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EPA Targets Iowa Cattle Feedlots for Runoff Violations

Three northwest Iowa cattle facilities face enforcement action as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency continues its new push to get feedlots to comply with federal Clean Water Act.

Compiled by staff

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced last week that it has taken civil action against three Iowa beef feedlots for violating the federal Clean Water Act. "We are finding harmful bacteria such as E. coli in wastewater discharged by feedlots at levels that are exponentially higher than the levels at which EPA permits municipal wastewater treatment systems to discharge their treated wastewater," says EPA regional administrator Karl Brooks.

Brooks is located in the EPA Region 7 office at Kansas City, which covers Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska and Missouri. He says feedlot runoff may contain pathogens and sediment, as well as nitrogen and phosphorus, all of which can harm aquatic life and water quality.

Bruce Feedlot of Hastings in southwest Iowa has agreed to pay a \$31,573 civil penalty for its unauthorized discharges of pollutants into Indian Creek and its tributaries in Mills County. The EPA's settlement with Bruce Feedlot is subject to a 40-day public comment period before it becomes final.

Groeneweg Farm of Rock Valley must apply for a permit and complete wastewater controls at its facilities by October 31 to end unauthorized discharges of pollutants into a tributary of the Rock River in Sioux County.

Gradert/Cla-Don/Winterfeld Feedlot of Ireton must apply for a permit and complete wastewater controls at its facilities by October 31 to end unauthorized discharges of pollutants into Six Mile Creek in Sioux County.

Ten Tips To Prepare for EPA Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations Inspections

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If you own a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation, you have probably heard about EPA's inspection and enforcement activities in Region 7. These activities are part of an increased national emphasis aimed at ending harmful discharges of pollutants from CAFOs into rivers and streams.

Having EPA show up at your facility for an inspection can sometimes be a daunting experience. Inspections are very comprehensive and typically cover all aspects of a facility's operation. EPA inspectors routinely perform walk-throughs of production and land application areas, review records and collect samples. To assist livestock producers in preparing for inspections, EPA officials from the Region 7 office in Kansas City offer the following 10 tips to help ensure that livestock operations are in compliance.

- 1) Are you discharging? Answering this question is one of the primary purposes of an EPA CAFO inspection. Owners and operators of CAFOs should evaluate their facilities to determine if any runoff is getting into nearby rivers and streams. If you are discharging, contact the state regulatory agency to determine waste controls and permit requirements.
- 2) Are you controlling runoff from feed storage areas? CAFOs are required to control runoff from all production areas, including feed storage areas.
- 3) Are you controlling runoff from manure/bedding stockpiles? These stockpiles are considered part of a facility's production area even if they are located outside the facility's footprint. Care should be taken to prevent runoff from discharging into nearby rivers and streams.
- 4) Is your facility medium sized? If your operation conveys runoff from the production area through a man-made ditch, flushing system or other similar man-made device, then you need to obtain a permit or stop the discharge.
- 5) It is important to read your National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit and implement its requirements.
- 6) Are you counting animals correctly? Both EPA and state regulatory agencies require that species in open lots be counted together with similar species in confinement for the purposes of determining your size status as a CAFO. Also, if your operation confines enough animals of one species to be considered a large CAFO, then all animals at the operation must be counted and



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runoff from these areas must be contained.

7) Maintain complete and accurate animal inventory records. One of the first things an inspector does is determine your CAFO status by looking at the number of animals that have been confined at your facility. This determination can take time if the right records are not readily available.

8) If you have an NPDES permit, you cannot expand operations beyond the capacity listed in your current permit without authorization from the state regulatory agency.

9) Maintain lagoon berms free of trees, shrubs and erosion features and follow pump-down level requirements for lagoons to maintain adequate storage levels.

10) Maintain records for land application of manure solids and liquids and follow a nutrient management plan/manure management plan in the application of any manure. These records are vital to demonstrating that you are implementing appropriate land application practices.

Learn more about the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System and how it regulates CAFOs at [CAFO](#).

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