



Connecticut Horse Environmental Awareness Program

Manure Utilization: Conquering the HEAP

Isn't it amazing how fast your manure heap becomes a mountain? What can you do with it? First, stop and realize that your manure is a valuable resource for someone, if not for you. Treat it as such, and find a way to put it to good use -- use it, sell it, or give it away.

Horse waste generally contains some type of bedding material along with the manure. Bedding type and quantity may vary greatly from farm to farm. In Connecticut, the most common bedding used is wood shavings or sawdust. Wood products can take months or years to break down. When applied to plants or crops in a raw, uncomposted form, it can actually do more harm than good. Consider composting your waste before utilizing it. (*See Composting fact sheet*).

When utilizing uncomposted waste on crops and hay fields, keep in mind the following:

- Nitrogen depletion of the soil may occur as bedding materials are broken down by micro-organisms. Nitrogen fertilizer may need to be added to counteract this effect.
- Smothering of grasses may occur if waste is applied too thickly.
- Parasite eggs in uncomposted manure may cause an infestation problem on pastures. Maintain a good deworming program for your animals.
- One 1,000 pound horse will excrete 9 tons of manure per year, which will provide 102 lbs. of nitrogen, 18 lbs. of phosphorus, and 69 lbs. of potassium for crop growth.

Disposal of manure may be necessary if you do not have fields on which to spread it. Remember that composting the manure will make it a more attractive commodity to potential takers. Some may be willing to pay for it.

Consider the following disposal options:

- Rent a dumpster and have it hauled away on a regular basis by a sanitation company.
- Arrange to have a local farmer or landscaper remove it on a regular schedule, or bring it to them. (If bringing it to them, consider using some type of truck or dump trailer as your portable manure storage container.)
- Friends, family, and neighbors may be willing to take it for use in gardens or landscaping.
- Form a manure cooperative in your area. Is there a compost facility in your area that would welcome horse waste? Is there an entrepreneur who might want to start one? Are there others who may be interested in doing the hauling to the facility? Talk to other horse owners. You are not the only one with this need.