

## COMPOST DELIVERY, STOCKPILING, AND HANDLING

*Good Neighbor Compost Handling – Well, it's just neighborly!*

Soil amendments, such as compost, are commonly but not always incorporated prior to planting into agricultural soils to add organic and inorganic nutrients to the soil as well as intended to improve the physical, chemical, or biological characteristics of soil. Occasionally it may be necessary to stockpile or provide a temporary handling area for compost or other soil amendments prior to application to the soil due to supply, delivery concerns, or application timing on the farm.

Human pathogens may persist in biological soil amendments of animal origin (BSAAO) for weeks or even months. Proper composting of BSAAO's will reduce the risk of potential human pathogen survival. Although human pathogens do not persist for long periods of time in high UV index and low relative humidity conditions, they may persist for longer periods of time within aged manure or inadequately composted soil amendments. There is some new research evidence that there may be a characteristic and prolonged low-level survival of some human pathogens in properly treated soil amendments. (A few relevant references included in this article.)

The 2018 Romaine Lettuce Outbreak in Yuma was attributed to irrigation water contamination in the Food & Drug Administration's Environmental Assessment (EA) report. The report left many questions unanswered as to how the water became contaminated and no specific source for the contamination was ever identified.

As we begin to prepare our fields for the upcoming season, the use of composts or other soil amendments is likely. Let's review some AZ LGMA guidance and metrics regarding the use of soil amendments.

- Do not store manure or compost near sources of irrigation water.
- Use soil amendment application techniques that control, reduce, or eliminate likely contamination of surface water and/or edible crops of all types being grown in adjacent fields.
- Minimize the proximity of wind-dispersed or aerosolized sources of contamination that may potentially contact growing crops.
- Prevent cross-contamination of in-process and finished compost (stored and/or stockpiled in temporary handling areas).

Take a moment to consider how your farm practices may affect our fellow farmers, irrigation water supplies and the industry. Let's be good neighbors.

If you would like more information regarding soil amendments or other AZ LGMA metrics topics, feel free to contact us.

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[https://www.centerforproducesafety.org/researchproject/399/awards/Pathogen\\_physiological\\_state\\_has\\_a\\_greater\\_effect\\_on\\_outcomes\\_of\\_challenge\\_and\\_validation\\_studies\\_than\\_strain\\_diversity.html](https://www.centerforproducesafety.org/researchproject/399/awards/Pathogen_physiological_state_has_a_greater_effect_on_outcomes_of_challenge_and_validation_studies_than_strain_diversity.html)

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