

CAFO Moratorium: Enough is Enough!

It's time for a moratorium on building new confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) and expanding existing operations.

Iowans are under siege and the problem is only going to get worse.

Across the state, Iowans feel they are under siege from an industry that is polluting the air, polluting the water, and destroying peaceful existence in rural areas. That industry is confined animal feeding operations.

Unfortunately two new slaughterhouses have made the problem even worse – Seaboard Triumph Foods in Sioux City and Prestage Foods in Eagle Grove. Currently, Iowa has 3 million people and 25 million hogs. The number of hogs is expected to grow to 30 million.

The industrial methods of raising animals in Iowa is not good for folks living near the CAFOs, not good for the environment, and not good for local communities.

The current way most of the animals producing meat, milk, and eggs are raised is in industrial livestock production facilities. Thousands of animals live under the roof of a production facility, never seeing sunlight, never breathing fresh air, and never having an opportunity to exercise outdoors. Currently livestock production involves raising as many animals as possible, as quickly as possible, in as small a space as possible, with the least outlay of money, with minimal labor and attention, with as little regulation as possible. Consequently the current state of industrial agriculture can be characterized as:

- Regulations are non-existent, lax, or favorable to the CAFO industry.
- CAFOs have direct environmental consequences, including polluted waters across the state and high bacteria levels in Iowa's lakes which lead to beach closings.
- The animals are raised via methods better suited to a manufacturing plant that is making inanimate objects than raising live animals.
- There has been a significant loss of opportunity for independent farmers who want to raise animals but don't want to raise them in industrial livestock factories.
- The industry has been overtaken by a few very large corporations that extract most of the profits for livestock production.
- The current industrial technology is simply not compatible for raising animals in a socially responsible, environmentally sound, sustainable way.
- County Boards of Supervisors have no control over the siting of a CAFO, as long as it meets current inadequate state regulations.
- Neighbors and the public have almost no recourse to challenge the proposed siting of a CAFO.

The neighbors complain of stench so bad that they cannot hang laundry outside, they cannot open their windows, and they cannot sit outside. With the stench from the CAFOs next door, the neighbors know that the property they own is less likely to be purchased at a fair price should they sell it. Significant reductions of residentially property values near CAFOs have been widely documented, with the reductions dependent on direction and distance for CAFOs, prevailing wind direction, and other specific locational variables. It's clear, no one wants to live next door or even very close to a CAFO.



Although CAFOs are not supposed to discharge manure into water bodies, it happens several times a year. The fines are so low that they are not a deterrent to discourage others from doing the same thing. Some of Iowa's waterbodies are so polluted with nutrients, which are chemicals in manure, that the water has been placed on Iowa's Impaired Waters list, which means that the water does not meet water quality standards.

None of the CAFO manure is actually treated, unlike human sewage, even though the manure is laden with pathogens, antibiotics, heavy metals, and hormones.

It is time for a moratorium.

It is time for a moratorium on building new CAFOs and expanding existing CAFOs.

This moratorium should continue:

- until the Iowa Department of Natural Resources is adequately staffed to perform annual inspections of all CAFOs and manure application fields
- until water bodies bordering or running through the properties where CAFOs and the manure application fields located are tested several times a year, both above stream and downstream
- until the poor water quality due to nutrients is restored in all Iowa water bodies
- until the air quality surrounding the CAFOs and manure application fields is adequately monitored and regulated
- until rules are established requiring permits for all confined animal feeding operations of all sizes
- until the regulatory processes are adequately staffed and sufficient to deter further violations
- until federal and state laws are upgraded to protect the public health and environment from damage from the pollutants emitted and discharged by CAFOs.



Photo by Bob Nichols, USDA NRCS

A majority of Iowans favor a moratorium.

Polling conducted in October, 2019, shows that a majority of Iowans favor banning construction of new CAFOs and expansion of existing CAFOs. Among the findings of the "National Survey on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)", conducted by the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future are:¹

- 63 percent of Iowans think the state legislature should pass a ban on constructing new CAFOs or expanding existing CAFOs.
- Three-fourths of Iowans want to raise environmental standards for CAFOs to protect air quality and water quality and to safeguard neighboring communities.
- 56 percent of Iowans say industrial animal farms focus more on profits than public health.
- One-third of Iowans are worried about health impacts across the board.
- 80 percent of Iowans are concerned about the threat of contaminated water and air to CAFO workers and nearby communities.
- 51 percent believe that industrial hog and swine farms contribute a significant amount to water pollution in the area.
- 49 percent believe that industrial hog and swine farms contribute a significant amount to air pollution in the area.

What you can do

Contact your state legislators and Iowa's Governor and ask for a moratorium on confined animal feeding operations.

¹ National Survey on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)" was released by Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, December 10, 2019

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"Survey: Majority of Voters Surveyed Support Greater Oversight of Industrial Animal Farms", press release from Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, December 10, 2019