



Manure storage options with a late harvest

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This year's late harvest has delayed many fall field activities including the land application of manure that needs to be done before the ground freezes and spreading restrictions come into effect. Chris Ullmann, agri-environmental extension specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (AF), outlines the options for producers.

Short term solid manure storage is one option. "If it works for you, start by identifying features with setbacks and select sites outside of those setbacks," explains Ullmann. "Use a map or an aerial photo to select the site. Make a mark 150 metres from a residence, 100 metres from a spring or water well, and 1 metre above any highest known flood level for a water body that floods – like a creek."

Ullmann says that if there is a common body of water that is shared with neighbours, draw a setback that is at least 30 metres wide for flat land and 60 metres if the land has a gentle four to six per cent slope. "The setback need to be 90 metres if the slope is more than 6 to 12 per cent, and rule out any area where the slope is greater than 12 per cent."

"You can also mark and exclude any short term sites from the previous three years," he adds. "Short term sites used to store manure for seven months over winter can be used in a four year rotation to meet the time restrictions in the [Agricultural Operation Practices Act Legislation](#) (AOPA)."

Ullmann says that the next step is to consider practices which minimize the risk of over-application of nutrients and further reduces the risk of manure leaving your property. He offers these suggestions:

- Soil test records can help locate piles in the fields where there is less risk of exceeding nitrogen or salinity limits.
- Sample and test the manure to help plan for spring application and to meet crop needs.
- Smaller piles and windrows melt quicker, making for easier access in the spring. Very large piles can remain frozen and inaccessible until late summer.
- Store out of the public eye. Storage that does not obstruct sightlines are better for public safety and reduces the chance of friction with other landowners.
- Select lands that do not drain off your property, ensuring that any run-off from storage remains on your land.
- Berms, covers and catchment can further reduce the risk of manure impacted run-off.

Permanent storage construction is another option. Explains Ullmann, "Building more storage reduces the needs for intensive planning and field beneficial management practices. Contact the [Natural Resources Conservation Board](#) (NRCB) for more information on obtaining a permit to construct a permanent manure storage. There are also grants available to help producers build additional storage when they do not have enough capacity. Be sure to ask a member of AF's Environmental Stewardship team about these funds at Agri-Trade, November 7 to 9, in Red Deer."

"If you feel storage is not an option for you this year, and you need to spread in winter conditions, contact the NRCB. They will work with you to address your emergency spreading needs," he adds.

For information on short term storage beneficial management practices, call the Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 310-FARM (3276) to speak to an agri-environmental extension specialist.

Contact:

Alberta Ag-Info Centre
310-FARM (3276)

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