

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

ACTION 8: REQUIRING REMOVAL OF EXEMPTIONS FOR AGRICULTURAL OPERATIONS FROM THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ACT

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 8, and provides additional information pertinent to this action step.

Action Step 8 requires:

The federal government removes exemptions for agricultural operations from the Occupational Safety and Health Act, including exempting agricultural operations from inspection and enforcement of labor laws based on the number of employees.

Overview of OSHA laws that pertain to CAFO workers:

The Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 created the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to ensure safe and healthful working conditions for US workers through the enforcement of standards, education, and training.

Overview of the CAFO exemption mentioned: Farming operations with fewer than 10 employees (not including family members) and that do not provide

temporary housing for workers are exempt from the OSHA rules, regulations, and standards.¹ A “farming operation” means any operation involved in the growing or harvesting of crops, the raising of livestock or poultry, or related activities conducted by a farmer on sites such as farms, ranches, orchards, dairy farms or similar farming operations. This means that the agency cannot use federal funds to inspect or cite these operations.

Many CAFOs have few employees and lack temporary housing, and therefore are exempt from the OSHA rules, regulations and standards. But protection is crucial for CAFO workers, who are often exposed to harmful waste particles, pathogens and antibiotic-resistant bacteria due to unsafe working conditions.¹ Due

to the hazardous work environment, CAFO workers experience high rates of injuries and adverse health effects, including burning eyes, muscular pain, headaches, coughing and nausea.² However, even under current OSHA protections, there are few regulations

that would apply to livestock agricultural workers. Most of the regulations pertain to issues regarding crop work, such as pesticide exposure, harvesting injuries and heat shock.

RECOMMENDED POLICY CHANGES

- ▶ Remove all exemptions for agricultural operations from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, meaning any operation, regardless of the number of employees and if they offer temporary housing, will be subject to inspection and enforcement of the labor rules and regulations, which work to ensure a safe workplace for all.
- ▶ Include new OSHA rules specific to livestock agriculture, such as rules that govern maximum hours of work and monitor and limit adverse health effects from occupational exposure to contaminants.

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