



USDA-CSREES 2007 National Water Quality Conference

[North Dakota Beef Producers Adopt Manure Composting](#)

Producer interest in alternative methods of handling manure has increased due to rising fuel and fertilizer costs and a greater awareness of reducing the pollution potential of livestock manures to surface and groundwater. Farmers have shown strong interest in composting but it is a system rarely utilized in ND. The Wells County Soil Conservation District (SCD) received a three year Natural Resource Conservation Service Conservation Innovation Grant to demonstrate composting to producers in Wells County, ND. The objective of the project was to demonstrate and transfer the practice of composting livestock manure to livestock producers through three phases. An introduction and education phase consisting of group meetings and one-on-one consultation with producers was conducted during the winter of 2005-2006. A demonstration phase was conducted during the summer of 2006 on four farms of varying degrees of feedlot modernization. The implementation phase will be conducted in 2007 and will allow for incentive payments for producers who adopt composting. A compost turner was purchased and operated by the Wells County SCD to turn the manure at each cooperating site. Temperatures of the piles, manure analysis before and after composting, time spent turning the windrows and volume reduction was recorded at each site. Nearly 50 people attended a public tour of three sites in late summer of 2006. Each of the four cooperating farmers stated they will continue composting manure in the future. An unexpected outcome is that these producers have requested assistance in calibrating their manure application equipment. Other results of the project include reduced cost of manure hauling and the end product having enhanced handling characteristics allowing for a more uniform application of a stable nutrient source.

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