

Abstract and Keywords

Many livestock farms are employing composting as a means to manage manure. Finding markets for these composts is important. Label or seal of quality for consumer identification is desirable for consumer identification of compost quality. Several such programs exist but do not fully address consumer needs. However, establishing a new program would be difficult and it is not clear that it is warranted. There are few data regarding agricultural compost quality. Samples taken of ready-to-use composts from 25 NYS dairy and poultry farms were analyzed for many parameters and data was collected on composting practices. These NYS manure-based composts were suitable for many uses. They were generally low in heavy metals. Nitrogen levels from the sampled dairy composts ranged from approximately 0.5-3%. Measurements of fecal coliform levels were generally low. The pH of most of the composts was above 7. The percentage of organic matter was highly variable among the composts tested, ranging from about 25-75%. Most composts tested were more dense and less mature than suggested in guidelines for most uses. Samples were taken from each farm at least two different times. The data showed that for about a quarter of the farms, there was a significant difference in some of the measured parameters between the different sampling dates, which may reflect sampling a different batch or pile. The quality of the composts was found to be affected by composting methods used and by manure type (poultry, unseparated dairy, separated dairy).

Keywords:

compost; manure; compost use; windrow; compost specifications