FEEDING YOUR FIELDS... THE PROCESS

Raw manure is known to producers for its agronomic properties, but also for its drawbacks. However, the manure conditioning process can counteract many of the negatives while adding numerous benefits. So, what exactly is “conditioning”?

Following collection, raw manure is dropped into ricks where it begins the natural decomposition process. Over a period of five weeks or more, the rows are mechanically turned to increase aeration while the internal temperature rises to an excess of 140° F, eliminating weed seeds and pathogens. During the process, each rick will be turned a minimum of five times, but can require as many as ten or more turns to ensure the best product possible. With each turn, any exposed foreign materials - such as concrete or metal pieces - are removed from the manure to ensure they never make it onto the fields.

Unprocessed ricks of raw manure (left) versus conditioned manure (right).

This conditioning breaks the raw manure into finer, more uniform particles and evaporates unnecessary moisture. When raw manure is collected from the pens, it can have up to 55% moisture content, but by the time conditioning is complete the target moisture content is 20%, saving on transportation costs and increasing nutrient concentration.

The end result of the conditioning process is a more even, consistent layer of manure across the field that incorporates quickly into the soil with precipitation, making it particularly well-suited to a no-till environment.