

Bedded Pack Survey Report

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INTRODUCTION

Bedded pack systems, when properly managed can help improve soil, water and air quality while providing a manure management alternative to livestock farms interested in avoiding liquid storage systems. While many bedded pack systems in Vermont have been managed appropriately, there are also some that are not being managed properly. For this reason, the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS), paused federal cost sharing of new bedded pack projects in 2011-2012. VT NRCS has reinstated the practice in FY 2013, with the understanding that farmers undergo increased education about managing their packs. The Pasture Program at the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture has submitted and processed a survey to evaluate current bedded pack practices in order to implement a workshop session.

OBJECTIVE

The goal is to help farmers correct some management practices in order for them to successfully operate their bedded packs while making the most out of their investments.

SURVEY RESULTS

The survey revealed that 75% of the respondents currently use bedded packs (Fig 1) while 22% are interested in adopting it within the next two years (75%) (Fig 2).

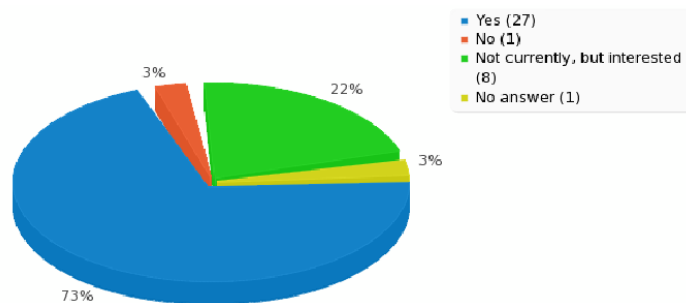


Figure 1. Do you use a bedded pack housing system on the farm you own or manage?

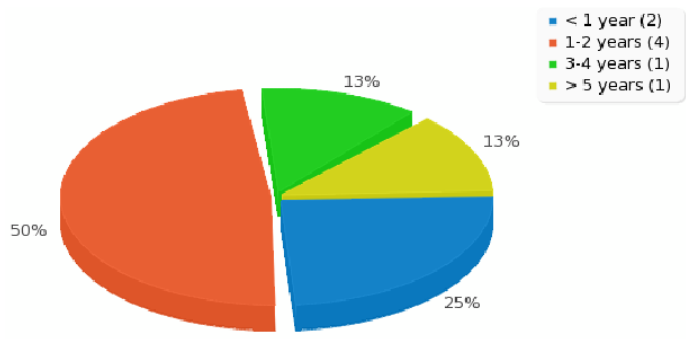


Figure 2. When do you expect to build a BP?

The majority of producers use it for beef, dairy and sheep however, most found benefits by allowing chickens or pigs in the pack (Fig 3).

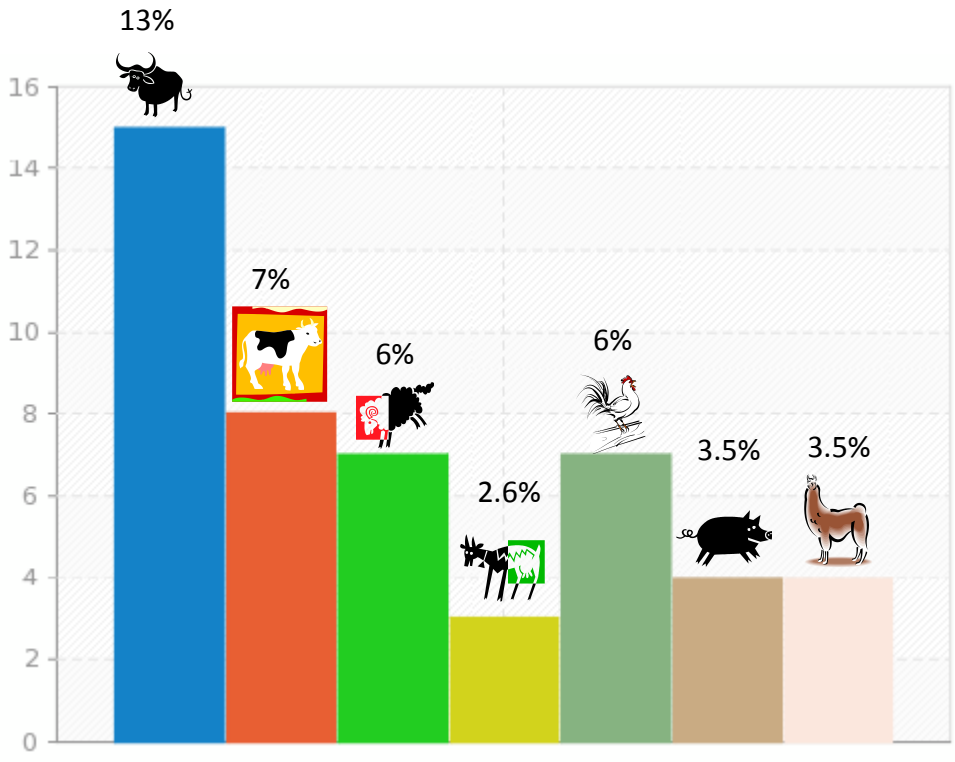


Figure 3. What type of animals are on the pack?

Thirty seven percent expressed managing up to 60 animals while 26% over 150 respectively (Fig 4).

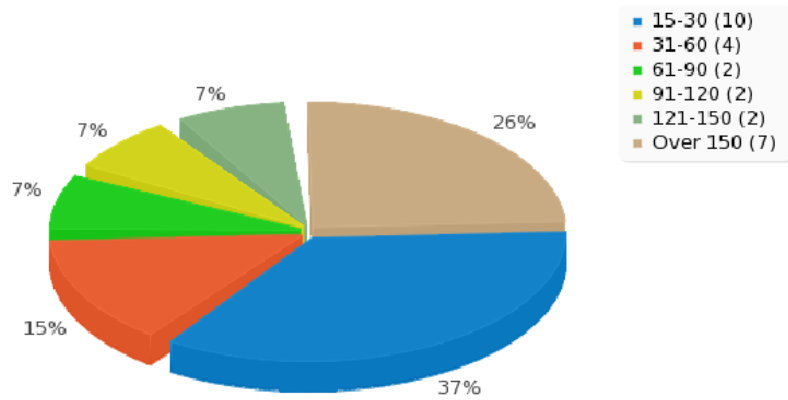


Figure 4. How many animals are managed using a bedded pack housing system?

Hay, sawdust, shavings and chips (21, 14, 9 and 8%) were the most used bedding materials and costs varied greatly Fig 5).

Bedding Materials	Count	%
Hay	24	20.87
Sawdust	11	13.91
Shavings	10	8.70
Chips	9	7.83
Straw	7	6.09
Combination of the above	3	2.61
Other materials used: (leaves, shredded paper, corn cobs)		

Figure 5. What bedding materials are you using, have used or plan to use on your bedded pack?

Seventy percent reported that it took 15-30 min to manage the pack daily, between 1 to 14 days to clean it at the cost of between \$100 and 3,000 (labor and equipment). Farmers reported starting the pack between September and November and removing it for composting between April and May.

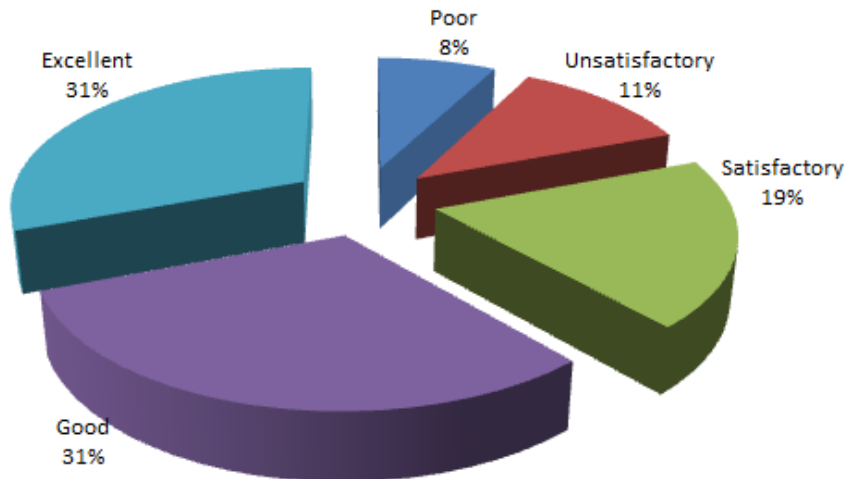


Figure 6. How do you rate your bedded pack experience?

Overall, around 80% reported having a satisfactory to excellent experience with the adoption of bedded pack systems (Fig 6).

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Workshops

A one-time workshops will be mandatory for funding new projects and will take place in:

- The Abbey, **Sheldon, VT** on March 07, 2013 (9:30 am to 3:00 pm)
 - Registration \$25 (incl. lunch): <http://2013sheldonbeddedpack.eventbrite.com/#>
- Middlebury Legion, **Middlebury VT** on March 08, 2013 (9:30 am to 3:00 pm)
 - Registration \$25 (incl. lunch): <http://2013middleburybeddedpack.eventbrite.com/#>
- Hotel Coolidge, **White River Junction, VT** on March 13, 2013 (9:30 am to 3:00 pm)
 - Registration \$25 (incl. lunch): <http://2013whiteriverbeddedpack.eventbrite.com/#>

Downloadable Bedded pack Brochure:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~pasture/Documents/Bedded%20Pack%20brochure%20021213.pdf>

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