

Manure spreading do's and don'ts

FRESHLY harvested alfalfa fields are prime sites for summer and fall manure spreading. But Quirine Ketterings, Cornell University agronomist, and a team of forage, dairy and animal science colleagues raise the following cautionary flags:

■ Established alfalfa-grass stands of more than 60% respond to extra ni-

Key Points

- Established grass-alfalfa stands respond to manure N better than alfalfa.
- Keep liquid applications to 4,000 gallons per acre to limit leaf burn.
- If Johne's disease is a problem, limit grass and feed to older animals.

trogen because of the grass in the stand. They're better alternatives for manure application than newly established clear seedings of alfalfa.

■ Surface applications lead to N losses through volatilization. Deep cracks in the soil, root channels and earthworm burrows can speed flow of manure to tile drains; so tile outflow

should be watched.

■ To reduce risk of alfalfa leaf burn from ammonia and salt injury, liquid manure application rates shouldn't exceed 4,000 gallons per acre per application.

■ Check manured fields for forage potash content if the forage is being fed to nonlactating cows. It's recommended to only feed forage with less than 2.5% K (dry matter basis) to nonlactating cows.

■ Application of manure from animals infected with pathogens, particularly Johne's disease, can potentially spread these infections. In the case of Johne's disease, animals less than 1 year old should not have access to contaminated pastures or to feed from such fields.

You'll find the full list of do's and don'ts for spreading on established alfalfa on the Web at www.nnyagdev.org. Click on "Ag Environmental Management," then on "Manure" and "Project Fact Sheet #16."



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SPREAD WITH CARE: Good forage stands are worth taking extra care with manure application.

Calculate your farm fuel costs

WITH skyrocketing diesel fuel costs, everybody is looking for a way to get a handle on changing machinery operating costs. Ohio State Extension educator Gene McCluer, of Hardin County, Ohio, discovered a fuel cost estimator developed by Thomas Dorn, University of Nebraska Extension educator.

With it, based on University of Minnesota Bill Lazarus' fuel use estimates (see Page 6 story), you can calculate current per-hour and per-acre fuel cost for operating farm equipment. You'll find the fuel cost estimator in an Excel spreadsheet format at hardin.osu.edu/agriculture/ag-newsletters/fuelcostestimator-2008.xls

With the spreadsheet, you can change the numbers in the fuel cost cells to your current or expected fuel price.

You can also estimate how fuel costs may change in the future and project your equipment fuel cost into the future.

