

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
MSUE Manure Management Team
Adopted by Level I Team Members
September, 2004

Executive Summary:

Extension programming on cross-cutting issues demands innovative approaches that will overcome institutional and social barriers. For example, manure management is a cross-cutting issue, a component of an even broader subject, agriculture and the environment. But Extension workers are already aligned along traditional subject matter areas—dairy, livestock, crops—and are not prepared to commit to a cross-cutting issue as a principal focus. Moreover, manure management, as related to the environment, is a subject that some farmers, agri-business representatives, etc., are reluctant to address. Simply put, many producers do not wish to become involved in programs related to environmental protection.

The MSUE Manure Management Team will develop an overall strategy for Extension programming in manure management. Moreover, in order to involve the greatest number of individuals, the Team will provide Extension workers with program elements that will allow individuals to focus their work plans on this otherwise peripheral issue. The Team will operate according to these guiding principles:

1. The MSUE Manure Management will develop, coordinate and provide educational programs related to agriculture and the environment for producers and other clientele.
2. The educational programs of the Team will be aimed at motivating producers to adopt sustainable practices in manure management via education, training and demonstration and instilling in producers a sense of ownership and responsibility for an improved relationship between agriculture and the environment.
3. The educational programs of the Team will be designed for ease of adoption and implementation by Extension Field Staff and others.

Two types of objectives will be offered. First, a few broad objectives will coalesce in specific categories a wide variety of programs currently conducted by individuals. Second, more specific objectives will be developed for specific programs or campaigns on particular topics in manure management. Both types of objectives and other elements of the plan will make up a list of suggestions for individuals that will serve as seeds to use as they develop their own plans of work. Reporting efforts then will more accurately reflect total contributions to programming in manure management.

The Situation:

Education in manure and nutrient management is an important part of the mission of Michigan State University Extension. In past outreach programs, we have stressed the traditional view of manure system planning; i.e., production, collection, storage, transport, land application. We have educated producers as to the value of manure nutrients in a cropping program. We will continue those efforts. But we must go further. A producer should already be able to select components and equipment for the manure system and, using available resources, put together a functional system.

Manure system designs must now meet the needs of a farm in a much broader sense. Moreover, manure system design must satisfy the interests of the rest of society. The nutrients, pathogens and odors associated with manure must be managed in a sustainable manner.

Unfortunately, manure management as related to the environment is a subject that some farmers, agri-business representatives, etc., are reluctant to address. Producers view the increasingly complex array of environmental regulations as restrictive, controlling and expensive. Adding to their frustrations is the difficulty of ascertaining a status quo from a regulatory standpoint when investing in environmental protection; i.e., will investments made today to protect the environment stand the test of time. Producers tend to be skeptical and fear that investments satisfying today's requirements will be money down the drain as legislation is enacted in the future. Producers prefer to stay under the radar. Simply put, they do not wish to be noticed, they do not want to become involved.

Our challenge in extension is to design and execute educational programs that will motivate producers to adopt sustainable practices related to manure management^{*}. Otherwise, programs aimed at helping to ensure that producers adopt cost-effective pollution prevention practices and that producers are in compliance with environmental regulations will not be effective due to lack of participation.

A Focus on Agriculture and the Environment

Manure management is a cross-cutting issue, a component of a broader subject. Our educational programs should go to the next level. highlighting agriculture and the environment, not simply manure management.

The MSUE Manure Management Team must provide this focus on agriculture and the environment. At Michigan State University, many of the elements that might comprise a program on agriculture and the environment are in place. But

^{*} Some producers are participating in programs related to environmental protection on their farms in an exemplary way. The development of these guiding principles is not meant to minimize their efforts. Nor does it imply that all producers need to change their attitudes toward environmental issues.

no department or unit currently provides leadership on programs that stress the connections between agriculture and the environment. Emphasis on these connections is essential to further engage producers and others in efforts related to environmental protection and is a role the MSUE Manure Management Team will play.

Campaigns to Engage Producers

Campaigns to change producers' thinking will be used in parallel with other extension programming efforts to further engage producers in addressing environmental issues on their farms. Participation in each program will help the farmer be a better manager and be more profitable. Hopefully, these positive experiences in the environmental process will put the farmer in a frame of mind to become engaged in additional activities. Already in place as a next phase is Progressive Planning, a new, step-wise, tailor-it-to-your-own-farm program of the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program.

Two extension campaigns are being planned. The first campaign is tentatively identified as "Project Manure CAPTURE", aka "Keep It In The Root Zone". The second campaign is centered on the "Spartan Nutrient Cycle Card", a laminated piece that will show key concepts of whole-farm nutrient management via the nutrient cycle on one side and, on the reverse side, decision aids to implementing environmental improvements.

Engaging Extension Workers

Because manure management is a cross-cutting issue and a broad issue, it involves many people in Extension. Yet, in some respects, it involves no one. Extension specialists and field staff already have well-established interests along traditional discipline lines—dairy, livestock, crops—that are related only indirectly to manure management. These traditional alignments, accompanied by full personal agendas, preclude major involvement in programs that, from the standpoint of the focus perceived by the individual, are on the periphery. The individuals want to be involved, and will be involved, but they are not ready to commit to manure management as a principal focus.

Strategic planning in the traditional sense of developing a vision, goals and objectives is difficult for a cross-cutting team. In fact, traditional strategic planning exercises may not be the most productive way to develop a unified action plan for a team that involves individuals with principal interests elsewhere.

As an alternative, consider that, in Extension, the evaluation process strongly influences programming. The goals and objectives that are meaningful in the evaluation process are the goals and objectives of the workers themselves. The essence of the strategic process is the plan of work of the individual which, in turn, is the basis for evaluation of the individual.

The responsibility of the team on a cross-cutting issue is to develop the elements that contribute to an overall plan. Rather than this plan being a strategic plan, the plan is a set of guiding principles assembled by key members of the team. The elements of the plan are really a list of ideas for work objectives and programs that might serve as seeds for individuals to use as they develop their own plans of work.

Two types of objectives are important to bringing a focus to the overall efforts of Extension workers in manure management. First, broad objectives may allow the wide variety of programs currently offered by individuals to be concentrated into a few categories. For example, Extension workers already conduct a wide variety of programs, tailored to local needs, related to utilizing manure nutrients in a cropping program. A broadly-stated objective(s) on this subject could be elected by individuals for their respective plans of work. All efforts related to the topic would then be reported back to a single objective, giving a true measure of the total effort. More importantly, the efforts of some as related to manure management would not be lost, as they might be now in the current array.

The second type of objective would be more specific and would be connected with a program or campaign related to manure management. For example, the campaign related to the Spartan Nutrient Cycle Card will be developed by a group of dedicated people. Materials will be made available along with a list of goals and suggestions for programs, workshops and involvement with other groups. Individual extension workers will elect to participate, with various levels of involvement, tailoring their efforts to their individual plans of work and objectives. Overall, the efforts of individuals will contribute to the whole. Moreover, because all individuals will report back to the same objective on their plans of work, the total effort related to manure management will be apparent. Note that the Spartan Nutrient Cycle Card campaign is, in fact, a program of the MSUE Dairy Team. But the campaign will have important impacts that are related to and should be reported back to manure management.

Guiding Principles

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