

I'm not a CAFO!

Dann Bolinger, Michigan State University Extension Educator and Dr. Bill Bickert, MSU Director of ANR Manure and Nutrient Mgt.

If you think that environmental regulation of dairy and livestock farms affects only the large farms, don't believe it! An AFO (Animal Feeding Operation) is defined as any farm that confines animals for more than 45 days during the year for any part of the day and where the confined area has no vegetation during the normal growing season. In Michigan, that includes nearly every animal farm.

A farm is considered a CAFO (Confined Animal Feeding Operation) if it meets the size or environmental risk requirements in the adjoining table. Although only large CAFOs are currently required to be permitted, small and medium CAFOs are expected to voluntarily come into compliance. Discharging any form of manure, wastewater or polluted storm water into waters of the state is unacceptable for any size CAFO. Small and medium CAFOs that are found to have a discharge are subject to immediate remediation of the problem and potentially could be fined or required to apply for permit coverage. Waiting to fix problems may invite enforcement involving short timelines, prescriptive and/or impractical solutions, and expenses that may be difficult to bear. Small and medium CAFOs need to take action today!

All farms need to take the initiative to improve environmental stewardship. The extent of necessary changes and the economic consequences will vary from farm to farm.

Regulatory Definitions of Large, Medium, and Small CAFOs

A **Medium CAFO** falls within the size range in the table below and either:

- has a manmade ditch or pipe that carries manure or wastewater to surface water; or
- the animals come into contact with surface water that passes through the area where they're confined.

If an operation is found to be a significant contributor of pollutants, the permitting authority may designate a medium-sized facility as a CAFO.

A **Small CAFO** confines fewer than the number of animals listed in the table **and** has been designated as a CAFO by the permitting authority as a significant contributor of pollutants.

ANIMAL SECTOR	SIZE THRESHOLDS (NUMBER OF ANIMALS)		
	LARGE CAFOS	MEDIUM CAFOS ¹	SMALL CAFOS ²
cattle or cow/calf pairs	1,000 or more	300 - 999	less than 300
mature dairy cattle	700 or more	200 - 699	less than 200
veal calves	1,000 or more	300 - 999	less than 300
swine (weighing >55 pounds)	2,500 or more	750 - 2,499	less than 750
swine (weighing <55 pounds)	10,000 or more	3,000 - 9,999	less than 3,000
horses	500 or more	150 - 499	less than 150
sheep or lambs	10,000 or more	3,000 - 9,999	less than 3,000
turkeys	55,000 or more	16,500 - 54,999	less than 16,500
chickens other than laying hens	125,000 or more	37,500 - 124,999	less than 37,500
laying hens	82,000 or more	25,000 - 81,999	less than 25,000

¹Must also meet one of two "method of discharge" criteria to be defined as a CAFO or may be designated.

² Never a CAFO by regulatory definition, but may be designated as a CAFO on a case-by-case basis.

Only when farmers evaluate where they stand can they develop realistic goals and set timelines to make needed improvements.

The Michigan Right to Farm *Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices* (GAAMPs) are a great starting point. Although their primary purpose is to maintain protection from nuisance lawsuits, they provide guidance toward protecting the environment in a practical manner.

Individual confidential assistance in answering your questions and assessing your farm's environmental status is available from partners of the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)—Michigan Milk Producers Association, Conservation Districts, Michigan Pork Producers, Michigan Farm Bureau, MSU Extension and others. MAEAP Progressive Planning for Livestock Systems provides an opportunity to have a friendly face provide guidance and to assist you in prioritizing needs. Visit www.maeap.org for more details.

Take the first step toward environmental stewardship today. Some significant improvements may take practical changes in management or facilities at little or no cost. Doing nothing helps no one. Taking action helps the environment, the animal industry and your farm's future.

This publication is brought to you by the Michigan State University Extension Manure Management Team. Visit www.rootzone.msu.edu for more information. 🌱