

Cool Compost



Show Notes

Commercial compost can help graziers improve soil health and grow better pastures, which means increased productivity for the future.

What is commercial compost?

Commercial compost is made from food and garden organics (FOGO) waste, collected through kerbside bin services.

This material is turned into compost at commercial composting facilities. There are different methods of composting, all of which speed up the natural decomposition of materials into nutrient-rich organic matter.

Commercial compost is required to meet strict Australian Standards, to ensure that it's good quality and free from weeds and contaminants.

Episode 1: Compost for graziers

Compost has been used in agriculture for centuries, but when it comes to using commercial compost in the grazing industry, the widespread potential for it to increase crop yield and profit remains largely untapped.

Which makes us ask, could commercial compost be the new frontier for Australian graziers?

In this first episode in the Cool Compost series, we talk to a grazier who used compost to transform his farming landscape from dirt poor to rich pasture.

And we hear from an environmental scientist who's used the power of compost as pellets to boost a farmer's crop yield by 30%.

Improve your soil health and yield

Commercial compost can be a good long-term investment in the health and productivity of your land and livestock.

That's because commercial compost is made from food and garden organics.

It's rich in quality nutrients. And it plays an important role in putting carbon and organic matter back into the soil, which increases biological activity.



Virginia Brunton, Principal Consultant organics, MRA Consulting Group. Photo: EPA.

Become more drought resilient

A long-term program of applying compost is a smart way to increase drought resilience and for farms to be less impacted by climatic events.

Not only can commercial compost improve your soil health, it can also improve soil moisture.

In a changing climate, this will only become more important as graziers seek to adapt and remain competitive.

A new world of opportunity with compost pellets

So how is compost applied? Commercial compost has traditionally been applied by spreading compost over the surface of the soil.

But to do this, graziers need large volumes of compost and, even then, spreading compost across the surface doesn't guarantee that it gets into the soil.

But a new method of applying compost – in the form of compost pellets – is a game changer, opening new, affordable opportunities for graziers to use commercial compost.

Groundbreaking trial

To test the potential of compost pellets the NSW Environment Protection Authority funded compost pellets trials by MRA Consulting Group through an Organics Market Development Grant.

As part of this trial, loose commercial compost was put through a pelletiser machine to make pellets.

The compost pellets were then put in the tube of an airseeder and planted with the seed, putting the compost exactly where it was needed – making it more cost-effective and easier to apply.

In promising news for the grazing industry, the trial more than tripled triticale yield, increasing revenue by \$1,000/ha.

Make the most of carbon credits

One of the benefits of using compost is that it helps to store more carbon in the soil. This means commercial compost could also create opportunities for carbon farming and earning income from carbon credits.

Reduce your reliance on fertilisers

A regular program of applying compost means graziers can also become less reliant on synthetic fertilisers. That's because commercial compost contains high-quality carbon and trace elements.

And with global shortages and unpredictable price fluctuations of synthetic chemicals, compost also offers potential as a wise insurance policy against price fluctuations in the future.

Showcase of success: Central West NSW



Steve Leisk, Farmer, Molong, Central West NSW.
Photo: EPA.

Over four years, Molong grazier Steve Leisk transformed his sandy property in Central West NSW into rich pasture growing from fertile soil. The crucial ingredient was commercial compost. He is now running at four and a half times more than previous production.

Graziers like Steve are very interested in the potential of applying compost in a targeted and strategic way.

“I realised, principally talking to farmers, that a lot of their production problems were due to lack of carbon in the soil – a lack of organic matter.

And one of the main sources of organic matter can be compost.

Carbon in soil drives the chemistry and biology and everything that makes a farm productive.”

– Virginia Brunton, MRA Consulting Group environmental scientist and compost expert



What to look for when buying your compost

Quality is vital. Make sure any compost you buy complies with Australian Standard AS4454 (Composts, soil conditioners and mulches) and the **NSW Resource Recovery Exemptions**. This ensures your compost is good quality and free from contaminants.

Soil testing is also important, as every soil has different nutrient needs. Compost can be made to suit requirements, so it is best to consult an agronomist who can provide advice on your specific soils.

About the program

The Cool Compost program showcases the results of the NSW Environment Protection Authority’s Waste Less, Recycle More Organics Market Development Grants program. The information provided in these show notes is based on evidence and results of the grant projects and activities.

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More information

Watch the video and listen to the podcast at circularag.com.au/compost

Use the Compost Buddy Advice Tool compostbuddy.com.au

The Australia Organics Recycling Association is the peak industry body for compost processors www.aora.org.au

Case studies at Australian Soil Management australiansoil.com.au/case-studies

Listen to the Land Life Podcast - Episode 6 Compost play.acast.com/s/land-life/compost

Compost advice and case studies at BioCarbon Soil biocarbonsoil.com.au

Read more about MRA’s compost pellet project mraconsulting.com.au/compost-pellets-down-the-tube