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Cotton Gin Waste to the Rescue?



Cotton gin waste could help clean up the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

At least one cotton gin waste company has reached out to help clean up the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, and cotton gins in the South have gotten calls from USDA seeking the absorbent material to soak up the oil that's threatening the marshes of the Gulf states.

Meanwhile, a innovation from a Texas Tech University researcher sandwiches a layer of carbon between two layers of low-micronaire cotton. Seshadri Ramkumar developed a non-woven blanket called fibertect that can absorb 15 grams of oil per one gram of material. The cotton soaks up the oil and traps the vapors in the carbon. It is two or three times more absorbent than synthetic materials, Ramkumar says. After the oil is rung out of the 'blanket,' the product can be reused. Plains Cotton Growers vice president Roger Haldenby told a Fox News station in Lubbock that low-micronaire makes up about 36% of the 2009 crop in the High Plains.

In Georgia, Albert Glass owns a company that turns cotton waste into cattle, goat and deer feed. In his patented process, he regins cotton waste, picking up 8% to 12% lint before turning it into livestock feed.

He's been in talks with former and current state officials with the USDA and researchers, who in turn have been discussing the potential of gin waste in the spill cleanup effort with BP officials. 'If we've got something that will help,' Glass told the Mid-South Farmer, 'then I'm willing to donate the inventory to this cause.'

He cites an expired U.S. patent that cotton gin waste contains a living bacteria similar to those found in yogurt that will biodegrade the hydrocarbons in the chemical spill.

BP has received at least 10,000 ideas for cleaning up the spill. BP spokesman Jon Pack Tuesday night said he hadn't heard of the cotton gin waste idea, but noted, 'we're trying deperately hard to find solutions.' BP operates an idea hotline at 1-281-366-5511.

Oil from the well has been flowing for more than a month since a last-April blast at the BP well off the Louisiana coast killed 11 workers. Federal, state and local authorities are working to cap it.

In the next few days, BP is going to use a method called 'top kill' to counteract the oil pressure with heavy fluid through the well, attempting to stop the leak and then cap it, the BP spokesman said.

Experts estimate as much as 210,000 gallons of oil leaking into the Gulf on a daily basis. Reports indicate that the oil has reached the marshes of Louisiana.

The waste from the cotton-ginning process includes burrs and lint, both absorbent materials. In a typical year, there's plenty of waste.

Glass, in a post on the WBRZ-TV station site in Baton Rouge, La., offered 7,000 tons of cotton gin waste.

'Cotton Gin Waste can effectively biodegrade oil in water without having to remove the waste/oil mix from the water afterwards,' Glass explained.

'Our plant in Cuthbert, Ga., is located 265 miles from the ports at Mobile Bay, Ala., where

our cotton gin waste can be loaded on barges then distributed on the ocean surface,' Glass wrote. 'At this time A. G. Daniel Company has 7,000-plus tons of dry cotton gin trash in storage that will be processed into cattle feed at our plant if not used in the oil spill cleanup efforts. '

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