

National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) CAFO Survey Results

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One of the major environmental challenges facing our country today is nonpoint source (NPS) pollution/runoff from agricultural lands, urban streets, construction activities, individual septic systems, parking lots, and other areas. Agriculture, in particular, has received considerable attention in recent years as State and Federal agencies have sought to increase water-quality-protection efforts. States are aggressively pursuing and expanding resource-conservation activities to minimize agricultural nonpoint source pollution. Significant environmental improvements have been achieved while enhancing agricultural competitiveness and farm profitability. Successful efforts have been obtained where the activities are voluntary, partnerships use a team approach, and specific needs of each area are met. All of this has occurred without legislation or regulation from the Federal level.

The Clean Water Act (CWA) and the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System of permits (NPDES) do not stand alone in protecting America's waters from NPS runoff from animal feeding operations. In particular, the State-led programs, when coupled with various Farm Bill, Clean Water Act, and Safe Drinking Water Act incentives and support, can provide significant and continuing opportunity for major environmental-quality protection. Federal water policies must recognize that the value of the State programs, if enhanced through Federal efforts, could provide a firm foundation for a sound national NPS policy, including addressing the runoff associated with animal agriculture.

States often have tackled environmental-quality issues before they reach national attention and federal efforts. Recently, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued a final strategy to curb water pollution from animal feeding operations (AFOs). Further, almost all States are utilizing existing laws, regulations, strategies, and programs to address water quality concerns associated with animal-waste management. In many cases, States have effective programs for protecting water quality without the use of a permit program.

NASDA recently completed a survey of state programs and requirements for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). Our survey found that about one-half of the states presently require the development and implementation of a nutrient management plan for the application of manure to the land based on the application of nitrogen, phosphorus, or both, depending on the most limiting nutrient. In addition, over one-third of the States have statutes or requirements that are more stringent than current Federal regulations. This presentation will provide additional information on the results of the CAFO survey.

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