

# *The Past, Present, and Future of Animal Feeding Operations*

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Animal feeding operations are a relatively new phenomenon in the U.S. agricultural landscape. Its growth in the past 50 years can be attributed to consumer demand for high quality meats at affordable prices. Today, most of this country's meat products were finished to consumer preferences in confined animal feeding facilities. Consequently, much of the country's agricultural sector has evolved to one that serves the feeding industry, such as the production of corn, other feed grains, and hay.

Recently, the animal feeding industry has come under attack by those who perceive it to be a major source of water or air pollution. Other critics of animal feeding operations include those who perceive them to be cruel and inhumane to animals or who are concerned over a perceived change in the structure of American agriculture. Regardless, critics are often less than fully informed as to the true nature of the operations, including environmental aspects.

It is critical that America's environmental policy address the relevant issues involved from the standpoint of proper and appropriate scientific analysis. To manage these issues from the standpoint of perception is to cause unnecessary disruption throughout much of the Nation's agricultural system.

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