Providing educational and networking opportunities for ND manure haulers

The Situation
Custom manure haulers do the bulk of manure application to cropland in ND. According to the National Agriculture Statistics Service, as of January 1, 2016, there were 1.7 million head of cattle in ND. The Midwest Plan Service estimates that one beef animal (weighing 750 lbs) produces 8.2 tons of manure per year. Doing the math, that results in 13,940,000 tons of manure per year, some of which is spread on cropland.

To take full advantage of manure nutrients, good manure management practices are necessary. NDSU research has found that manure can completely replace commercial fertilizer for corn production. On the other hand, land application of manure has the potential to pollute surface water, especially rivers, as shown by a 2014 ND Department of Health water quality report.

Extension Response
To provide an educational (best management practices for manure management) and networking opportunity for a group that is usually overlooked and underserved, the Livestock Environmental Management program has been hosting the “North Dakota Manure Haulers Meeting” since 2015. The 2016 meeting agenda was designed to cover topics of interest listed by the 2015 meeting attendees, such as insurance concerns for manure haulers, road weight regulations, manure composting, and the possible formation of the “ND Manure Haulers Association”.

Impacts
There were 23 manure haulers in the meeting, representing 12 different businesses across the state. The program evaluation revealed that:
- 70% of respondents indicated moderately high or high knowledge of manure composting process (19% before).
- 45% of respondents indicated that they were aware of tools available for manure users (5% before).

Many attendees listed manure spreader calibration as an action that he/she intended to take after the workshop. Calibration can have a positive impact on both the economic and environmental aspects of manure application.

Another impact of these meetings is that the manure haulers in the state are moving forward to form the “ND Manure Haulers Association”. Mary Berg, NDSU Livestock Environmental Management Area Extension Specialist, is leading the efforts of the group to get that association established.

Feedback
“We made copies of some of the material provided during the meeting, and we are handing them out to our customers.” - Attendee
 “[We will] talk with customers about manure fertilizer value.” – Attendee
 “[I will] calibrate my truck.” – Attendee

Public Value Statement
Best manure management practices maximize the chance of manure nutrients to be used for their intended goal (enhance crop production) and minimize the risks of water contamination, which could limit its recreational use.

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