Arkansas Nutrient Management Education Programs

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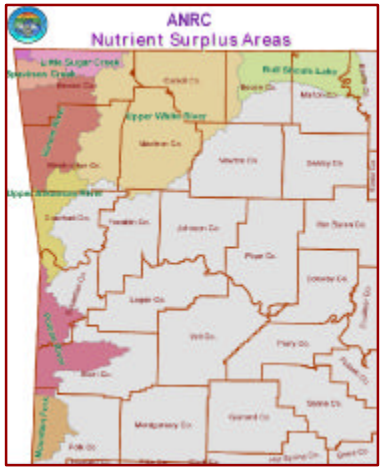
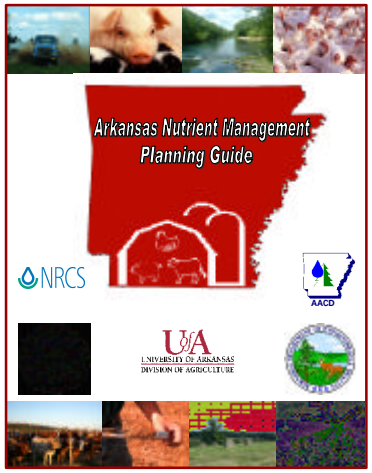
Introduction

As part of the new Arkansas nutrient management laws, nutrient management plan writers and nutrient applicators working in designated nutrient surplus areas must be certified by Arkansas Natural Resource Commission (ANRC). The Arkansas Extension Service has been coordinating educational meetings to inform livestock producers about the regulations. Extension has also developed training curricula for both nutrient management plan writers and nutrient applicators that must be attended as part of the certification process. As a condition of the certification process, both planners and applicators must attend four hours of continuing education programs which the Extension Service is also developing and will begin offering these programs in January 2006.



Livestock Producer Education

The Arkansas Extension Service in cooperation with poultry integrators conducted many educational meetings for livestock producers within the nutrient surplus areas. The goals of the meetings were to present the most up-to-date information on both the Arkansas nutrient management laws as well as the new federal regulations for dry manure Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO). The main training tool used was power point presentations. Surveys collected at the meetings indicated that the producers knew general information about the regulations before the meeting, however, information presented at the meetings was essential for understanding the specifics of what was required and the potential impacts of the regulations on livestock producers.



Nutrient Plan Writer Training

As part of the new Arkansas nutrient management laws, nutrient management plan writers writing plans within the designated nutrient surplus areas must receive certification through the Arkansas Natural Resource Commission (ANRC). The Arkansas Extension Service has developed the educational materials and programs that must be completed by plan writers for certification. The training is four days with an exam on the last day of training. Materials developed for the plan writers include the plan writer manual containing step by step procedures that a plan writer should follow when developing a nutrient management plan. Plan writers also receive a CD with the manual and a reference guide that contains materials such as Extension fact sheets, NRCS resources, regulation information to assist them and their clients in developing and implementing nutrient management plans.

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Nutrient Applicator Training

Another requirement of the Arkansas nutrient management laws, is certification of anyone land applying nutrients containing nitrogen or phosphorus (including commercial fertilizers). Applicator certification is also conducted through the Arkansas Natural Resource Commission (ANRC). The Arkansas Extension Service has developed the required educational materials and programs for certification. There are two categories of applicators, private and commercial. Private applicators are those who apply nutrients to land that they own or manage. Private applicators must attend a 3 hour training provided by the Extension service, apply to ANRC for certification and pay a license fee. Commercial applicators are those who derive the majority of their annual income from the application of nutrients to land not under their ownership or control. Commercial applicators must attend the same training as the private applicators, apply to ANRC for certification, pass an exam administered by ANRC, and pay license and testing fees. The Extension service provides applicators with an applicators manual containing essential information for the correct application of nutrients.

Continuing Education and Future Objectives

Both nutrient plan writers and nutrient applicators must attend four hours of continuing education credit courses over five years to maintain certification. The Arkansas Extension Service is currently developing programs to assist in this requirement. The goal of the programs will be to further improve nutrient management in Arkansas by providing valuable information, updates, and tools to assist both plan writers and applicators be more confident and efficient in nutrient management processes. The Extension Service is also collecting contact information from training attendees in order to distrubute periodic newsletters containing information on current nutrient management issues, scheduled meetings, and training programs.