

AMERICAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION CALLS FOR NATIONAL MORATORIUM ON NEW AND EXPANDING CONCENTRATED ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATIONS

ACTION 5: REQUIRING END OF LIQUID MANURE HANDLING SYSTEMS

In light of the wide-ranging negative health and environmental impacts associated with Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), as well as serious social and environmental justice concerns, the American Public Health Association adopted a new policy resolution. The [Precautionary Moratorium on New and Expanding CAFOs](#) calls for federal, state and local governments, including public health agencies, to impose a national moratorium on new and expanding CAFOs until additional scientific data on the attendant risks to public health have been collected, uncertainties resolved, and 12 action steps outlined in the resolution have been taken. This document is one of a series of briefs concerning the action steps that must be met before the APHA's call for a moratorium will be lifted. This document focuses on Action Step 5, and provides additional information pertinent to this action step.

Action Step 5 requires:

Federal and state governments prohibit the installation of new liquid manure handling systems, including waste lagoons, and phase out their use on existing operations in order to reduce the risk of public health and environmental disasters.

Overview of public health threats associated with CAFO liquid manure: CAFOs produce billions of tons of waste a year, at a rate far greater than can be absorbed by the land. This untreated waste is stored in “lagoons,” or cesspools, which pose serious public health and ecological hazards through contaminated surface and groundwater resources.¹ This form of waste management poses an exacerbated risk during times of heavy rainfall and extreme weather, which are becoming increasingly common. The constant and exacerbated exposure to CAFO waste is an environmental justice concern, as most surrounding communities are historically disadvantaged communities of color,

whose occupants are disproportionately exposed to harmful pathogens, antibiotic-resistant bacteria and contaminated drinking water.

Although some groups have proposed solutions to waste lagoon contamination, such as lagoon covers and manure digesters,² these solutions do not prevent groundwater contamination, field spraying, or harmful odors.³ In addition, many of these “solutions” require significant financial investment and thus further support the adoption and continued use of unsustainable methods of industrial food animal production. More research is needed to test alternative waste management methods.

RECOMMENDED POLICY CHANGES

- ▶ The Environmental Protection Agency should utilize and enforce all regulatory standards necessary to prevent new lagoons from being built.
- ▶ Congress and Federal Agencies support research for sustainable alternatives to waste lagoons that are not vulnerable to breaches and that protect local communities and resources from contamination.
- ▶ Hold responsible the industries that own the animals, not the farmers or contractors, for waste management and the expenses related to phasing out existing lagoons.
- ▶ Encourage sustainable methods of animal production whose scale does not exceed the capacity of the land required to use the waste sustainably.⁴

The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future is an interdisciplinary academic center based within the Bloomberg School of Public Health's Department of Environmental Health and Engineering and is a leader in public health research, education, policy and advocacy that is dedicated to building a healthier, more equitable and resilient food system. The opinions expressed herein are our own and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Johns Hopkins University.

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