

You and Animal Waste Regulations

Livestock production is an important industry in Mississippi, with an estimated annual value of more than \$1.1 billion. Mississippi farms include about 750,000 beef cattle, 60,000 dairy cattle, 160,000 horses, and other livestock. Farmers also produce about 500 million broilers and 325,000 hogs annually.

These livestock produce an estimated 7.3 million tons of animal wastes annually. It is important for livestock producers to manage these wastes properly to reclaim the nutrients and to protect water quality, the environment, and comply with environmental laws. Mississippi has the land resources to land-apply these wastes for these benefits.

This publication highlights water quality regulations affecting animal wastes. It also outlines management practices to help livestock farmers comply with water quality regulations. This publication does not address other regulations, such as those related to health, that pertain to livestock production.

Why Water Quality Regulations Exist

Animal wastes are one of many pollutants regulated by the Clean Water Act and other federal laws. These laws are administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). They require each state to reduce the impact of pollutants, including animal wastes, on water quality and the environment.

Bacteria and nitrates in animal wastes may contaminate drinking water and cause various human illnesses. Organic matter and nutrients in animal wastes also may be associated with other water quality problems, including fish kills, in lakes and streams. Animal wastes may be either **point source pollutants** (an easily identified source, such as a feedlot) or **nonpoint source pollutants** (not an easily identified source).

Water quality regulations in Mississippi are administered by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality. The Mississippi State Department of Health oversees other regulations involving health concerns associated with human and animal wastes. The Mississippi Board of Animal Health issues requirements on proper animal carcass disposal, including poultry composting permits.

Mississippi Water Quality Regulations

EPA regulations and state law make it illegal to **directly** pollute state waters with any type of wastes, including animal wastes, or to place wastes in a location that would **likely** pollute state waters. State waters are practically all waters, including surface and underground water sources, streams, lakes, ponds, wells, springs, irrigation and drainage systems, ditches, and other waters.

Complying with water quality regulations takes careful planning and management. Using these animal waste management practices will help you comply:

- Properly design, construct, and maintain an animal waste lagoon or other animal waste storage system so it does not overflow and pollute water sources. Contact your county Soil Conservation Service (SCS) office for proper design requirements.
- Land-apply animal wastes at recommended, uniform rates to reduce the risk of contaminating water sources and to best utilize nutrients. Apply wastes at least 100 feet from a water source, including any private well on your farm. Contact your county SCS office or county Extension office for recommended application rates.
- Cover and protect all temporarily stored animal wastes to keep them from leaching into groundwater or washing into streams or other surface water. Do not store animal wastes near any water source.
- Provide alternative watering to keep livestock out of streams and possibly polluting state waters or eroding streambanks.
- Contain liquids from silage storage facilities to keep contaminants from possibly polluting state waters or your own drinking water.

Remember that other conditions on your farm, such as no system to collect or treat animal wastes, may place you at risk of violating water quality laws.

Animal Waste Permit Requirements

You are required to have an animal waste operating permit issued by the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality if any of the following conditions applies to you: you operate an animal feedlot; a grade A dairy; a

poultry farm with 10,000 or more birds; a swine operation with 10 or more sows or 50 or more swine; a livestock sale barn averaging more than 50 head per day or 350 head per week; or any other confined animal operation causing pollution.

This permit gives the legal right to operate an animal waste treatment facility. It does **not** permit discharging animal wastes into state waters or onto any area likely to pollute state waters. To apply for a permit or for more information, contact the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality at the address below.

You do not need an animal waste operating permit if your operation has fewer livestock numbers than described above. But regardless of the number of livestock, **all** producers are required to comply with regulations concerning pollution or likely pollution of state waters.

Other Animal Waste Regulations

Livestock farmers also are required to comply with other regulations concerning buffer zone requirements and animal waste sanitation concerns. Follow these requirements to reduce odor complaints, create a more positive public attitude toward animal production, and protect human health.

- Construct all livestock facilities and land-apply animal wastes at least 300 feet from adjoining property lines, at least 1,000 feet from any residence you do not own, and at least 100 feet from a private water well.
- Land-apply dairy animal wastes within seven days to prevent sanitation problems. Also, locate a dairy animal waste storage facility at least 100 feet from the milk room, and do not allow dairy cows access to stored animal wastes. Contact your county health department or Mississippi State Department of Health at the address below for information on other health regulations not covered in this publication.
- Dispose of animal carcasses by methods approved by the Mississippi State Board of Health. These include composting, incinerating, rendering, or covering carcasses with at least two feet of dirt and away from a well or water source. Do not dump carcasses in a stream or gully, or allow them to decompose in the open near a residence.
- Tarp or cover transported animal wastes to reduce health concerns and avoid possibly polluting roadways, ditches, or other water sources.

Voluntary Compliance Is Important

Fines for violating water quality laws may be severe, in some cases up to \$25,000 per day per violation. But the

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By **Dr. Jimmy Bonner**, Farm•A•Syst program coordinator, Energy Extension Center, in cooperation with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, the Mississippi State Department of Health, the Mississippi Board of Animal Health, and the Soil Conservation Service.

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possibility of fines is only one reason to voluntarily comply with these laws. By voluntarily complying, you are protecting everyone's rights — including your own — to a clean water supply and healthy environment.

By taking the initiative and using recommended animal waste management practices, you reduce the chances of polluting a water source — and the chances you may be asked to explain a pollution problem. By anticipating likely problems, you also are in a better position to correct them before they become more serious.

In some cases, it may be to your advantage to discuss your situation directly with the agencies listed below. These agencies are committed to helping you protect water quality and the environment for the benefit of all.

For More Information

Mississippi water quality regulations

Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
Office of Pollution Control
P. O. Box 10385
Jackson, MS 39289-0385
(601) 961-5171

Mississippi health and sanitation regulations

Your county health department

or

Mississippi State Department of Health
Division of Sanitation
P. O. Box 1700
Jackson, MS 39215-1700
(601) 960-7689

Animal carcass disposal and poultry composting permits

Mississippi Board of Animal Health
2531 North West Street
P. O. Box 4389
Jackson, MS 39296-4389
(601) 354-6089 or 1-800-852-1279

Designing, installing, and maintaining animal waste systems

Your county Soil Conservation Service office or your county Extension office

For more information about managing animal wastes, contact your county Extension office.