

FACTORY FARMS in Illinois



Background

- Approximately 27,000 livestock operations exist in Illinois. Some operations contain over 10,000 animals on just a few acres. Large operations are also called factory farms.
- The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) has less than 10 full-time staff in their livestock regulatory program.
- Illinois' livestock operations produce over 10 million tons of waste annually. Waste is often stored improperly or in structures that leak. The waste is eventually applied to farm fields, but over-application and polluted runoff occur.
- In 2009, 48% of livestock operations investigated by IEPA had at least one regulatory violation. 8 operations were referred to the Attorney General.



The Problems

FOR PEOPLE

- Illinois residents who live near factory farms can experience a lower quality of life. Common complaints include odors, air pollution, flies, contaminated water, and debilitating health problems.
- Antibiotics used for livestock can cause an increase in antibiotic-resistant bacteria, threatening human health.
- Some Illinois residents have spent their life savings on lawsuits against new factory farms because construction permits are issued despite local opposition.

FOR WILDLIFE

- Millions of Illinois' fish have died from illegal livestock waste discharges into streams and lakes.
- Wildlife sensitive to pollution disappear from waters polluted by livestock waste.

FOR WATER

- Livestock waste pollutes Illinois' water with pathogens, antibiotics, ammonia, nitrates, and algae blooms.
- Many waters downstream of factory farms do not have enough oxygen to meet the state pollution standard.
- In 2009, IEPA documented the illegal release of over 200,000 gallons of livestock waste into lakes and streams.



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Some of the streams listed by IEPA in 2010 as potentially degraded by livestock operations:

Stream Name	County
Dums Creek	Marion
Elkhorn Creek	Carroll, Ogle
Elm River	Clay, Wayne
Galena River	Jo Daviess
Horse Creek	Monroe, Randolph
Kaskaskia River	St. Clair
Lake Branch	Clinton
Little Crooked Creek	Washington
Little Muddy River	Perry, Washington
Middle Fork Big Muddy	Franklin, Hamilton
Marys River	Randolph
Silver Creek	Macoupin, Madison



Factory farms can locate within ¼ mile of residences and ½ mile of towns. Surrounding properties may drop in value. At least 11 Illinois bodies of government have passed resolutions opposing the construction of new factory farms.

The Solutions

- Monitor factory farms for environmental violations. Report fish kills, water pollution, and odors that cause illness. Call 1-800-782-7860.
- Meet with your legislators. Ask them to support legislation that creates more stringent requirements for factory farms and increases funding for state agencies to implement and enforce livestock regulations.
- Join or form grassroots organizations working to reduce pollution from factory farms.
- Participate in public meetings about proposed factory farms. Comment on NPDES water pollution permits issued by IEPA.
- Support pasture-based farms and local food.

