



# Fact Sheet

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania • Department of Environmental Protection

## Understanding CAFOs

### What is a CAFO?

CAFO -- or concentrated animal feeding operation -- refers to a farm where large quantities of livestock or poultry are housed inside buildings or in confined feedlots.

CAFOs in Pennsylvania are defined as animal feeding operations that:

- have more than 1,000 animal equivalent units (AEUs);
- are a concentrated animal operation (CAO) with 301 to 1,000 AEUs; or
- exceed, for a certain animal group, a threshold number established by EPA (examples include 700 dairy cows; 2,500 swine weighing over 55 lbs. each; 500 horses; or 82,000 egg-laying chickens).

An AEU is defined as 1,000 lbs. of live animal weight, and a CAO is an operation that has an animal density of more than two AEUs per acre of land suitable for manure application.

### What happens to all that manure?

Typically manure is removed from the livestock buildings or feedlots and stored until it can be spread on farm fields, exported to other farmers or composted.

When manure management systems are properly designed, constructed and operated, manure is an important and safe source of nutrients for growing crops and for other acceptable alternative uses.

### How does DEP protect water quality near CAFOs?

CAFO permits require management plans to ensure that manure and agricultural process wastewater is stored and used as a safe, economical source of nutrients for crop growth. In addition, CAFO manure cannot be mechanically applied within 100' of surface water unless a 35' wide vegetated buffer is maintained.

### How are CAFOs regulated?

Pennsylvania CAFO permitting requirements are based on the PA Clean Streams Law and include requirements from the federal Clean Water Act. Both individual and general National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits are available. State Water Quality Management Permits are also

required to assure proper siting, design, construction and operation of certain large manure storage facilities.

### What are the permitting requirements?

DEP's CAFO permit requirements include, but are not limited to:

1. A Nutrient Management Plan that has been approved by the county conservation district or the State Conservation Commission under the Act 38 program. The plan must include manure application setbacks of at least 100 feet or vegetated buffers of at least 35 feet from surface waters. Also, manure that is stockpiled at CAFOs for 15 days or more must be covered or otherwise stored to prevent discharge to surface waters.
2. An Erosion and Sediment Control Plan for acreage being plowed or tilled.
3. When required by regulation, a water quality management permit or engineer's certification for manure storage facilities.
4. A water quality management permit when treatment facilities are proposed that include a treated wastewater discharge.
5. A preparedness, prevention and contingency plan for pollutants related to the operation.
6. A plan to prevent discharges to surface waters from raw material storage areas.

### Are permitting requirements the same regardless for all CAFOs?

For the most part, yes, although CAFOs under an individual permit have more stringent conditions imposed on them on a case-by-case basis, depending on their location and site conditions.

### What determines whether an individual or a general NPDES permit is needed?

New or expanding farm operations with more than 1,000 AEUs are required to obtain an individual permit, as are all CAFOs that are located in a special protection watershed. Additionally, any CAFO that intends to discharge treated wastewater to a stream is required to obtain an individual permit.

All other CAFOs can apply for NPDES coverage through a general permit by filing a Notice of Intent (NOI).

### What input does the public have?

Public participation is required for ALL CAFO permits. For general permits:

1. The proposed general permit is made available for public comment before it can be adopted. Also, a public hearing may be held, when requested. The final version is published along with responses to all comments.
2. For new or expanded operations, the applicant must publish Notice of Intent (NOI) in a newspaper of standard circulation in the local area.
3. Notice of receipt of an NOI for coverage under the general permit is published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin. The NOI, including the approved nutrient management plan for the operation, is available for a 30-day public comment period. All comments are considered and responded to before DEP takes final action. Notice of final action on the NOI is also published.

For individual permits:

1. For new or expanded operations, the applicant must publish notice of intent to apply for an NPDES permit in a newspaper of standard circulation in the local area. New operations are also required to notify their municipality(ies).

2. A public hearing is required for any proposed CAFO in an Exceptional Value watershed. Also, DEP may hold a public hearing for other proposed CAFOs, when requested by the public.
3. Notice of receipt of a draft individual permit is published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin and major newspapers of general circulation throughout the state. The application, including the approved nutrient management plan for the operation, is available for a 30-day public comment period. All comments are considered and responded to before DEP takes final action. Notice of final action on the individual permit requests will also be published.

### How does DEP ensure compliance?

DEP will ensure compliance through inspections of the operations. DEP inspects all CAFOs that have individual permits at least once a year and the county conservation districts annually check nutrient management activities on all CAFOs. All CAFOs are also required to perform their own periodic inspections, to keep records of these inspections and report problems.

For more information, visit DEP's Web site at [www.depweb.state.pa.us](http://www.depweb.state.pa.us), Keyword: "CAFOs." You may also contact:

Division of Conservation Districts and Nutrient Management, Bureau of Watershed Management, P.O. Box 8465, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8465, or telephone 717-783-7577, fax 717-787-9549 or your DEP regional office.

## DEP Regional Offices CAFO Contacts

### Northwest Region

230 Chestnut St.  
Meadville, PA 16335-3481  
814-332-6328

**Counties:** *Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango and Warren*

### Southwest Region

400 Waterfront Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4745  
412-442-4219

**Counties:** *Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington and Westmoreland*

### Northcentral Region

208 W. Third Street, Suite 101  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
570-321-6581

**Counties:** *Bradford, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga and Union*

### Southcentral Region

909 Elmerton Avenue  
Harrisburg, PA 17110-8200  
717-705-4826

**Counties:** *Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry and York*

### Northeast Region

2 Public Square  
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711-0790  
570-826-2355

**Counties:** *Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming*

### Southeast Region

2 East Main Street  
Norristown, PA 19401  
484-250-5189

**Counties:** *Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia*