

Black manure circles on crops

CAFO pivot-spraying adds to the stink, the risk for neighbors



Lighthawk/ECCSCM photo, Aug 15, 2008

Black manure circles on crops, on bare fields, from pivot-irrigators at Vreba-Hoff CAFO; neighbors of CAFOs suffer stench, health risks from emissions including airborne ammonia, hydrogen sulfide.

Worst CAFO violators, 2008

Vreba-Hoff/Waldron	56 violations
Hartland Farms	7 violations
Bakerlads Farms	1 violation
State Line Farms	1 violation
2008 totals	65 violations

The year 2008 was marked by several enforcement actions by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. After years of emissions and air quality violations, State Line Farms hog facility in Morenci was ordered to shut down two of its swine barns in November 2008.

Vreba-Hoff continued its many years of unlawful discharges and noncompliance with Consent Orders. The three Vreba-Hoff facilities -- V-H 1 on Dillon Hwy, V-H 2 on US-127, and Waldron Dairy on US-127 -- were cited for 56 violations and discharges, some of which continue into this new year. As of January 2009, Vreba-Hoff owes the state of Michigan \$403,500 in fines and penalties.

Liquid manure sprayed from dozens of new pivot-irrigators last year, in addition to the usual tanker-spraying and drag-lining, made life miserable for neighbors of CAFOs. Through summer and fall, residents called the Michigan Department of Agriculture to report eye-watering, nauseating emissions.

But MDA, the first responder to air complaints, has no monitoring equipment, no public health experience. DEQ and health departments do not respond without the go-ahead from MDA, and MDA has *never* referred complaints to our local health department. This gap in agency response to public health is a critical concern.

ECCSCM to monitor air

As a result, ECCSCM is planning its own air monitoring projects. In addition, our Stench Alert web page (www.nocafos.org/stench.htm) will continue to post neighbors' reports of emissions and symptoms.

Please email us if CAFO emissions cause you symptoms -- headache, nausea, burning eyes; or if you have to go inside, stop work, stop children playing outside, etc. All these effects, even minor ones, can indicate the presence of ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, or other Volatile Organic Compounds in the air you're breathing. These pollutants can also trigger asthma, or make respiratory problems worse, especially for children and the elderly.

ECCSCM's air quality projects will document both emissions and symptoms. We will inform agencies and the general public so that action can finally be taken to protect the public health.

*KEEP THE AIR & WATER CLEAN,
FOR US & FUTURE GENERATIONS*

Vreba-Hoff's Earth Mentor "Treatment" System Still Not Certified, Doesn't Meet Standards

In 2007, the 30th Circuit Court's Interim Order required Vreba-Hoff to construct a partial-treatment system for animal wastes (the Earth Mentor system). A previous treatment system had failed. It is now 2009. The Vreba-Hoff court case, treatment failures & violations continue...

...In September 2008, Vreba-Hoff acknowledged that the facility "has continued the irrigation of final state effluent water, even though the levels are **not to standards.**" [emphasis added]

...In November 2008, a court-appointed Dispute Resolution Facilitator recommended \$223,500 in fines against Vreba-Hoff for multiple violations of the Court Order. The Facilitator noted that Vreba-Hoff already owed \$180,000 in penalties for previous violations, which must be paid when the "Defendant [Vreba-Hoff] presents an engineer's certification that the Earth Mentor System is operating as designed...Defendant **has not presented the certification.**" [emphasis added]

...Vreba-Hoff now says it must add cows (more manure) to pay the penalties (for mishandling manure).

...January 2009, a hearing in the 30th Circuit Court, Lansing, on Vreba-Hoff payments was scheduled then postponed. *How long* until Vreba-Hoff cleans up its act, meets standards and pays its fines?

2 New Reports Document Risks, Costs of CAFOs

1) *Pollution, disease risks from CAFOs*: A 2-yr study by the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health cites risks from the huge amount of animal waste industrial farms generate, use of antibiotics by such facilities leading to the development of drug-resistant bacteria and the high concentration of animals on industrial farms increasing the risk of disease spreading. The report recommends phasing out the most inhumane production practices within 10 years; implementing federal performance-based standards to improve animal welfare; and expanding and reforming animal agriculture research. See the full report:

http://www.ncifap.org/_images/PCIFAP_FINAL_REPORT.pdf

2) *CAFOs cost taxpayers billions*: The Union of Concerned Scientists calls for policies that reduce CAFO subsidies and encourage modern, sustainable meat, milk and egg production. "CAFOs Uncovered: The Untold Costs of Confined Animal Feeding Operations" details the policies that have allowed CAFOs to dominate U.S. meat and dairy production. "CAFOs aren't the natural result of agricultural progress, nor are they the result of rational planning or market forces," said Doug Gurian-Sherman, a senior scientist in UCS's Food and Environment Program and author of the report. "Ill-advised policies created them, and it will take new policies to replace them with more sustainable, environmentally friendly production methods." See the full report:

http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_environment/sustainable_food/cafos-uncovered.html

ENFORCEMENT TOOLS AND ACTIONS



Lighthawk/ECCSCM photo, July 10, 2008

Aerial photos have become an important enforcement tool for community groups and agencies. ECCSCM in cooperation with volunteer pilot organization Lighthawk photograph CAFO lagoons and land application sites.

From a car on a road, you see milk houses and the warehouse-style barns. You can't see the manure pits, the lakes of waste. Only aerial views can reveal the extent of degradation and pinpoint violations, whether from sediment discharges during construction, manure discharges, or (in one case last year) lagoon failure and overflow.

Aerial photos have been taken of CAFOs throughout the state and after on-site investigation of possible violations, several DEQ enforcement actions have been taken.

Check out the new online training guide for stopping CAFO pollution, from the Michigan Chapter of the Sierra Club. The guide includes information on community organizing, on water monitoring, on Michigan's CAFO permits, permit hearings, agency contacts, and much more.

<http://michigan.sierraclub.org/issues/greatlakes/StoppingCAFOPollution.html>

*ECCSCM Meetings - 3rd Wednesday of the month, 7:30 p.m.
Hudson Community Center*

JOIN US: Yes, I want to help protect our water and promote sustainable agriculture. Contributions support water monitoring and community education.

Name: _____

Address _____

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Mail to: ECCSCM, P.O. Box 254, Hudson, MI 49247

Thank You!

We Support Sustainable Agriculture

that preserves and protects water quality in streams and lakes

that raises animals in a healthy, natural environment, grazing, absorbing sunshine

that avoids the steady diet of hormones and antibiotics given animals in the crowded, confined conditions of industrial facilities

that values and protects farmland, the environment and the rural community