

Environmental-friendly study being conducted at courthouse

Dairy compost was spread over a section of the Coryell County Courthouse lawn this week as part of a project to improve water quality in the North Bosque and Leon River watersheds.

The Texas Water Resources Institute and Texas Cooperative Extension are involved in the project, which is funded by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

Coryell County Extension Agent Lyle Zoeller assisted Cecilia Gerngross, program specialist for soil and crop sciences with the Texas Water Resources Institute, and Randy Bow, research assistant at the Texas A&M Experiment Station at Stephenville, in laying out the plots and spreading the composted manure.

Zoeller said one plot was treated with a commercial fertilizer, one was treated with the compost at a rate of 40 tons per acre and a third was treated at a rate of 20 tons per

acre.

Producers using the composted manure could see some long-term economic benefits, as well as a cost savings, Zoeller reported.

According to the Extension Service, runoff containing manure from more than 160 dairy farms contributes to excessive phosphorus in the North Bosque and Leon Rivers.

Through the Composted Manure Incentive Project, the TCEQ is providing incentives for composting excess manure from dairies in the two watersheds. The Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board also is involved in removing the manure from the watersheds with a project called Dairy Manure Export Support.

Entities can receive a \$5 per cubic yard rebate for participating in the program.

Keith Bell, maintenance supervisor for the Gatesville Independent School District, reported the composted material was placed on

the McKamie Stadium football field last week.

Sand is usually spread on the field every year to help fill holes left by the football season. The sand also helps water get into the clay soil. Bell said using the compost would help in those areas, while saving about 60 percent of the cost through the incentive program.

Gerngross said farmers and ranchers can also receive a reduced price through the Hamilton-Coryell Soil and Water Conservation District.

The courthouse project will allow residents to see what the product can do, she noted. She said the project not only helps the dairy industry, but also helps clean up the environment.

Participants in the Leon River Restoration Project have been using the compost to establish grass in areas where cedar trees are removed, and Fort Hood is also using the product to establish vegetation in areas of the military reservation.

More information on the dairy compost project can be found on the internet at <http://compost.tamu.edu>.



Dairy compost project

Coryell County is participating in a study by the Texas Water Resources Institute and the Texas Cooperative Extension to use composted manure as fertilizer. Three plots were laid out and fertilized this week on the courthouse lawn. Coryell County Extension Agent Lyle Zoeller, left, assisted Extension employees Randy Bow, center, and Cecilia Gerngross with test plots.