

# Tips from 'Manure Jockeys'

Jim and Mit Skinner have five ways to improve manure handling



Hauling manure properly is an important skill, says Jim Skinner. The public remembers when mistakes are made.

By Betsy Freese  
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If you want to improve the image of livestock production, says Jim Skinner, first improve your manure handling skills. Jim and Mit Skinner, of M&J Manure Jockeys, Inc., in Paullina, Iowa, haul and apply 30 million gallons of liquid manure yearly. They have these tips on improving manure handling.

**1 Keep it clean.** The Skinners' equipment is kept clean and looking new. Their tankers aren't dripping manure down the road. From site to site they wash and disinfect. Why? Public relations, says Jim Skinner. If you drive by a field where manure is being applied and some of that manure has spilled onto the road, the smell on your tires when you drive in the garage is all you will remember.

Another reason to keep equipment clean is disease spread, says Skinner. Many experts believe swine diseases may be transferred by manure tankers moving from farm to farm. The Skinners carry a pressure washer with their equipment and spend three to four hours before leaving each site washing and disinfecting.

**2 Calculate rates.** Do your homework before you haul, says Skinner. "Don't guess at the gallons per acre. Calculate." If you don't calculate properly, he warns, you could under- or over-apply and hurt yields.

**3 Agitate, agitate, agitate.** You must properly agitate pits before hauling or solids will build up, says Skinner. Use a good pump that really agitates the manure, not just stirs it around.

**4 Don't cut costs.** Good equipment that works and lasts is not cheap. The tank above costs \$60,000. Pumps are \$10,000 to \$17,000. Hoses run \$500 and up. If you can't invest that much money, or don't have the time or patience to handle manure properly, hire it done, says Skinner. Their starting rate is less than 1¢ per gallon, depending on volume and time of year.

**5 Know what you are doing.** "I've seen guys blowing manure in the creek because they weren't paying attention," says Skinner. "I've seen them hauling in the rain with their tires covered in mud." All this leads to a negative image of livestock production, he says. "Handling manure properly is a skill. Do it right." **SF**



## Learn more

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A new 24-page publication, *Manure Characteristics, MWPS-18*, is available from MidWest Plan Service. It provides information on manure handling, sampling, testing and nutrient content. It costs \$8, plus \$2 shipping and handling. Order toll free: **800/562-3618**  
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