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Pollution From Livestock Farming Affects Infant Health

ScienceDaily (Oct. 12, 2008) — A new study in the American Journal of Agricultural Economics explores the effects of pollution from livestock facilities on infant health and finds that production is associated with an increase in infant mortality.

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Stacy Sneeringer of Wellesley College utilized data on spatial variation in livestock operations from the past two decades to identify the relationship between industry location and infant health. As livestock production has become more concentrated in larger farms, production has become more concentrated in certain areas.

Previous studies have found that animal production can result in high concentrations of potentially harmful byproducts. Effluent from livestock farms can contaminate the groundwater and air. Certain gases associated with livestock farming have been found to be toxic and to contribute to overall air pollution levels. Livestock farming has also been associated with air-borne

particulate matter.

Sneeringer found a statistically strong positive relationship between livestock farming and infant mortality. A 100 percent increase in livestock production in a county being associated with a 7.4 percent increase in infant mortality. Most of this effect occurs within the first twenty-eight days of life. Sneeringer interprets her results as reflecting damage to the fetus, as evidenced by higher rates of neonatal infant mortality, causes of death related to problems in the perinatal period, and lowered Apgar scores.

"The results of this article suggest that the mechanism by which this effect operates may be increased air pollution," Sneeringer notes. In a plea for more accurate data collection, she observes that "careful monitoring of groundwater and air pollutants near livestock farms will be necessary to form an accurate picture of their effect on public health."

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Adapted from materials provided by [Wiley-Blackwell](#).

Journal Reference:

Sneeringer et al. **Does Animal Feeding Operation Pollution Hurt Public Health? A National Longitudinal Study of Health Externalities Identified by Geographic Shifts in Livestock Production.** *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, October 2008; DOI: [10.1111/j.1467-8276.2008.01161.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8276.2008.01161.x)

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