



Frequently Asked Questions about the Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) Permit

from Ecology's Water Quality Program

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) revised the general permit covering Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs).

Q: When is the CAFO General Permit going into effect?

A: Ecology issued the CAFO General Permit on June 21, 2006, and after a 30 day appeal period the permit became effective on July 31, 2006. The permit is scheduled to expire on July 21, 2011.

Q: Can I appeal the permit?

A: Yes. You can appeal the issuance of a general permit upon receipt of the permit. The procedures and requirements for the appeal process are explained in RCW 43.21.B310. You can also visit our website: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/permits/cafo/index.html. Just click on the link "Appealing this Permit."

Q: Who do I contact with questions?

A: You can ask questions to the Department of Ecology at:

Mail:	Kevin Hancock	Phone:	360-407-6283
	Department of Ecology	Fax:	360-407-6426
	PO Box 47600	E-mail:	khan461@ecy.wa.gov
	Olympia, WA 98504-7600		

Q: Who needs a permit?

A: Large CAFOs need a permit, if they discharge or propose to discharge to state waters. Any designated CAFO or medium Animal Feeding Operation (AFO) that discharges to state waters must also get a permit. Any AFO may choose to get a permit. For more details see Ecology's: [Is my operation a CAFO?](#)

Q: What will this permit require?

A: Your permit will require you to:

- Implement a nutrient management plan.
- Submit annual reports to the state and send updates to your nutrient management plans to the state.
- Retain records of your nutrient management practices for at least five years.
- Conduct annual soil tests from nutrient application areas (large CAFOs only).
- Anticipate the storage level of your manure lagoon.

Q: Is groundwater monitoring required in the permit?

A: No. The permit does require soil testing of field application areas and a way to anticipate the storage level in the manure lagoons. What the permit is trying to do is identify leaks before there is a groundwater problem.

Q: Why do I need a permit?

A: New federal rules require some CAFOs to be covered under a permit. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) adopted the rules in February 2003, and a recent court decision changed the requirements of the federal CAFO rule and state CAFO permit. Ecology and Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) are responsible for implementing this rule at the state level.

Animal manure is a valued resource when managed effectively. While nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen are valuable components of manure and essential for crop growth and animal production, improper management of manure can lead to excessive nutrient loading in rivers, streams, and lakes. Excessive nutrients in waterways cause too much plant growth, fish kills, and reduced aesthetic and recreation quality.

Q: How will the permit protect the environment?

A: This permit ensures that manure is properly stored and used. CAFOs required to get a permit must design and maintain their production area to prevent a discharge to waters of the state except during the biggest rainfall. Manure can be spread on crops only if it is applied at agronomic rates. An agronomic rate is the rate manure can be applied to meet crop needs while avoiding over applications. In other words, the plants can use all of the nutrients in the manure, and it won't run off into the water.

Q: Will the nutrient management plans be available to the public?

A: As part of the permit, CAFOs must write and follow a nutrient management plan. This is a federal requirement. The court ruling stated that when nutrient plans are used as effluent limits they are subject to public review and must be submitted with the permit application.

Q: Which state agency is running the CAFO program?

A: In July 2003, the Legislature began the transfer of the CAFO Program from Ecology to the WSDA. Ecology is still in charge of writing the CAFO general permit. WSDA inspects the CAFOs and works with them to solve any compliance problems.

Q: How do I cancel a permit?

A: If you are no longer operating the facility, you must file a notice of termination or transfer the permit to the current operator. If you have a permit and are still operating, you must have a nutrient management plan in place and no discharges for three years in order to terminate your permit. You still must file a notice of termination.

Q: How do I find more information?

A: Copies of the permit, fact sheet, and application are available on Ecology's web page at: www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/permits/cafo/. For more information, please contact Kevin Hancock of the Department of Ecology at 360-407-6283 or khan461@ecy.wa.gov.

If you need this information in an alternate format, please contact us at 360-407-6401. Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability can call 877-833-6341.