

Land & Water fact sheet

On-farm waste management

What is it?

All farming operations create waste products that need to be managed. Waste management is not just about getting rid of waste but also about reducing the amount of waste you create in the first place.

Farm waste sources:

- household waste
- plastic waste (hoses, mulch, bags, fittings)
- tyres and scrap from old machinery
- oil and grease waste from machinery
- chemical containers, fertiliser packaging
- chemical waste (left over diluted chemical and concentrated chemicals, no longer suitable for use).

How can it help me?

Reducing the amount of waste you produce, means less to get rid of. Disposal of waste can add to production costs. These include fuel, labour and time costs for disposal of unwanted waste. Reduce the amount of unnecessary waste coming on to your farm. Look at reducing the amount of waste you produce and where further waste production minimisation could occur. For example, reuse containers that store non-toxic products for other purposes around the farm. Inform your family and staff of changes to practices around your farm.

Programs such as ecoBiz, set up by the Queensland government, can provide further guidance to help your business operate more efficiently and to increase cost savings. The six steps to Ecobiz are set out to help you become more efficient in using energy, materials and water; reducing

solid and liquid waste disposal and improving your productivity.

For more information visit their website www.epa.qld.gov.au/ecobiz

Chemical waste

The best and most obvious solution to the problem of chemical waste is to reduce the amount of pesticide and herbicide waste that is created. The job of diluting and mixing pesticides should be seen as a highly responsible job. Knowledge and proper training in chemical usage will reduce the likelihood of there being any accidents or wastage of chemicals.

Taking on an integrated pest management plan could also reduce a farm's overall reliance on chemicals.

Chemical containers and fertiliser packaging

ChemCert provides chemical accreditation courses for safe and effective application of pesticides. Some of their extended programs include DrumMuster™. DrumMuster is a program that focuses on the collection of clean, non-returnable chemical containers for recycling.

DrumMuster and Chemclear™ were set up as part of the Industry Waste Reduction Scheme, a nationwide chemical waste disposal service. They were designed to provide an alternative to burning old containers which is hazardous for your health and the environment or storing old containers in heaped piles which can become unsightly.



On-farm eco-efficiency measures continued

A waste disposal plan can help you work out a way to deal with farm waste. Ask yourself three questions:

1. Can this product be reduced, substituted or eliminated?
2. Can the waste be recycled or collected?
3. Is the waste only suitable for landfill?

Oil and grease waste

Waste oil may be contaminated with metal particles, fuel, rust, dirt, carbon, heavy metals and water. It is hazardous to humans and animals and the environment.

Spent oil should be stored somewhere securely and recycled. Until waste oil can be removed from the farm, it should be stored in a leak proof container in a bunded area. A bund is an embankment built around a spill proof area, usually used for storing chemicals. Bunding should be able to contain the volume of the container plus 20 per cent in the event of leakage.

A local government collection depot or garage may collect oil for recycling.

Recycling spent oil reduces potential hazards on the farm and conserves a precious resource.

Tyres

Tyre disposal can be costly at local council waste stations. It may be worth enquiring at local tyre retailers to see if there is a disposal service available.

Old scrap machinery

Scrap metal is easily recycled at scrap metal merchants. Look out for 'round up' collections in your area advertised in local newspapers.

Plastic mulch waste

Plastic mulch is a big issue as it is used extensively in some horticultural industries. Dirt and debris are hard to remove from the plastic sheeting prior to recycling and it is bulky to place in landfill.

Options to reduce plastic mulch waste in landfill include: using a thinner plastic or using a biodegradable plastic instead. Several companies in Australia are currently working on ways to reduce plastic waste.

Packing shed and household waste

Packing shed waste, including green waste, cardboard and bottles, needs to be effectively managed so it does not build up and create a food safety hazard and provide refuge for pests and rodents. Recycling of glass, cardboard, tins and plastic is desirable if the recycling services are available.

To find out more about Farm Management Systems contact Growcom on 07 3620 3863 or visit www.growcom.com.au/knowledgeplant

References

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