



Agri-Doo Nutrient Management Services

CARE USING WOOD CHIPS

A dairy farmer recently asked us to analyze the nutrient value of the material he scrapes from the yard/track area and the calf shed to determine if the material was suitable for pasture spreading and to determine suitable application rates.

The pile of material was largely composed of manures, some sand and gravel and significant amounts of wood chips from the calf shed. We also sampled the calf shed waste by itself.

The material as expected was high in nutrients and we also included a heavy metal test.

The arsenic and chromium levels were detrimentally high and some of the other levels were barely acceptable. The conclusion we drew was that the treated pine wood chips were the byproduct of a timber manufacturing plant. Any wood chips used on farms need to be from untreated material and not the by product of treated material.

High levels are unlikely to have major consequences for single events but if the levels continue high overall farm levels will elevate and consequences could occur. High arsenic has been linked to animal death, nervous system failure and low fertility rates.

The fact that the chips were been used in the calf shed is also concerning (given some calves propensity for chewing everything) and the long term impacts are pretty much unknown.

Some of this material was also used as compost for the farm veggie patch and we suggested immediate removal.

We would strongly suggest that wood chips aren't used unless you are absolutely certain of their origins. Under most circumstances pine chips shouldn't be used as they are generally going to have been treated.

If you need assistance contact us and we can organize testing.