

## **Turning Chicken Litter into Better Fertilizer**

Americans' appetite for chicken products has at least one side effect – chicken waste (called litter) from broiler houses. In east Texas alone, about 600,000 tons of this material is generated each year.

Chicken litter is often used as fertilizer, so that the phosphorus value can be recovered. However, since most crops need about four pounds of nitrogen for each pound of phosphorus, and poultry litter has nearly equal amounts of the two nutrients, some of the phosphorus is “excess” and may run off into streams, ponds, and lakes.

Research at the Texas Agriculture Experiment Station shows that fertilizing crops with a blend of high-nitrogen fertilizer and chicken litter increases crop yields and reduces the potential for phosphorus runoff. This fertilizer blend makes it possible to productively recycle phosphorus, utilize chicken litter, and improve water quality.

Source: Robert Burns (Texas A&M University) – Nitrogen plus boiler litter cleans water; Southwest Farm Press, May 20, 2004