

# Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations Need NPDES Permits

**JAYNE SEBRIGHT**  
Lancaster Farming Staff

**EPHRATA (Lancaster Co.)**  
— If you own more than 300 cows, 2,500 hogs, or 40,000 chickens, you may need to apply for a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

These NPDES permits were mandated in February 1999 by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. They assure that farmers comply with the concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) requirements of the federal Clean Water Act.

Farmers have a three-year phase-in period to receive their permit. Any new operations meeting the requirements should apply for the NPDES permit prior to beginning to operate. The goal of the NPDES

program is to prevent the operation from polluting Pennsylvania's streams and water supply.

Any operation with more than 1,000 animal units, referred to as a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO), is required to apply for an individual NPDES permit. Operations with 300 to 1,000 animal units are eligible for a general NPDES permit. Farms with 300 to 1,000 animal units that are located in special protection watersheds must receive an individual permit because of the higher risk for them to pollute water sources.

An animal unit or animal equivalent unit (AEU) is equal to 1,000 pounds of body weight. The requirements between the general and individual permits vary to take into account both the operation's size and its potential to have an adverse impact on water quality.

"Very few farmers have actually applied for the permits," said Roger Musselman, chief of permit section for the water management program, south-central region of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

Musselman encourages farmers to contact their county conservation office to find out if they need to apply for an NPDES permit. "The NPDES program ties in with the nutrient management act," said Musselman.

Under the Nutrient Management Act, any farmer with more than two animal units per acre should have a nutrient management plan approved by the county conservation district. According to Kevin McGonigal, Nutrient Management Technician for Adams County Conservation District, the deadline to apply for nutrient management

plans was October 1998.

"Most farms that needed nutrient management plans have either already had their plan approved or are working on developing a plan," said McGonigal.

The number of animal units on a farm should be identified in the nutrient management plan.

"Once a farmer identifies the number of animal units on their farm, that should indicate whether or not they need a NPDES permit," said Musselman.

The Department of Environmental Protection is counting on the conservation districts that approve nutrient management plans to alert farmers to get NPDES and other permits they need.

"The problem is we don't have any idea how many concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO) exist in Pennsylvania," said Musselman. "I suspect there are quite a few,

but it is really up to the operator to identify themselves and apply for the permits."

According to Musselman, the Department of Environmental Protection will eventually locate the CAFOs that exist in Pennsylvania. But the NPDES program is still new to the department. In fact, Pennsylvania is one of the first states to have initiated a NPDES program to guarantee water quality.

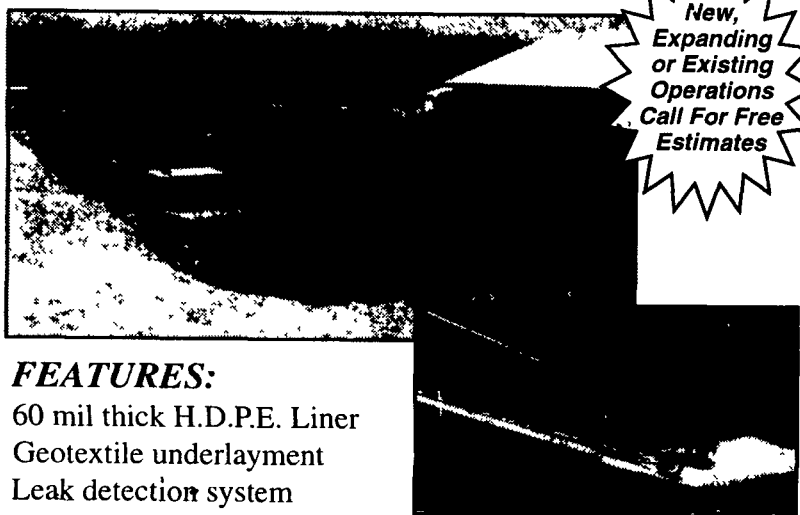
The federal Environmental Protection Agency is reviewing Pennsylvania's general NPDES permit. Since Pennsylvania is a delegated state, it can establish its own permits. However the EPA must approve them.

"One thing our organization does is respond to complaints," said Musselman. "Once we receive a complaint about a concentrated animal feeding operation, we can make sure that operation complies with the nec-

Turn to Page A39

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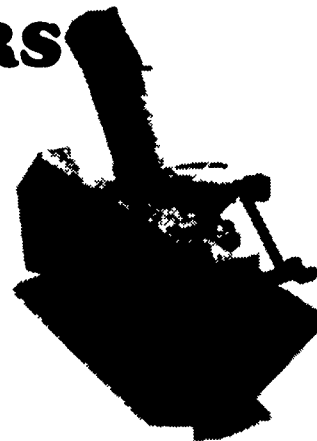
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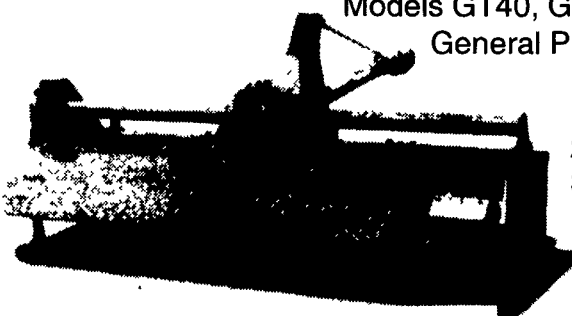
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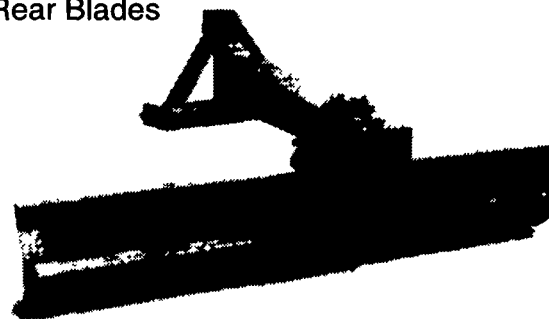
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