

Saddle up for equine manure management ideas.... From Manure Manager Magazine...  
Two made-in-Canada solutions for managing horse manure are doing the trick in areas of high horse populations.

Treena Hein March 23, 2018

By Treena Hein

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I Have Manure. I Want Manure. Those are the two prominent buttons on the front page of the website for Manure Link, a program created by Langley Environmental Partners Society (LEPS) in Langley, BC.

Manure Link does just what you'd think – it links horse owners with gardeners or landscapers, helping farmers being good neighbors by managing their manure appropriately – and helping urban neighbors appreciate the value of having farms in their communities.

The program has been running for seven years, and both it and the website have recently received an update. The website is now easier to navigate, with new information added along with an interactive calculator to help people design a compost system for their particular volume of manure.

The first step for gardeners and landscapers is to consider what kind of composted manure they want and how much. LEPS agriculture program coordinator Ava Reeve says the manure in the program mostly comes from horses because there are such a significant number of them in the area, but that manure is also available from hobby farms with small numbers of sheep or chickens.

“Different types of manure have different qualities for soil amendment,” she says. “We recommend that people do the research on which type suits their needs best.”

The next step is to consult the Manure Link list and choose a nearby farm location with the volume and type of composted manure desired. The last step is to make contact with the farmer and arrange a time for pickup or delivery. For their part, farmers must compost their manure following the LEPS recommended practices, keep their Manure Link information updated (age, type and amount of compost available) and respond to inquiries.

While the interest in manure exchange is strong both from livestock owners and gardeners, Reeve says the big barrier seems to be with proper composting. She says horse owners and hobby farmers are groups that tend not to have manure management plans in place because they aren't necessarily treating their operations as a serious business.

“In fact, large farms are often in better compliance with manure regulations,” she notes, “probably because they're more intentional about their management.”

Reeve says Langley has a lot of horse owners, and while horse manure is a great candidate for home-scale composting, they “don't seem to want to deal with it. I think a significant number of horse owners

are either paying to have their manure hauled away or are just piling it up in a back corner – which of course is not the same as composting.”

She advises farmers to set up a system and incorporate manure management into their daily tasks. Piles of manure need to be covered with a tarp in rainy months and kept away from water. They must also have a balanced carbon-to-nitrogen ratio.

“With horse manure, this actually means not putting clean bedding material in the compost, because the manure itself is already balanced,” says Reeve. “And it needs to be turned regularly, which can be done with a tractor every few weeks for fast composting or at least once a month. Those are the bare-bone basics. You can monitor the moisture levels, or even get fancy with a long thermometer to track the stages, but balancing inputs and incorporating air are key.”

She says those with untended piles may or may not see them as a wasted resource, but very often don’t see how manure can cause serious environmental impact.

“It can leach runoff that gets washed into waterways and damages our streams and the wildlife that live there,” she notes. “Landscapers...want large quantities at multiple points in the year, and they have the trucks and trailers to haul it away. Now it’s up to horse owners and small farmers to meet the demand with quality, composted manure.”

#### Closed-loop horse bedding service

HiPoint Agro Bedding based in Guelph, Ontario, is busy currently building its first three facilities in Guelph, Calgary, and West Palm Beach Florida; facilities that will receive used horse bedding, separate the bedding from the manure, sterilize and treat the bedding, and send it back to the same farm it came from. The manure will be composted and can then be spread on fields.

The cost of HiPoint’s recycled bedding, says Paul Cross, the firm’s head designer, will be the same as that of quality used shavings sold in the same geographical area.

“As we build facilities under 50 miles of the stalls we are taking from and returning to, the manure hauling and trucking are reduced, reducing emissions and cost,” he explains. “We are seen as the environmental solution to solving a global crisis without asking farms to pay more.”

HiPoint anticipates opening its Florida facility in late summer 2018.

“We can handle 50,000 tons of used wood shavings manure from equestrian stalls per year or handle the manure used bedding from around 3,000 to 4,000 horses,” Cross says. “In our Calgary and Ontario facilities that we are preparing for the end of 2018, we will handle 35,000 tons each, but it can be ramped up for more.”

Indeed, in horse hotspots like West Palm Beach, Chesapeake Bay, New York, North Carolina, Calgary and California, managing bedding is a big issue. HiPoint says horse populations in many counties across the U.S. number 20,000 or more, and typically horse bedding/manure is not permitted to be spread on fields because the manure is raw and the shavings don’t break down easily. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and provincial governments in Canada, Cross adds, have also disallowed manure and used shavings to enter landfill sites.

“The only options are burning or composting, and ... composting, if not treated and covered correctly, could cause environmental hazards to raw crops,” he explains. “Recycling is the most efficient, economical, and environmentally-friendly option, done right. Our process was created to be more energy efficient and have low-to-no emissions output. The small organic fines and manure buns are composted underground with biosecurity measures in place to create a fantastic soil amendment.”

The HiPoint system is proprietary, but involves a flat-bed drying unit that uses both heat and steam for sterilization. There are processes in place to remove all dust. In addition, the bedding is treated with the firm’s proprietary natural aromaceutical, which Cross says makes them “healthier for the horse, the rider and stable hands, which helps heal horses’ hoofs, while being antiviral, antibacterial and antimould within the stable environment.”

When asked how many times bedding can be put through the HiPoint recycling process, Cross explains that their process removes smaller fibers that have broken down, to the level desired by each customer. Larger shavings can be reused indefinitely.

“By adding a small percentage of new shavings, we can continue to recycle the used bedding,” he says.