

Financial & Technical Assistance Available to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation Owners and Operators

Overview

On December 15, 2002, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator signed the revised National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and Effluent Limitation Guidelines (ELG) Rule affecting concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO). The revised Rule contains changes that will affect mostly large livestock and poultry operations nationwide. The Rule now requires CAFO operators to develop and implement a nutrient management plan as a permit requirement. The EPA recognizes that U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) defined comprehensive nutrient management plans (CNMP) satisfy EPA nutrient management plan requirements. Technical and financial assistance is available to USDA conservation program participants from the NRCS to help them plan and implement CNMPs for CAFOs.

EPA's CAFO Rule

Major changes made by EPA in its revised CAFO Rule include:

- All large CAFOs must apply for an NPDES permit, or demonstrate that they have no potential to discharge into waters of the United States.
- Large poultry operations using dry waste management systems are now covered by the CAFO Rule.
- New source poultry, swine, and veal operations, as defined by EPA in the Rule, must meet a "no discharge" standard. This standard only allows for discharge from the production area in the event of a 100-year, 24-hour storm or greater.

CAFOs covered by a NPDES permit are required to develop and implement a site-specific nutrient management plan.

EPA estimates that approximately 15,500 livestock and poultry operations will be required to obtain NPDES permits under the revised rule or demonstrate that they have no potential to discharge. This estimate includes 11,000 large operations, and 4,500 medium-size operations that meet certain conditions as defined by EPA in the Rule.

Financial and Technical Assistance

The 2002 Farm Bill offers several voluntary conservation programs that can be used by livestock and poultry producers to help them comply with the revised CAFO Rule. NRCS provides technical assistance to CAFO operators through conservation planning, design, and implementation. Producers also may obtain assistance from Technical Service Providers (TSP).

TSPs are individuals, entities, or public agencies certified by the NRCS and placed on a list of approved TSPs by State. Technical Service Providers may provide technical services to program participants directly or through NRCS. Only those TSPs who are certified for specific categories of technical services and are included on the approved list may receive payments for technical services provided. Visit the NRCS “TechReg” website, <http://techreg.usda.gov/>, for information on certification and to locate certified TSPs working in your State. CAFO operators should contact their local NRCS office for more information.

Financial assistance to implement practices and systems is available through:

- *Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)*: Provides up to 75 percent (up to 90 percent for beginning or limited resource farmers or ranchers) in cost share funds to assist producers in implementing conservation systems and addressing regulatory requirements. EQIP funds can be used to develop CNMPs, which are expected to satisfy the CAFO Rule’s nutrient management plan requirement. At least 60 percent of EQIP financial assistance funds are required by statute to be used on a nationwide basis for livestock and poultry operations, both confined and grazing.
- *Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA)*: Provides cost-share funds to assist producers in implementing conservation systems and addressing regulatory requirements. Program funds may be used by CAFO operators to develop and implement a CNMP. AMA funding is limited to producers in the following 15 States: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.
- *Additional Farm Bill Programs*: Other conservation programs may support CAFO operators in their efforts to implement a well-rounded conservation plan. These programs include:
 - Conservation Reserve Program
 - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
 - Wetlands Reserve Program
 - Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program
 - There may be State and local cost share programs available to support CAFO operators.

Technical Tools

Technical tools available to assist CAFO operators with conservation practice technical standards, conservation and nutrient management planning, and animal waste storage design include:

- *NRCS’s Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG)*: The eFOTG contains the practice standards for developing CNMPs. You may access the eFOTG at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/>.
- *CNMP Training Opportunities: Visit the NRCS’s Animal Feeding Operations website.* <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/afo/>, for a list of CNMP-related training opportunities.

- Animal Waste Management (AWM): A planning tool used to estimate the production of waste materials within an animal feeding operation and determine the size of storage / treatment facilities. You may access the AWM at:
<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/water/quality/common/wastemgmt/awm.html>
- Nutrient Management Planning Tools: Many States have developed nutrient management tools that can be used within that State to assist livestock and poultry producers with developing site-specific nutrient management plans. These tools vary from computerized spreadsheets to hand-written worksheets. In an effort to ensure all States have access to a scientifically sound automated nutrient management planning tool, NRCS has helped to support the development of three software tools for optional use within States where applicable.
 - Manure Management Planner (MMP): A manure utilization planning tool developed at Purdue University to help develop nutrient management plans. You may access MMP at: <http://www.agry.purdue.edu/mmp/>. The Spatial Nutrient Management Planner (SNMP) is a decision-support tool that facilitates the collection, analysis, and presentation of spatial information related to nutrient management planning. SNMP is now linked to Purdue University's MMP. <http://www.cares.missouri.edu/snmp/>.
 - Idaho OnePlan: The Idaho One Plan web site is a regional 'one-stop shop' for farmers and ranchers to use to develop their own unique conservation plans for their operations that satisfy all regulatory requirements. The web site integrates all agency programs, government regulations, and conservation planning aids; provides self-help guides to assist in determining whether and how certain programs or regulations apply to their farm or ranch operation; and identifies financial assistance opportunities. You may access this tool at: <http://www.oneplan.org/>.
 - AFOPro: AFOPro is a standalone nutrient management planning tool, with optional connections to GIS (ArcView using either AFO Pro Spatial or Spatial Nutrient Management Planner as the front end) and the NRCS's Animal Waste Management (v 2.1 or higher) engineering software. The application automates manure allocation decisions in compliance with the NRCS's 590 Standard, which requires the documentation of form, source, timing, method, and placement of nutrients. Access this application at:
http://www.esri.sc.edu/Projects/usda/application_development/afopro.asp

For more information about the financial and technical assistance available through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>. For more information about the CAFO Rule, visit EPA's CAFO Rule website: <http://www.epa.gov/npdes/cafoRule>.

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