AL537.00 General

This supplement provides Alabama policy regarding all phases of environmental engineering. Major divisions relate to waste management, water quality, and air quality.

AL537.01 NRCS technical assistance for environmental engineering.

c. Alabama Policy

1. Waste Management

a. The environmental engineer on the state conservation engineer's staff is assigned to provide state-wide leadership in overall waste management activities. The resource engineer assigned to the West-Central counties in the state will have state-wide responsibility to coordinate and provide technical assistance as needed for waste management.

b. Single-stage Composters and Mini-composters for Dead Poultry.

Properly sized and managed, a single-stage composter or a mini-composter for dead poultry can be low in cost and can be operated without a front-end loader. A high level of management is required to operate either type of composter to efficiently dispose of poultry carcasses and avoid serious problems. Problems reported on some units include fly and odor problems, intensive hand labor requirements, rain entering and fouling the systems, consolidation of composting material making removal difficult, and incomplete decomposition of carcasses.

Technical assistance and cost-share (when available) may be provided in developing conservation plans which include single-stage composters or mini-composters if the guidance in NRCS Conservation Practice Standard, Composting Facility, Code 317, is met.

c. Settling Ponds for Solids Separation.

Settling ponds used to separate solids from swine waste may produce more odor and fly problems than other liquid storage facilities or than other types of animal wastes when the hydraulic detention time is less than 45 days. The settling pond/lagoon system also complicates management of the waste since the sludge collected in the settling pond and the excess liquid in the lagoon must both be land applied; thus, two types of equipment may be needed.

The settling pond/lagoon combination shall not be used for swine wastes unless approved in advance by the state conservation engineer. When landowner preference or other factors require a swine waste management system with a solids settling pond, the landowner will be presented a letter indicating the following:

1. Excessive odors and fly problems may be a problem with this type system which could result in litigation by neighbors or others.

2. Management of the system will be more complicated than conventional waste storage ponds and lagoon systems because solids and excess liquids will have to be disposed of separately.

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3. Struvite buildup in pumps and pipes may be a problem.

The letter to the owner must be included in the conservation plan. In addition, the O&M portion of the conservation plan must clearly address the need for frequent removal of solids from the settling pond and the need to apply excess liquids to the land.

The minimum detention time for this type system will be 45 days.

d. Waste Storage Ponds for Swine Wastes.

Due to the odor levels associated with high volatile solid loading rates typically found in swine waste storage ponds, it is not recommended that waste storage ponds be designed for swine operations. Under certain conditions of small size and remote location, a waste storage pond for swine waste may be considered with approval of the state conservation engineer.

e. Locating Suitable Burial Sites for Massive Dead Animal Disposal

NRCS will provide technical assistance to the state veterinarian and his staff and local animal producers in locating suitable burial sites for massive dead animal disposal. When catastrophic losses occur due to extreme heat, storms, etc., creating a loss that exceeds the approved planned mortality disposal system, the landowner should have in place an approved burial site to handle the disposal of the die-off. NRCS has an agreement with the state veterinarian to locate a suitable burial site for massive dead animal disposal. Only the state veterinarian or his representative has authority to approve a burial site.

The NRCS commitment is as follows:

1. NRCS will provide on-site soils information for the location of a burial site.

2. The resource soil scientist will be contacted if the district conservationist cannot fulfil the request.

3. State veterinarian personnel will inform the producer to contact NRCS immediately when a large die-off occurs. NRCS personnel will work with the state veterinarian's field person and the producer in locating an on-farm burial site.

To avoid the possibility of NRCS personnel being unavailable at the time of a catastrophic loss (i.e. – non-workday, prior commitment, personal emergency, etc.), producers should be encouraged to contact NRCS for the selection of a suitable burial site well in advance of any circumstances which could lead to such loss.