



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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Dairy Industries Demand More Expertise

ALBUQUERQUE, NM – Eastern New Mexico’s booming dairy industry has needs that demand smarter support from the private sector and government, says the USDA-New Mexico Natural Resources Conservation Service. This conservation agency is responding by offering technical assistance with Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP) to help the industry meet what are frequently high tech challenges.

“A dairy may have a pond that isn’t lined or one that isn’t large enough. They may not have enough land on which to apply the waste from the dairy,” said Linda Scheffe, NRCS water quality specialist. “They may be confused about the role of EPA or the New Mexico Ground Water Quality Bureau.”

The EPA has regulations governing the discharge of effluent into surface water, and the New Mexico Ground Water Quality Bureau regulates issues that might contaminate ground water. According to Scheffe what NRCS seeks to offer is certified CNMP planners who can develop comprehensive plans that address both sets of regulations. One way of doing this is accomplished by focusing on soil testing as a key, and developing plans that keep the nitrates from the effluent and manure in the soil they are applied to - and which are utilized by the plants on that land. Typical crops that may be utilized are sorghum, alfalfa, and small grains. In this scenario, the waste becomes a resource rather than something to just be disposed of.

Scheffe said the CNMP looks at the entire system from the corral area to ponds and application in a way that ensures protection of resources and respects economics. The NRCS also offers programs that can assist with the cost share of improvements.

“As the dairy industry has grown many of the more advanced technologies that are being utilized for wastewater systems are now becoming options dairies are exploring,” said Scheffe. “NRCS has a 70-year history of being there for agriculture, we work to find smarter answers, and we have some skills dairies in New Mexico can use.”

For more information about CNMPs, Linda Scheffe can be contacted at (505)761-4448.

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