

ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What could cause an environmental claim on my farm?

Generally claims come from another entity or person who believes you have caused harm to them or their land or property. Following are examples of where environmental claims can come from:

Manure	Insecticides and Other Chemicals	Milk Spill
Fertilizers	Gasoline	Diesel
Odors	Dust	Storage Tanks
Septic Systems	Gaseous Herd Emissions	Nutrition Application
Breakdown of Equipment	Feed (Fermentation and Ozone Production)	

And one of the biggest areas to be concerned about: Third Parties who allege damages regardless of merit.

Who can bring environmental suits and cleanup actions against dairy farmers?

Anyone can, but claims most often comes from regulators acting on behalf of local, state or federal governments; fellow citizens or neighbors.

Why have government agencies become more involved with environmental regulations in recent years?

Any internet search brings up countless occurrences that deal with the government's increasing concern about maintaining clean air, clean water and minimizing climate change. The government is keying in on carbon footprints and discharge of greenhouse gases. Here are the results of one of those internet searches:

- California officials identify agriculture, including cows, as the major source of nitrate pollution in more than 100,000 square miles of polluted groundwater.
- In Oklahoma, nitrates from Seaboard Farms' hog operations contaminated drinking water wells, prompting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to issue an emergency order in June 2001 requiring the company to provide safe drinking water to area residents.
- In 1996 the Centers for Disease Control established a link between spontaneous abortions and high nitrate levels in Indiana drinking water wells located close to feedlots.
- High levels of nitrates in drinking water also increase the risk of methemoglobinemia, or "blue-baby syndrome," which can kill infants.
- Animal waste contains disease-causing pathogens, such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, *Cryptosporidium*, and fecal coliform, which can be 10 to 100 times more concentrated than in human waste. More than 40 diseases can be transferred to humans through manure.
- In May 2000, 1,300 cases of gastroenteritis were reported and six people died as the result of *E. coli* contaminating drinking water in Walkerton, Ontario. Health authorities determined that the most likely source was cattle manure runoff.
- Manure from dairy cows is thought to have contributed to the disastrous *Cryptosporidium* contamination of Milwaukee's drinking water in 1993, which killed more than 100 people, made 400,000 sick and resulted in \$37 million in lost wages and productivity.
- From 1995 to 1998, 1,000 spills or pollution incidents occurred at livestock feedlots in 10 states and 200 manure-related fish kills resulted in the death of 13 million fish.
- When Hurricane Floyd hit North Carolina in 1999, at least five manure lagoons burst and approximately 47 lagoons were completely flooded.
- Nutrients in animal waste cause algal blooms, which use up oxygen in the water, contributing to a "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico where there's not enough oxygen to support aquatic life. The dead zone fluctuates in size each year, extending over 5,800 square miles during the summer of 2004 and stretching over 7,700 square miles during the summer of 1999.
- Ammonia, a toxic form of nitrogen released in gas form during waste disposal, can be carried more than 300 miles through the air before being dumped back onto the ground or into the water, where it causes algal blooms and fish kills.

