



Manure Management Plan

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Final, June 01, 2025

Version 1.0

Background

Every agricultural operation, as defined in 25 Pa. Code § 91.1 and 3 Pa.C.S. § 503, in Pennsylvania, regardless of size, that land applies manure or agricultural process wastewater (generated on the agricultural operation or received from an importer) without a permit or approval from the Department of Environmental Protection (“DEP”) is required to demonstrate the land application is following a plan based upon current standards to manage nutrients for water quality protection (25 Pa. Code § 91.36(b)). A written Manure Management Plan satisfies this requirement. The planning requirement applies to manure and agricultural process wastewater land application by various types of equipment and/or direct application of manure by animals on pastures and in Animal Concentration Areas (ACAs). To assist the regulated community with guidance on how to develop a Manure Management Plan, DEP developed *Land Application of Manure-A Supplement to Manure Management for Environmental Protection*. DEP revised this supplement in April of 2024. The purpose of this FAQ document is to provide additional information since the 2024 revisions. This FAQ document will be updated with additional questions and answers over time.

Nothing in this document affects regulatory requirements. The interpretations herein are not an adjudication or a regulation. There is no intent on the part of DEP to give the interpretations in this document that weight or deference. This document provides a framework within which DEP and delegated county conservation districts (CCDs) will exercise administrative discretion in the future. DEP reserves the discretion to deviate from the interpretations in this document if circumstances warrant.

Manure Management Plan Workbook

FAQ #1: Is water used to wash produce, such as fruits and vegetables, considered Agricultural Process Wastewater?

Agricultural process wastewater is defined as wastewater from agricultural operations, including from spillage or overflow from livestock or poultry watering systems, washing, cleaning or flushing pens, milkhouses, barns, manure pits, direct contact swimming, washing or spray cooling of livestock or poultry, egg washing or dust control. Based on the definition of agricultural process wastewater that is included in the glossary and is taken from 25 Pa Code §

91.1, water that is used for the washing of produce is not considered agricultural process wastewater.

FAQ #2: Should the wastewater generated from washing down a poultry barn be treated as Agricultural Process Wastewater?

If the wastewater from washing down a barn comes into contact with manure during the cleaning process, then the entirety of that wastewater must be treated as if it is manure.

FAQ #3: Can additional space be added to the AEU sheet? It works for farms that only have a few types of livestock, but many of our Amish producers have a little bit of everything and there is not enough space in the workbook for these. We have just been attaching a separate page with the AEU calculations.

DEP will look at increasing the number of lines on the Animals Worksheet. It is acceptable to use more than one Animals Worksheet to accommodate the amount of animal groups on the operation. The AEU Calculation Spreadsheet, available on DEP's Agricultural Compliance website, can be used as part of the Manure Management Plan. This spreadsheet provides space for up to 17 separate animal groups. As long as all of the information is entered into the spreadsheet, including total acres for manure application, this spreadsheet can be used as a substitute for the Animals Worksheet in the plan. After entering the required information, this spreadsheet can then be printed with the print setting set to fit sheet on one page. The printed page can then be inserted into the plan.

FAQ #4: If an operation performs wants to utilize the N-removal Nutrient Balance Sheets to determine manure calculation rates, do they only need to have one soil test for the entire operation?

A soil test showing soil phosphorus levels to be less than 200ppm is a requirement to be able to determine manure application rates using N-removal based Nutrient Balance Sheets. It is recommended that a single soil test sample not represent more than 20 acres. For operations that are using N-removal based Nutrient Balance Sheets for an area greater than 20 acres, multiple soil tests should be performed. For example, if a field is 30 acres in size, then there should be 2 soil tests performed for that field. Adjacent fields may be grouped together for the purpose of soil sampling so long as the combined acreage of those fields does not exceed 20 acres and so long as the sample submitted to a lab for analysis is an aggregate of subsamples from all fields.

FAQ #5: Are soil tests needed for the winter application worksheet?

For a Manure Management Plan, soil tests are not a requirement to be able to apply manure during the winter.

FAQ #6: On page 8, can we put multiple seasons in the seasons category if the type and rate are the same? Similarly to the AEU sheet, this page is only useful for very simple operations. We have been making up nutrient balance sheets for most operations.

Multiple season applications may be listed on the Plan Summary if all of the information is exactly the same for each season's application. If any of the information for the applications is

not going to be the same for each application, such as the fields applied to, crop group, or incorporation timing, then the manure applications should be listed on separate lines.

FAQ #7: The charts in the back lack detail in terms of crop specificity—for example, what qualifies as grass/hay?

In reference to the charts in Appendix 1, we recommend following the types of crops listed in the Penn State University Agronomy Guide. In the Agronomy Guide, the terms Small Grains and Small Grain Silage refers to; Oats, Barley, Wheat, Buckwheat, Rye, Triticale, and Spelt. Cool-Season Grass Hay lists the following: Orchardgrass, Bromegrass, Timothy, Reed Canarygrass, Tall Fescue, Perennial Ryegrass, and Festulolium.

FAQ #8: Is a plan required to include the Nutrient Balance Sheet (NBS) calculations for the plan to be considered administratively complete?

The plan is not required to include the NBS calculations, only the planned application rates. If an inspecting agency believes that the application rates are unreasonable or possibly inaccurate, that agency may request to see the NBS calculations that were used to determine the manure application rates.

FAQ #9: Can a plan substitute the NBS summary page in place of the Manure Management Plan Summary page?

A fully completed NBS summary page may be substituted in place of the Manure Management Plan Summary page if the NBS summary page contains all of the planned manure application for the operation.

DEP has collaborated with staff from the Penn State Nutrient Management Education Program to develop a Nutrient Balance Sheet spreadsheet intended to be used for Manure Management Plans. With this spreadsheet, after the user has input the information, they will then be able to print a Manure Management Plan Summary and Winter Manure Application Summary directly from the spreadsheet. The printouts will mirror the information that is on the Manure Management Plan Summary and the Winter Manure Application Summary in the Manure Management Plan Workbook. The Manure Management Plan Nutrient Balance Sheet Spreadsheet will be available for download on the PSU Extension Nutrient Management Program website.

PSU Nutrient Management Program Website

<https://extension.psu.edu/programs/nutrient-management/manure/mmp-excel-nutrient-balance-sheet-nbs-and-user-guide>

FAQ #10: Are soil tests required to utilize a 35-foot manure application setback?

The Manure Management Plan Workbook offers the operator the ability to decrease their manure application setback from streams, ponds, lakes, or springs to 35 feet if they establish or maintain a 35-foot permanent vegetated buffer along the water body. Soil tests are not a requirement to reduce the setback to 35 feet. The only requirement is to have that 35-foot vegetated buffer. The

Workbook also provides criteria for an operator to reduce their manure application setback from streams, ponds, lakes, or springs to 50 feet. The criteria for the 50-foot setback does require a soil test be performed within the last 3 years that shows phosphorous levels (Mehlich 3-P levels) of less than 200 parts per million. The criteria for the 50-foot setback and the 35-foot setback are separate and independent of each other.

FAQ #11: How do we complete the Animal Concentration Area (ACA) Worksheet?

Section 1 of the ACA worksheet should be completed if the operation has contacted someone for technical assistance with managing the ACAs on the operation. Examples of technical assistance include a CCD, NRCS or private consultant. In section 1, write the name of the person that was contacted for assistance and the date that the person was contacted.

In Section 2 of the ACA worksheet, the plan writer should write a brief description of how the ACAs are managed on the operation. An example of this from the MMP Workbook is “Installation of gutters and downspouts and heavy use area protection directing water to the concrete tank manure storage facility in the summer of 2022. Installation of fencing and stream crossing to locate congregation areas away from the stream.”

Section 3 of the ACA Worksheet is the BMP Implementation Schedule table that must be completed. Each ACA on the operation should be listed on the table. If an operation has multiple ACAs on the operation, then list each of them and input the separate information for each ACA. The columns in the ACA worksheet should be completed as follows:

- In the 1st column, the writer should list the name of the ACA.
- In the 2nd Column, the writer should list the date that clean water was diverted around that ACA and the number of systems used to do so. Each BMP involved with diverting clean water is considered 1 system. If an ACA had gutters to divert barn roof runoff and an upslope diversion to divert water runoff around the ACA, then that would be considered 2 systems because there are 2 BMPs involved in diverting the water around the ACA.
- The 3rd column refers to if the ACA has an improved and stabilized surface, if it does then the writer should list the date that it was implemented and the estimated size of the improved and stabilized surface.
- The 4th column is asking if the polluted runoff from the ACA has been directed to a storage system or a vegetated treatment area. If yes, then the writer should put the date that it was completed.
- The 5th column is asking if animals have limited access to streams by utilizing stabilized crossings and water areas. If it does, then the writer should list the date that it was completed.
- The 6th column is asking if steps have been taken to limit the size of the denuded areas associated with that ACA. The writer should indicate whether that has been done. The acceptable answers for this question are “yes” or “no”.

- The 7th column is asking if steps have been taken to move animal congregation areas away from streams, associated with that ACA. If this has been done for that ACA, then the plan writer should list the date that it was implemented.

Example of completed BMP Implementation Schedule Table:

ACA Name or Location (Refer to Operation Map)		Divert clean water around ACA (Number of Systems)	Improve and stabilize the surface material of the ACA (Sq. Ft)	Direct polluted water to storage or vegetated treatment area	Limit access to streams through stabilized crossings and watering areas	Limit size of denuded areas	Locate area where animals congregate (feed areas, shade, etc.) away from streams
ACA #1	Date	07/15/22	04/01/2023	07/15/22	07/15/2022	Yes	07/15/22
	Amount	1 System	3000 sq.ft.				

Manure Management Plan Short Form

FAQ #12: Is the 8,000 pounds for Question a based on overall weight or overall annualized AEU's for the operation?

For this question on the Short Form, if the operation exceeds 8,000lbs of livestock weight at any point of the year then that operation is not eligible to utilize the Short Form.

FAQ #13: If an operation exports a portion or all of their manure to another operation, are they eligible to use the Short Form?

An operation that exports a portion or all of its manure may utilize the Short Form, so long as the manure is being exported to another operation that land applies it according to a Manure or Nutrient Management Plan, or the manure is exported to a permitted waste disposal facility. If an operation is utilizing the Short Form and they are exporting all of their manure, then they should mark the "N/A" option for question b.

FAQ #14: If an operation has a concrete barnyard, are they eligible to utilize the Short Form?

An operation with a concrete barnyard may utilize the Short Form if the concrete area is able to be maintained to prevent the flow of manure and contaminated runoff to streams, lakes, springs, ponds, or open sinkholes.

Version History

Date	Version	Revision Reason
06/01/2025	1.0	Original