculture today. This may lead to increases in the use of manure on food crops. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recognizes that properly treated manure can be an effective and safe fertilizer; however it cautions that growers should follow recommended agricultural practices for handling manure to minimize microbial hazards (USDA, 1998). Some of these practices include treatments to reduce pathogens and maximizing the time between application and harvest. Recommendations for avoiding disease transmission include steps to reduce disease susceptibility and careful handling and spreading of manure from animals at a high risk for infection, especially young calves (Pell, 1997). Many producers, food safety organizations, and the USDA organic standards encourage the use of a 60-day waiting period between manure application to food crops and harvest. More research is needed to develop application and treatment methods to reduce the risk of pathogen transfer to food crops and to verify the safety of these practices. This should be coupled with educational programs that document food safety to the consumer.

### **Summary of Research, Extension and Policy Needs**

Land application of animal manure has been a cornerstone of animal agriculture. If used properly, manure could represent a much larger percentage of the total applied nutrients without concern for environmental degradation. Ultimately, in the pollution prevention hierarchy, utilization of manure nutrients on the farm as fertilizer input represents a more sustainable solution than other options such as off site transfer, energy production, or disposal. Further research and extension efforts could lead to this increased use. The following sections summarize some of the most pressing research and extension needs identified in this paper.

#### *Manure impacts on soil quality and crop growth*

- Research and educational programs focusing on quantification of the non-fertilizer value of manures is essential for greater utilization.
- More research should be conducted to demonstrate and place an economic value on the water quality benefits that manure offers in terms of reduced runoff and erosion.
- Studies that compare the agronomic qualities of different types of manure, including composts, are needed to demonstrate the value that processing choices have on soil and water quality.
- Studies to determine the long-term effects of manure application on soil physical, biological and chemical properties, on crop and animal productivity, and on adjacent ecosystems should be conducted.
- Research and extension projects focused on showing non-farm audiences that land application is safe, sustainable, and environmentally sound are needed.

#### *Manure and Carbon Sequestration*

- Research to document the long-term effects of manure handling (e.g., composting, additives) and soil management (e.g., tillage, liming, irrigation, fertilization) interactions on carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide fluxes and soil organic C sequestration.
- Studies to determine if manure treatment practices to reduce P availability (i.e., alum, Fe oxides) affect the stability of C in manure.



- Research to determine the impact of increasing the stability of C in composts on potential soil organic C sequestration on a farm scale.
- Investigations to find economically viable crop rotations that could sequentially receive substantial nutrients from manure during high-nutrient demanding crop phases, while preserving the C sequestration potential of manures and crop residues during other phases.
- Socio-economic studies to determine economic incentives necessary for producers to systematically implement agricultural practices to maximize the C sequestration potential in animal manures.

#### *Manure Distribution Issues*

- Research to develop methods to overcome the high transportation costs limiting the potential to transport manure to off farm areas is needed. This should include applied research into technology development and economic analysis of separation, screening, condensing, and dewatering technologies that could produce more transportable and valuable products.
- Quantifying the economic and agronomic effects of additives or blends with other materials could also result in greater utilization.

#### *Manure Nutrient Issues*

- Research to address problems encountered in collecting representative manure samples for nutrient analysis and determining the nutrient content of manures.
- Development of inexpensive, on-farm nutrient tests that would allow for testing at the time of application and more frequent and dependable test results.
- Research to improve our understanding and knowledge of mineralization rates and their effects on crop growth.
- Develop techniques to assess nutrient availability of manure in specific soil-crop-climate systems.
- Research that provides a better understanding of the effectiveness of different methods of manure application on crop nutrient uptake and utilization. Research should also address the development of application technologies with improved accuracy and precision or lower unit costs.

#### *Nutrient Management Planning*

- Determination of application rates that provide the crop with sufficient nutrients without having adverse environmental effects.
- Development of sustainable planning methodologies that take a systems approach combining manure and other fertilizers rather than concentrating on individual nutrients.
- Research is needed to determine the effectiveness of NMPs at addressing water quality concerns and the key components that should be addressed in these plans. This should be done in conjunction with detailed cost benefit analysis to determine key components.
- There is a need for on-farm decision support systems and environmental models that require little input data and can be used by non-scientific users in planning manure application strategies.

- There are also substantial extension needs to implement planning processes and to educate producers on the need for and benefits of NMPs.

#### *Other Water Quality Measures*

- Continuation of research associated with minimizing the potential for runoff and leaching under various management scenarios and development of BMPs to reduce nutrient losses from agricultural areas receiving manure.
- Research efforts should focus on developing technologies that use natural and modified drainage patterns to limit off-site transport of nutrients and identifying BMPs to synchronize nutrient availability from manure with crop nutrient needs.
- Determine the relationship between soil P and movement of soluble P to surface and shallow ground water and develop predictive tools to identify areas susceptible to P losses on a landscape.
- Tillage impacts on nutrient and pathogen loads should also be investigated as the trade-offs between nutrient distribution and non-point source loads are not clearly established.
- Studies addressing the cost-benefit and efficiency of these systems to the farm and comprehensive watershed scale are needed to aid in producer decisions and help with TMDL modeling efforts.
- Educational programs and policies to inform and to encourage adoption of current conservation technologies and BMPs by farmers is also an immediate need.
- With further research on rotational grazing/free range systems and improvements in forage genetics and production, extensive systems could become more economical for small to mid-size producers.

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