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A Blog About Energy and the Environment



May 28, 2010, 8:14 am

Tougher E.P.A. Action on Factory Farms

By [SINDYA N. BHANOO](#)



Bowing to pressure from advocacy groups, the Environmental Protection Agency will step up efforts to monitor the nation's thousands of factory farms.



Veronica Lukaso

for The New York Times

This week the E.P.A. [reached a settlement](#) of a lawsuit filed last year by environmental groups arguing that the agency needs to pay closer attention to the effects of the livestock industry on waterways.

Animal waste, bacteria and parasites from chickens, pigs and cows drain into streams and rivers, posing a threat to human health.

The E.P.A. has agreed to propose a rule that will require concentrated animal feeding operations to report detailed data to the agency every five years, including information on type and capacity of manure storage facilities, quantity of manure generated, available land acreage to apply manure and how excess manure is disposed of.

“Believe or not – the E.P.A. and the public don’t have this basic information for thousands of factory farms because historically many have been able to avoid pollution control requirements,” said John Devine, an attorney for the National Resources Defense Council, one of the groups that filed the lawsuit.

The new rule is a starting point for change, said Ann Carlson, a professor of environmental law at the University of California in Los Angeles. “If you’re not actually figuring out on the ground what’s going on, it’s tremendously hard to enforce,” she said. “This is improving information flow.”

Mr. Devine said the data collected would better equip the E.P.A. and the public to assess pollution.

The E.P.A. has committed to proposing the rule by May 25, 2011, and finalizing it by May 25, 2012.

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