Recycling Newspapers for Poultry Litter and Animal Bedding
West Virginia University Extension Service

The use of old newspaper (ONP) for livestock bedding and poultry litter is continuously increasing in West Virginia. There are at least six businesses in West Virginia presently processing ONP and/or other kinds of paper and some cardboard for utilization as livestock bedding, poultry litter, packaging material, crop mulching material and for recycling into newsprint and other paper products. These six paper processors are located in Charleston, Greenbrier County, Randolph County, Preston County, Grant County and Morgantown.

Chopped newspaper as a livestock bedding material began in Preston County in 1990 when Extension Agent Tom McConnell tried it for dairy free-stall bedding. Since then newspaper bedding has been used for all kinds of livestock.

About 300 tons of ONP was used in West Virginia broiler houses in 1992. Most of this ONP was collected and processed in Randolph, Preston and Monongalia Counties in West Virginia and in Cumberland (Allegheny County, MD). Although this may not seem very significant, 300 tons less ONP dumped in landfills, saves $9,000 to $11,000 in dumping fees. Broiler litter cost savings using ONP litter in place of shavings/sawdust litter range from 20 to 50 percent or more depending on whether the producer uses a "total litter service" or purchases processed paper FOB and hauls and distributes in his own houses.

Presently total paper litter service is being provided for about 15-17 broiler houses each month. Total litter service is provided by Resources Unlimited in Petersburg. ONP is collected, chopped and baled in 45 lb bales by Brock Scrap Steel Company in Cumberland, MD. Resources Unlimited partners Roy Musser and Craig See pick up the baled paper litter at Brock's plant and transport it to their customer's farm where they spread the litter in the broiler houses with a small push type chopper-distributor machine.

Some broiler producers are hauling their own baled paper litter in covered semi-trailers from paper litter supplier News for Moos in Preston County and the Randolph County Sheltered Workshop. Some of these producers park the trailers on their farm and unload the litter as needed to save one handling, while other producers that share a trailer have to unload and store litter. Only about a third to one-fourth as much tonnage of chopped paper litter is needed compared to shavings/sawdust litter. The 300 tons of newspaper litter used saved producers about $38,000 in litter costs.

Broiler producer Max Park in Hardy County is using twice shredded newspaper in his three broiler houses. The ONP is shredded and baled in 500-550 pound bales by Document Management Services in Morgantown. The bales are trucked to the Park Farm by DMS. One to one and a quarter ton of paper is used in each of Park's three 16,800 square foot broiler houses (0.12 to 0.15 pounds of paper litter per square foot). The twice shredded newspaper litter has been very satisfactory and Mr. Park plans to continue using it.
Greenbrier County livestock producers are utilizing all the ONP collected through the Greenbrier Recycling Center. Two-hundred and seven tons were processed in 1992. The ONP is chopped with an Agri-Metal paper chopper and baled in 300-350 pound bales for farmers and other users to pick up at the center. The center stockpiled ONP last summer to be sure the supply would be adequate for the demand in the '92-'93 winter season. Larger bales up to 800 pounds can also be provided.

One problem in West Virginia is that ONP is not being chopped and baled in all the areas of the state where it is needed for poultry litter and livestock bedding. Efforts are underway to get a paper processor to serve the Ohio Valley area. Many more dairy and livestock farmers in that area would use paper for bedding if it was available more locally. The transport distance from supplier to user in many areas is not always economically feasible. More broiler producers in the major five-county broiler production area could also benefit from additional paper litter suppliers in their area.

Small paper chopper machines available at relatively low cost are being used for some on-farm chopping, but conversation with livestock farmers indicate that most prefer to purchase processed baled paper bedding rather than chop it on their farm. Poultry producers have traditionally used a litter service where a phone call to order is all that is needed to get ready-made litter delivered and distributed in their poultry houses. The increased use of newspaper litter has created a mix of conventional litter (shavings/sawdust) suppliers, paper litter suppliers, on-farm chopping of ONP for paper litter and farmers hauling paper litter chopped and baled out of the major poultry production area.

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