EPA Issues New Permit Rules for Dairies - Other livestock facilities also to come under scrutiny

On December 15, 2002 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced changes in how dairies and other livestock operations will be regulated. These regulations are generally referred to as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) Requirements. Some of the rule changes that Whatcom County producers can expect to hear more about during the coming year include:

- Dairies with more than 700 cows will be designated as “Large CAFOs” and will need to get a permit, even if they have never violated water quality laws.
- Operations other than dairies that maintain livestock, such as dairy replacement operations and poultry farms, will be inspected for water quality violations and regulated if discharges are confirmed.
- New rules for farms under permit will include soil phosphorous testing at least once every five years and the testing of manure that is transferred off farm so that those receiving it will know what its nutrient content is.

T-SUM 200 - Use Accumulated Heat Units to Time First Manure Application

Dairy producers can normally expect favorable conditions to begin applying liquid manure by sometime next month in many locations. The main exceptions are fields that are poorly drained and/or prone to frequent flooding. The accumulation of 200 heat units (T-Sum 200) since January 1, 2003, signals the best time to begin applying manure. Since 1995, Conservation District staff have been determining T-Sum 200’s arrival locally, based on weather data maintained at the sewage treatment facility in Lynden. Contact District dairy technicians (Chris Clark, Mark Ockey, or Chuck Timblin) starting in February to find out if it has arrived, or consult Ag Canada’s website for conditions in Abbotsford (farmwest.com).

DAF Prototype Tested in Whatcom County

DAF or “Dissolved Air Flotation,” is the name of a manure solids/manure nutrient removal system designed by Krofta Technologies Corp. The DAF system is currently being tested on farms throughout the western U.S., including the Ken Maarhuis and Edaleen dairies in Whatcom County. DAF is designed to take liquid manure that has already gone through a solids separator and further remove both solids and nutrients, thereby producing a cleaner liquid.

Preliminary tests indicate that the effluent may contain significantly fewer nutrients and solids than the manure going into the machine. DAF uses a combination of dissolved oxygen and chemical additive action in order to accomplish its task. Its purveyors hope to keep the cost of the chemical additive down to around 10 cents per cow, per day. Unfortunately, there are no firm estimates available yet on the cost of equipment and installation.

It is possible that DAF could become a valuable tool for nutrient management. Potential uses for DAF include cleaning up flush water so that it could be recycled over and over again for longer periods of time and concentrating manure nutrients in solid form for easier storage. For now, DAF is in the prototype and research and development phase. Much study still needs to be done to determine its true effectiveness, as well as its potential effects on the environment.

DEADLINES APPROACHING!!

2003 Cost-share (EQIP) Sign-up Deadline - Thursday, February 14, 2003. Sign up at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service field office located in the Agricultural Service Center at 6975 Hannegan Road, Lynden.

Regulatory Challenges (continued from page 1)

producers in other areas will have to learn how to
deal with geographical locations that make their
areas prone to poor air quality. Degraded air quality
may prove to be a more difficult challenge to over-
come than our wet environment, because of the
harm poor air quality poses to a large number of
people. Environmental groups in California contend
that 72,000 asthma attacks and hundreds of deaths
occur each year from an air basin that is one of the
dirtiest in the nation. Dairies are still exempt from
federal air regulations in California, but because
farms with 4,000 or more cows produce 25 tons of
smog-contributing gases annually, environmental
groups feel they should come under the same regula-
tions that cover industries with similar emission
levels.

Benefits Abound for Planting Trees Around the Farm

Start planning now, because the best
time to plant trees and shrubs in
Whatcom County is rapidly approach-
ing (mid-February through early
April)! Seedling plants, which are
available at a fraction of the cost of
those grown in containers, are only
available in the early spring, and
going them planted early helps
ensure that they will get off to a good
start. These are some reasons to consider plant-
ing trees:

• Windbreaks and shelter-belts for livestock - Even
  a single row of trees will take some of the chill out of
  winter wind (though 2 or 3 rows is even better). Trees
  are also useful for minimizing and/or controlling
  drifting snow around the farmstead.

• Privacy and noise reduction - A row of trees may
  be the best way to keep inquiring minds from wonder-
ing about things that are none of their business.

• Odor control - A row of trees accelerates the disper-
sion of odor by causing air to swirl and lift away from
  the ground.

• Beautification - Trees add beauty (and value) to the
  landscape and can be used to screen out less than
  pleasing sights.

• Wildlife habitat - Once trees are established you
  won’t have to buy birdseed to entice songbirds to your
  farm.