

## MANURE SAMPLING AND ANALYSIS

This fact sheet was prepared by Jan Jarman, formerly with the Mn. Dept. of Agriculture.

Manure nutrients applied to cropland should be accounted for when determining commercial fertilizer needs. Manure nutrient composition varies widely between farms due to differences in animal species and management and manure storage and handling. Sampling and laboratory analysis is the only method for determining the actual nutrient content of manure. Published average values should only be used for initial application rate planning when no previous analyses are available, for estimating total nutrients generated in a specific time period, or for MPCA permitting requirements.

### WHEN TO SAMPLE

Manure is very heterogeneous and nutrients stratify in storage. Sample manure at application time following adequate agitation of liquids in storage or mixing of solids in the spreader loading process. If no previous analyses are available, use published average values for initial application rate planning, then use the analysis results to calculate commercial fertilizer needs. Sample manure each time it is applied, over the course of several applications. Track analysis results to determine the needed sampling frequency and develop farm-specific average value to use for application rate planning. Nutrient content will change with changes in management (housing, feed, bedding, storage, handling) and can vary between years or seasons depending on precipitation (for manure stored outdoors).

### WHAT TO SAMPLE

Agitated liquid slurries: Agitate liquid in entire structure for 2-4 hours just prior to application. Take one sample per 300,000 gallons of pumped manure. Avoid sampling near beginning and end of pump-out. Each sample may consist of several subsamples mixed together. If it is not possible to agitate liquid slurries before application, several samples taken throughout pump-out will be needed to characterize the manure. Keep track of which sample results correspond to manure applied to which fields.

Unagitated lagoon liquids (single/multiple stage, settling basins): Lagoons, which act as settling basins or are used in flush/recycle systems, are usually not agitated. Take out sample per 300,000 gallons of pumped liquid. Avoid sampling near beginning and end of pump-out. Each sample may consist of several subsamples mixed together.

Stored solids: Depending on the size of the pack, pile or stack, take at least three samples during application, each consisting of 5-10 subsamples from different loads. More samples are needed for stored solids because of its extreme variability. Avoid sampling the outside foot of a pile or stack.

Scrape and haul: Sample when applying to fields where nutrients will be credited. Fall is probably the most important time to sample. Take several subsamples from consecutive applications and mix together. Samples may be taken throughout the year to characterize variability.

Poultry in-house systems: For litter or manure that is not stored for any length of time prior to application. Use a pitchfork or shovel to sample to the depth of the floor in 5-10 locations in each house. Mix subsamples to obtain 1 or 2 samples for analysis. Take subsamples from around feeders and waterers in proportion to the areas they occupy.

### HOW TO SAMPLE

Liquid manure: Samples can be taken in the field (for broadcast manure) or from the application equipment. Sampling in the field can be done by placing catch cans throughout the area where manure will be spread. Mix the subsamples in a bucket and take a smaller sample for analysis. Sampling from the application equipment is the easiest and most effective way to get a good sample. Take subsamples from the filling hose or from a bottom unloading port, mix together in a bucket and take a sample for analysis. Sampling from liquid storage structures is not recommended since it is much safer and easier to sample from application equipment or in the field.

**Solid manure:** Samples can be taken in the field or from the spreader. In the field, spread tarps to catch manure as it is applied. For each sample, take several small subsamples from the tarps and place in a bucket or pile. Avoid larger pieces or chunks of bedding. Collect other subsamples throughout application and keep cool. Subsamples can be mixed by placing in a pile and repeatedly shoveling the outside of the pile to the inside. Use a trowel or plastic gloves to take a smaller sample for analysis. Samples can also be taken with a pitchfork or shovel from the spreader box after it is loaded. Collect subsamples throughout application, keep cool, mix and take a smaller sample for analysis. Again, sampling from the field or spreader is much easier and safer than trying to sample from a pack or pile.

**SAMPLE HANDLING AND ANALYSIS**

**Laboratories:** A listing of manure testing laboratories is available from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Manure Testing Laboratory Certification Program, (612) 297-2530.

**Preparing samples:** For liquids and solids, clean, leakproof plastic jars with wide mouths may be used for the samples. Solids with lower water content can also be placed in leakproof plastic ziplock bags. Most laboratories will provide sample jars and postpaid mailing packages. Jars should be filled no more than 2/3 – 3/4 full, tightly sealed and placed in a leakproof plastic bag. For solids, plastic bags can be partially filled and all the air squeezed out. Fill the sample container with about 1-2 cups or 1-2 pounds (a large handful) of manure for analysis. Tightly seal containers and label with the farmer’s last name and a sample ID using a waterproof marker. Place in a second plastic bag and freeze overnight if possible. Do not let samples sit in the sun or at room temperature for more than 12 hours. Mail samples early in the week and avoid weekends and holidays. Be sure to include payment and the sample information sheet.

**Analyses:** Analyses needed for developing a manure application plan are total nitrogen (N), phosphate (P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>) and potash (K<sub>2</sub>O). Laboratories usually provide these analyses plus dry matter (solids) and sometimes ammonium-N (NH<sub>4</sub>-N) for a set fee. Knowing NH<sub>4</sub>-N can be useful if this fraction makes up a large percentage of the total N in the manure. All of the NH<sub>4</sub>-N is usually available the first year of application. If this fraction is high (70% or more of total N), then total N availability the first year may be higher than average. It is usually not necessary to analyze manure for other mineral constituents such as calcium, magnesium, zinc, sulfur or boron. Most manures contain significant quantities of these minerals, and fields with manure histories are rarely deficient.

**Results:** Manure nutrient content should be reported in units of lbs/ton or lbs/1000 gallons, on an as-is basis. Phosphate and potash should be reported as such, rather than as P and K. A table of conversion factors is given below. Always check results to make sure they fall within normal ranges for that particular species and storage system. Use University of Minnesota nutrient availability factors to calculate total available nutrients applied.

**CONVERSION FACTORS**

To convert Column 1 into Column 2, multiply by		Column 1	Column 2	To convert Column 2 into Column 1, multiply by	
10,000		percent (%)	parts per million (ppm)	0.0001	
% DM / 100		% , DM basis	% , as-is basis	100 / % DM	
83.3		% , as-is basis	lbs/1000 gal	0.012	
20		% , as-is basis	lbs/ton	0.05	
2.29		P, any unit	P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> , any unit	0.44	
1.2		K, any unit	K <sub>2</sub> O, any unit	0.83	

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