

FEEDLOT TECHNICAL WORKPAPERS COMPLETED

During the period January to July 2001, committee meetings and staff work continued on the Generic Environmental Impact Statement for Animal Agriculture. Draft and final versions of the Technical Workpapers were presented, debated and revised. The EQB has received nine final TWP's, with the remaining draft TWP's to be finished soon. The TWP's and other information can be found on the **Feedlots** link of the Minnesota Planning Web site at: www.mnplan.state.mn.us.

TWP documents are prepared by scientific experts to examine various areas of concern. TWP's examine these critical areas in greater depth than the 1,500 page Literature Summary previously completed by the University of Minnesota and its partners. Priorities for further research work were discussed and agreed to by the Citizen Advisory Committee. The Soil Phosphorus Index, Air Quality Dispersion Modeling and Health Effects of Air Emissions were determined the highest priorities for additional study. The EQB also recognizes the importance of ongoing medical research into the health effects of pathogens in meat and livestock products.

Major areas of investigation for the TWP's include:

1. Description of Animal Agriculture
2. Social and Community Topics
3. Land Use and Conflict Resolution
4. Role of Government
5. Economic Impacts
6. Water Quality Issues
7. Air Quality Issues
8. Soils and Manure Issues
9. Human Health Issues
10. Animal Health and Welfare

Throughout the last six months, the CAC has been working on the policy development and recommendation process. While the contractors are collecting the detailed TWP information, the CAC is processing and digesting the data to extract meaningful trends and project the results of future actions.

The CAC will sort through the complex linkages between the economic, social, public health and environmental aspects of the animal agriculture industry. This requires a careful balancing of the real costs and benefits from any proposed actions. Advances in genetic sciences, globalization of commerce and exponential increases in information technology are accelerating the pace of change in every field.

In January 2001, Marlene Halverson presented her draft TWP on animal welfare. She compared aspects of various American and European production systems, focusing on the need to promote sustainable livestock production systems. She touched on the issues of antibiotic resistance and animal cruelty. EarthTech Consultants presented their final TWP on Human Health issues and the draft TWP on Air Quality and Odor. Both of these topics generated lively debate and discussion among CAC members.

February's meeting featured a final presentation on the Air Quality TWP and discussion of odor complaints, air quality monitoring and air dispersion modeling. The issue of producer certification and product quality assurance was also debated. There was a talk by Dr. Thomas Blaha on a pilot pork certification program he was launching for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, called MNCert.

In March, CAC members heard Steve Jann from USEPA discuss federal programs for feedlot regulation. Dr. David Mulla from the University of Minnesota made his initial presentation on the Water Quality TWP. The CAC heard about Dr. Mulla's work with regard to shifting the focus of regulation to land application of manure, which he showed was the most significant source of water contamination. Dr. Paul Bloom and his team gave the initial presentation on the Soils and Manure TWP, focusing on their research into a Phosphorus Index for Minnesota.

In April, CAC members heard the Land Use TWP and the initial presentation on the Social and Community TWP. After a lively question and answer period with the consultants, the CAC began work on initial policy recommendations for these controversial areas. Dr. Mulla returned to make his final presentation on the Water quality TWP.

In May the Land Use team presented their final TWP. In June most of the meeting was spent discussing the Economics TWP. The CAC worked on policy recommendations in several areas.

Next steps

The final GEIS and final TWPs will be posted on the Minnesota Planning Web site. The final GEIS should give the most current and comprehensive picture of animal agriculture available. In addition, the final GEIS will identify further research needed to more completely understand the impacts of feedlots on society, human health and the environment.

Background

Animal agriculture is a major component in Minnesota's economy. Recently it has gone through dramatic and unprecedented changes. A decade-long trend of increasing consolidation of smaller farms into larger ones, a continuing shift to bigger feedlots, and public concern over feedlot impact has generated much attention and controversy throughout our state. New public health concerns may cause us to rethink some aspects of modern farming. We are seeing new production efficiencies and economies of scale, as well as problems and diseconomies of scale.

As a result of these concerns and issues, the 1998 Legislature directed the EQB, along with a citizen advisory committee, to conduct a statewide study of animal agriculture and feedlots to assess their present and projected impact on Minnesota. The study, a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS), is examining the effects of animal agriculture and feedlots on Minnesota's economy, health, environment and quality of life. The objective of the

study is to provide balanced information on animal agriculture and recommendations on future alternatives to optimize livestock production in the state, while protecting public health, social stability and environmental quality. This GEIS will not answer all issues and concerns, but it will provide an objective foundation to establish current knowledge and direct future research investigations.

This comprehensive study is the first in the United States to explore statewide impacts of the entire livestock industry. When completed, the study will offer citizens and policy-makers scientific data on the livestock industry and recommendations on future options for the industry. The final GEIS is slated to be completed by December 30, 2001.

Citizen Advisory Committee

A 24-member citizen advisory committee was appointed by the EQB under direction from the Legislature. It is charged with ensuring that the public, including all interest groups and stakeholders, are involved in shaping the feedlot study and its findings.

The Environmental Quality Board, staffed by Minnesota Planning, draws together five citizens and the heads of 10 state agencies that play a vital role in Minnesota's environment and development. The board develops policy, creates long-range plans and reviews proposed projects that would significantly influence Minnesota's environment.

For information, contact:

George Johnson
GEIS Project Manager
651-296-2888

Gregg Downing
GEIS Research Coordinator
651-205-4660



658 Cedar Street
St. Paul, MN 55155

651-296-3985
Fax: 651-296-3698