



# Commercial Manure Applicator Manual Report

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Pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 3.197, the cost of preparing this report was approximately \$200.

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# Executive Summary

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The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) issues three (3) Commercial Animal Waste Technician (CAWT) license types:

**CAWT Company License:** This is for companies that commercially manage or apply animal waste.

**CAWT Site Manager License:** This is for lead employees that manage site operations and supervise CAWT Applicators that apply manure to the ground.

**CAWT Applicator License:** This is for persons that commercially apply manure to the ground under the supervision of a licensed Site Manager.

In order to obtain CAWT Site Manager or CAWT Applicator license, persons must work for a licensed CAWT Company and demonstrate qualifications and competency by completing a certification examination. The tiered license structure ensures all persons managing or applying manure received approved and up-to-date training.

Clean Water Funds (CWF) as a part of the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment were used to develop and implement a new online certification/training system for CAWT Applicators. Industry partners and stakeholders, the University of Minnesota Extension and the MDA developed learning objectives and training modules that supports manure applicator education and provides better assurances of applicator competency.

## Introduction

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The Clean Water Fund (CWF) from the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment dollars provided funding for a professional contract with Extension to develop applicator training. The Commercial Animal Waste Technician (CAWT) training and licensing program is in response to stakeholder requests, primarily from commercial livestock manure managers and associated groups in Minnesota.

These entities wanted to promote education and competence of their members and strengthen the credibility of their profession with customers, regulators and the public. Persons who only apply manure were previously not required to be licensed. The revised license structure ensures that more people and all licensees must accomplish training, certification and recertification.

The primary goal of this project was to develop and implement a comprehensive, up-to-date online certification/training system to certify CAWT Applicators who commercially apply manure to the ground. The following groups identified the manure applicator training as a priority:

- Commercial manure applicators
- County feedlot officers and members from the Association of County Feedlot Officers
- Custom Applicators Association
- University of Minnesota Extension
- Minnesota Pork Board
- Soil and Water Conservation District
- Pollution Control Agency
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture

The collaboration resulted in the development of targeted objectives for certification and training as a basis to improve manure applicator education and provide better assurance of applicator competency. The online component of the licensure enables MDA to deliver a license quickly.

## Legislative

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The 2013 Legislature appropriated Clean Water Funds (CWF) to develop and implement a comprehensive, up-to-date instructional system for animal waste technicians who apply manure to the ground for hire.

**2013 Minnesota Session Laws: Ch. 137, Art. 2, Sec. 3**

*\$50,000 the first year and \$50,000 the second year are to develop and implement a comprehensive, up-to-date instruction system for animal waste technicians who apply manure to the ground for hire.*

Minnesota law requires companies, site managers and applicators that apply or oversee the application of manure for hire to obtain a Commercial Animal Waste Technician (CAWT) license from the MDA. Animal waste cannot be commercially managed or applied by persons for hire without a valid CAWT Site Manager or CAWT Applicator license (Minnesota Statute 18C.430 subd. 1).

In 2013 the Minnesota legislature approved revisions to the CAWT license structure by establishing a tiered license framework that includes: a CAWT Company License, a CAWT Site Manager License and a CAWT Applicator License. (Minnesota Statute 18C.430 subd. 3).

## Background

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Animal waste or manure is an important agricultural production input (fertilizer). Because a large volume of manure is used and applied in the state, it is critical to have well-trained applicators who use environmentally sound practices and to prevent over-application.

The MDA issues licenses to qualified applicators that pass a certification exam. The new online CAWT Applicator training and certification provides information about applicable regulation, safety, changing technology, emerging issues and other topics. This helps to ensure a continued level of competence to properly apply animal waste for agricultural production. A person may not commercially manage or apply animal wastes to the land for hire in Minnesota without a valid CAWT Site Manager or CAWT Applicator license. The MDA issues licenses to applicators who qualify by passing a certification exam.

## Program Changes

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A diverse work group met in 2011 to evaluate the CAWT licensing program and promote proposals to improve applicator education, promote greater compliance, and raise training standards. Stakeholders strongly supported changes to CAWT licensing. Industry and regulators saw that a tiered system could pave the way for profound and positive impacts to statewide manure management.

CAWT Applicator licensing will help to ensure that previously unlicensed applicators will receive more training. The work group urged for online training and certification; efficient license delivery was necessary for the industry. The MDA has implemented a system that ensures CAWT Applicator training and certification is delivered quickly and efficiently in order to meet industry demand. The online training consists of several training modules and a final certification exam. The licensing process is

integrated – incorporating video training and online certification. Applicants can complete their application online, remit payment and receive their license within a two (2) hour session.

## CAWT Applicator Certification

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A person must demonstrate their qualification to hold a license by passing a certification exam that is based on the training. CAWT Applicators will receive training through a series of online videos accessible on the MDA website. After completing the videos, applicators must successfully pass a certification exam before they are issued a license. Upon completion of these steps a license is issued immediate.

The process advances within a single 2 hour integrated session.

The videos address issues encountered by applicators as they perform normal tasks which are developed in response to established learning objectives. Organized by topic areas, the videos cover core knowledge, skills and abilities a person must possess to competently perform the duties of an applicator. The training videos will be routinely refreshed. Applicators must complete this process annually to become certified.

The MDA projects that approximately 650 applicators will become licensed by the agency. Licensed applicators may only operate under the supervision of a licensed Site Manager who is responsible for overseeing all manure management operations. The supervision by Site Managers who are trained at a higher level provides additional assurance that manure management will proceed well.

The availability of up-to-date certification tools and quality training resources will support well qualified applicators. The MDA will partner with education institutions, such as the Extension and other stakeholders to develop the training materials.

## Online Certification/Training of CAWT Applicators

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Clean Water Fund (CWF) dollars were appropriated to develop and implement this comprehensive, up-to-date instruction system for animal waste technicians who apply manure to the ground for hire.

The MDA solicited bids to develop a curriculum to support CAWT Applicator training and craft video training material. The Extension was selected as the project contractor after a competitive Requests For Proposals process. The new CAWT Applicator training will be available online now.

## Conclusion

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The CWF dollars support the development and implementation of online training/certification for CAWT Applicators. This process provides assurance that persons receiving a license from MDA are qualified, and CAWT Applicators will receive training on manure best management practices to protect water quality. These practices are critically important to protect surface and groundwater from non-point agricultural source contamination and will have a direct impact on protecting water quality in many watersheds across Minnesota.