



CHAPTER 1.0

Introduction

1.1 Purpose

A beneficial management practice (BMP) is defined as any management practice that reduces or eliminates an environmental risk.

This manual has been designed to provide you, an Alberta producer, with information about beneficial management practices (BMPs) that deal with environmental risks on rural farmstead sites. BMPs maintain or improve a farm's soil, water, air and wildlife habitat resources, and therefore contribute to the farmstead's overall sustainability and to the economic and environmental health of the farm family, as well as the surrounding landscape and community. Since the farmstead is the heart of your operation, it is important to learn how to identify areas of potential risk. This manual offers you options for managing those areas of risk so that your farmstead remains the key to the health of your family, your livestock and the environment.

Each farm is unique. Not all beneficial management practices provided in the manual are suited to every situation or farmstead site. You will need to consider your site's specific environmental risks, and review the various options available to address those risks. Then you can choose those options best suited to your needs, and adapt them to the specific conditions on your farm.

More information on beneficial management practices to address environmental risks associated with crop and livestock production can be found for specific commodity groups. A series of Beneficial Management Practices manuals for Alberta producers are listed at the end of Chapter 2.

1.2 Background

Agricultural producers in Alberta value the environment and feel strongly about their role as stewards of the land. They also understand that for their farm to remain productive and for Alberta's agricultural industry to be competitive in world markets, they need to safeguard environmental quality.

The competition for land and water resources has increased in recent decades as Alberta's population and economy have grown. This trend makes it increasingly important for everyone, including farmers, to manage these resources wisely.

Analyzing the location of any farmstead is a critical first step in improving the health of the operation's environment. By understanding how the farmstead fits into the landscape, producers can identify potential contaminants, foresee possible pathways for those contaminants to travel and predict where those contaminants might end up.

Understanding the farmstead's layout will ultimately assist in making appropriate management decisions. While some physical properties of a site, such as slope, soil type, water table and climate may be beyond a producer's control, management decisions can be influenced by these physical properties. Factors that can be managed include water supply, storage locations of potential contaminants and run-on and runoff control of surface waters. An emergency plan can also be developed to manage risk.

Managing risk and adopting BMPs suited to your farmstead are important in building and maintaining an operation that is economically sound as well as socially and environmentally responsible.

A glossary of terms is listed at the end of the manual; words defined in the glossary are highlighted in bold when they first appear in the main text.