Illinois Regulations Affecting Composting of Horse Bedding

Composting can be an easy, efficient and environmentally safe technology for the disposal of horse manure if conducted correctly. Unfortunately, current permitting regulations may actually discourage many horse stables from composting horse manure or horse bedding. Understanding these regulations can assist equine facility operators in making sound decisions on waste disposal.

Of the two government entities that regulate compost facilities in Illinois, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) is the main regulatory agency, determining compost application rates and siting regulations, and issuing permits. The Illinois Department of Agriculture oversees the Illinois Livestock Management Facilities Act (ILFMA) and the manure Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) specifically relating to compost.

Fact, No Permit Needed:
- An equine facility can compost any material generated on site.
- A stable can compost horse manure, grass clippings, straws, sawdust, old feed, etc. that originated from that specific facility.
- The resulting compost must be used on-site.

Fact, Permit Required If:
- The compost produced is sold or given away.
- The composting operation accepts composting material greater than 10% of the total volume of waste generated on-site.

Agency Contacts

Siting and permits:
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
1021 North Grand Avenue East
P.O. Box 19276
Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276
(217) 782-3397
http://www.epa.state.il.us/
Bureau of Land  217-524-3300
Bureau of Water  217-782-1654

Livestock and Nutrient Management:
State of Illinois Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 19281, State Fairgrounds
Springfield, IL 62794-9281
(217) 782-2172
http://www.agr.state.il.us/
The IEPA does not distinguish between the manure and urine soaked bedding (horse manure) and the dry bedding (horse bedding), but instead considers it all horse manure which in technical terms is considered organic material.

- Horse bedding will not compost without the addition of another nitrogen source, such as manure, grass clippings or fertilizers.
- Horse manure will compost with little effort and without the addition of a nitrogen source.
- An equine facility that uses material generated on-site for composting and then uses the resulting compost on-site does not need a permit.
- If a facility takes in material from another location that makes up more than 10% of the total material being composted, it must obtain an IEPA permit for siting and operation.
- If a facility sells or gives away the resulting compost, it must obtain an IEPA permit for siting and operation.

Because any composting facility, whether permitted or not, is not allowed to cause pollution, certain requirements exist for permitted and non-permitted facilities alike.

Siting Criteria for All Compost Facilities (Permitted or Non-permitted)
- Located 200 feet from any well
- Located 5 feet above the water table or located on an impermeable surface (such as concrete or asphalt)
- Located 50 feet from the property line
- Located outside of the 10 year floodplain or is flood-proofed
- No compost facility may cause surface water (runoff) or ground water (leaching) pollution

Generally, livestock waste composting may be conducted and the finished compost applied to the on-site farmland without a permit from IEPA. No permit is required if the materials being mixed are all generated on the local farm or acreage.

For composting, IEPA considers horse bedding and horse manure as the same thing - organic material

www.sweeta.illinois.edu