

# LIQUID SEPARATED DAIRY MANURE AS A NUTRIENT SOURCE IN A SUGARBEET ROTATION

Melissa L. Wilson

Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota - Department of Soil, Water, and Climate, St Paul, MN

## **Justification for Research:**

Using manure as a nutrient source can be more complicated than using commercial fertilizers since the nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) content can vary depending on species, storage and treatment methods, and application techniques. Farmers, particularly those that grow sugarbeets, are also concerned about when the nutrients are released in the growing season which changes depending on soil types and weather. Despite concerns, there are other benefits of manure beyond being a source of N and P, including improving soil health and providing micronutrients. Plus, the up and down price swings of the commercial fertilizer market make manure more attractive, especially if a farmer has a consistent supply which can offset fertilizer costs.

As large dairies are moving into western Minnesota, a consistent supply of manure is no longer a problem. However, these dairies are using a new technology to separate solids from liquids in the manure, and the impact on nutrient availability in this region's climate and soil types is unknown. Understanding this is particularly important for sugarbeet growers due to the effect that late season N availability in the soil has on the sugar content of their crop. Where in the rotation should this manure be applied to maximize the beneficial properties while minimizing risk of low sugar content due to excess nitrogen? Our goal is to answer this question so that farmers are able to make better decisions about using dairy liquid separated manure in their rotation to reduce fertilizer costs.

## **Summary of Literature Review:**

Little recent information is available on the effect of manure on sugarbeet root yield and quality. Halvorson and Hartman (1974) reported that sucrose concentration and recoverable sugar per acre were reduced with the addition of beef manure while root yield was increased. Schmitt et al. (1996) reported that swine manure mineralization occurs several years after application in a legume-corn rotation. Swine manure was found to be 80 to 90% available in the first year of application for corn production. Since that time, the most activity for manure applications in sugarbeet production systems has been conducted in the Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative (SMBSC) growing area although it is expanding to other sugarbeet growing regions as well. Three major research projects have been conducted in the SMBSC growing area since 1999 and are summarized below.

Project 1. Lamb et. al 2002, Manure application on sugarbeet 1999-2001: The objectives of the first research project were to: 1) measure turkey and swine manure application effects on sugarbeet root yield and quality compared to fertilizer N applications; 2) determine the effect of manure mineralization differences on sugarbeet root yield and quality; and 3) develop management strategies for manure application in a sugarbeet rotation. The results from the three sites of this study indicated that the use of manure on a field with no prior manure application may not be as detrimental to sugarbeet quality as originally thought. However, the effect of manure application to sugarbeet root yield and quality on fields with a history of manure applications was not answered with this study. If manure was applied at reasonable rates equivalent to the N fertilizer recommendation, it did not negatively affect sugarbeet recoverable sucrose per acre on fields with no manure application history. Excessive application rates of manure will reduce quality.

Soil nitrate-N values during the growing season indicate that while the sugarbeet plant is actively growing, it will utilize most of the nitrate-N mineralized into the soil from manure. This utilization is greater than corn or soybean. A soil test for nitrate-N taken in the later stages of corn or soybean growth will reflect excess nitrate-N mineralized from manure. A nitrate-N soil test taken at later stages of the growing season will not reflect excess soil nitrate-N during sugarbeet production.

Results from 1999 indicated that sugarbeet top N concentration and N uptake at harvest reflect the N additions from both fertilizer and manure. This did not occur in the 2000 growing season. A long period of drought conditions

during August and September in which the sugarbeet plant was under moisture stress affected the plant uptake of soil nitrate-N.

Project 2. Lamb et. al 2013, Turkey litter use in a sugarbeet crop rotation 2007-2012: Turkey manure has a considerable amount of litter from bedding in it, thus slowing initial release of poultry manure-N. The implication of the manure-N release is critical, especially to sugarbeet growers. This research project was designed to: 1) determine when in a three-year rotation should turkey litter be applied and 2) determine nitrogen fertilizer equivalent of turkey litter applied two and three years in advance of sugarbeet production in the rotation.

With three sites worth of information, it was concluded that if a grower must apply turkey litter in the sugarbeet production system, it should be applied in the fall before sugarbeets. This conclusion is not what the current recommendation is. Caution about the use of any kind of manure in rotation should be used. In this study, the manure application rates were not excessive. Excessive applications could cause problems with quality. Applications made more than once during a three-year rotation should be avoided for the same reason. Too much of a good thing (turkey litter) can cause problems with management of the residual soil nitrates in the soil system.

Project 3: Lamb et. al 2016, Liquid swine manure in a sugarbeet production rotation 2010-2015: This research project was designed to: 1) determine when in a three-year rotation should swine manure be applied; 2) determine nitrogen fertilizer equivalent of swine manure applied one, two, and three years in advance of sugarbeet production; and 3) determine the effect of over-fertilization with N on the quality, root yield, and summer petiole nitrate-N. The results from this study can be summarized in the following two areas:

- I. The effect of timing of manure application in the soybean, corn, sugarbeet rotation.
  1. Manure application significantly affected 2 of the 3 sites.
  2. At the 2 sites, manure application increased root yield and extractable sucrose per acre. The closer to sugarbeet production the application is made, the greater the root yield and extractable sucrose per acre response.
  3. The application of swine manure in the fall before sugarbeet production significantly decreased sugarbeet sucrose concentration and extractable sucrose per ton. Depending on the quality payment system, this reduction can be economically significant.
- II. The effect of manure application timing in the rotation and the application of N fertilizer before sugarbeet production.
  1. No interaction occurred between N fertilizer application and manure management for any yield or quality variable measured at 2 of the 3 sites.
  2. N fertilizer rate increased root yield and extractable sucrose per acre at 2 of the 3 sites.
  3. Manure management affected root yield and extractable sucrose per acre at 1 site. The closer you apply manure to sugarbeet production, the greater the yield. There was no effect at 2 sites.
  4. N fertilizer application decreased extractable sucrose per ton at 2 of the 3 sites. This could affect the payment.

For both turkey and swine manure, application rates near the recommended amount of N for sugarbeet production resulted in an increase in root yield and extractable sucrose per acre. This application also reduced quality parameters such as sucrose concentration and extractable sucrose per ton. The application should be made the fall before sugarbeet production in the crop rotation. Unless the sugar payment is heavily quality-based, then increases in root yield and extractable sucrose per acre will make up for the decreases in quality. More information is needed regarding dairy manure applications, particularly liquid-separated dairy manure, as this is becoming more readily available in some sugarbeet production areas.

### **Objectives:**

The objective of this study is to evaluate the timing and rate of dairy liquid separated manure in a sugarbeet-soybean-corn rotation on crop yields and sugarbeet quality.

## Materials and Methods:

This is a 3-year field study at two locations - near Willmar, MN and Wahpeton, ND - in collaboration with the Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative and Minn-Dak Farmers Cooperative. The goal was to see what part of a three-year rotation is best for dairy liquid-separated manure application. This study utilized a split plot experimental design with four replications. The main plots represent a crop rotation common to each sugarbeet growing region. Each treatment in the main plots started with a different crop in the rotation in Year 1 (see table 1). This allowed each crop to be planted in each year. Manure was only applied in the subplots during the first year of this study as this allowed for observation of where manure application had the greatest benefit within the crop rotation (before corn, sugarbeet, or soybean). After the first year, we continued to monitor the impact of that one application throughout the rest of the rotation. All crops were planted on 22-inch rows.

Table 1. Main plot treatments.

Treatment	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
1	Corn	Sugarbeet	Soybean
2	Soybean	Corn	Sugarbeet
3	Sugarbeet	Soybean	Corn

Various manure application rates acted as treatments for the subplots (see table 2). The treatments were comprised of a high application rate (about 14,400 gallons per acre), a low application rate (about 9,500 gallons per acre), or no manure applied. The 'high' and 'low' rates were chosen based upon the rates typically offered by the large dairies specific to each region. Where manure was not applied in the first year, the crops were fertilized with commercial nutrients according to the state University guidelines. In years 2 and 3, state University fertility guidelines were utilized to apply commercial fertilizers to all plots, taking into account any residual fertility credits from the initial manure application.

Table 2. Subplot treatments.

Treatment	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
a	Fertilizers	Fertilizers	Fertilizers
b	Manure low rate	Fertilizers w/ second year manure N credit	Fertilizers w/ third year manure N credit
c	Manure high rate	Fertilizers w/ second year manure N credit	Fertilizers w/ third year manure N credit

Each experimental crop was taken to harvest and evaluated for yield, quality, and any other appropriate crop-specific quality parameters. Plot-specific 0-6 inch soil samples were collected prior to planting in each experimental year and subjected to routine soil analyses. Nitrate analysis on 0-2 foot and 0-4 foot soil samples was conducted on plots that were planted to corn and sugarbeets, respectively. Soil samples (1-ft depth) were collected 2-3 times throughout each growing season to monitor potential changes in the levels of both nitrate and ammonium.

## Preliminary Results:

This experiment was begun in the fall of 2019 at a farm site near Willmar, MN. Manure was surface applied and incorporated within 24 hours of application. Fertilizers will be applied as appropriate in the spring prior to planting crops. Initial soil samples and manure samples were collected and are in the process of being analyzed. There is no other data to present at this time.

The site near Wahpeton, ND was unfortunately not started at this time due to the fields being flooded and it would have been inappropriate to apply manure in these conditions. We will try to start this experiment in that location in fall 2020.

## References:

- Halvorson, A.D., and G.P. Hartman. 1974. Longtime influence of organic and inorganic nitrogen sources and rates on sugarbeet yield and quality. *In* 1974 Sugarbeet Research and Extension Reports p. 77-79.

- Lamb, J.A., M.W. Bredehoeft, and C. Dunsmore. 2013. Turkey litter effects on sugar beet production. In 2012 Sugarbeet Res. And Ext. Rpts, <https://www.sbreb.org/research/>.
- Lamb, J.A., M.W. Bredehoeft, J. Rademacher, N. VanOs, C. Dunsmore, and M. Bloomquist. 2016. Swine manure application management in a sugar beet rotation. In 2015 Sugarbeet Res. And Ext. Rpts. <https://www.sbreb.org/research/>
- Lamb, J.A., M.A. Schmitt, M.W. Bredehoeft, and S.R. Roehl. 2002. Management of turkey and swine manure derived nitrogen in a sugar beet cropping system. In 2001 Sugarbeet Res. and Ext. Rpts. 32:125-134.
- Schmitt, M.A., C.C. Sheaffer, and G.W. Randall. 1996. Preplant manure on alfalfa: Residual effects on corn yield and soil nitrate. J. Prod. Agric. 9:395-398.