



Focus

Managing Dairy Waste -- Under The New Act

The New Act

On April 1, 1998, Governor Gary Locke signed into law the 1998 Dairy Nutrient Management Act passed by the 1998 Washington State Legislature. This act will significantly change how water pollution related to commercial dairy farms will be addressed.

The law establishes a technical assistance and inspection program for dairy farms to lead to water quality compliance. The dairy waste management program will address the discharge of pollutants to surface and ground waters of the state.

Registration and Inspection

The law directs Ecology to mail a registration form to the approximately 800 dairy producers with a Grade A milk license by July 15, 1998, and inspect their farms. All dairy farms that produce and commercially sell milk have a Grade A license. The farms must complete the registration form and return it to Ecology by September 1, 1998. By October 1, 1998, Ecology will establish a database to track inspections, violations, and compliance.

The new law also requires Ecology to inspect all farms within two years, beginning October 1, 1998. The inspections will survey for evidence of water quality violations, identify corrective actions, monitor the development of dairy waste management plans, and identify farms in need of technical assistance.

Conservation districts may participate in inspections. The new law eliminates a formal referral process between Ecology and districts of farms. Under the previous law, Ecology typically referred farms in need of technical assistance to districts.

As required under the Clean Water Act, Ecology will continue to issue NPDES permits to farms causing pollution problems. The new law reduces farmers' annual permit fees by 50%. The average fee for a dairy wastewater discharge permit will now be about \$160.00 per year.

Dairy Waste Management Plans

The law requires all dairy farms to develop an approved dairy nutrient management plan by July 1, 2002, and to implement it by December 31, 2003. Conservation districts will approve the plans. Dairy producers may appeal waste management plan decisions by conservation districts to the Conservation Commission and/or Pollution Control Hearings Board.

By November 1, 1998, the Conservation Commission will develop guidelines specifying the minimum elements a dairy waste management plan must contain. The Conservation

Commission will also establish up to four regional technical assistance teams to assist dairy farmers implementing the dairy waste management plans.

Program Advisory and Oversight Committee

Governor Gary Locke directed Ecology to establish a Dairy Nutrient Management Program Advisory and Oversight Committee with broad representation to provide direction and oversight of the program.

The committee will have several responsibilities, including discussing suggestions about the new program, recommending inspection procedures, and determining new technologies for managing dairy waste.

Additional Information

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Phil KauzLoric at the Department of Ecology, PO Box 47600, Olympia, Washington 98504-7600, (360) 407-6413 pkau461@ecy.wa.gov

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