

This is farming? Vreba-Hoff lagoons now cover acres and acres of farmland



Lighthawk/ECCSCM photo, March 13, 2009

Vreba-Hoff manure lagoons and leachate pits now cover most ag land behind the facility, from Dillon Hwy to Ingall Hwy in Medina Township. Lagoons are major emitters of the air pollutants Hydrogen Sulfide and Ammonia – emissions which CAFOs must now report annually.

CAFOS MUST NOW REPORT AIR EMISSIONS

We finally have some numbers, big numbers, the tons of pollutants going into the air from CAFO facilities and lagoons. Hydrogen Sulfide and Ammonia are just two of the chemicals that neighbors and people downwind are breathing.

Beginning in February this year, CAFOs must report their emissions of Hydrogen Sulfide and Ammonia under the Emergency Planning Community Right to Know Act (EPCRA).

Using estimators developed in each state, CAFOs calculate their yearly emissions based on numbers of animals, type of housing and type of manure storage. In liquid manure lagoons, as much as 30% of the nitrogen goes up in the air as Ammonia.

Up to 564 tons/year of Ammonia from one dairy CAFO

This year a dairy CAFO in southwestern Michigan reported its Ammonia emissions as ranging between 135-564 tons per year. That's 135 TONS minimum released into the air from that one location. Ammonia and Hydrogen Sulfide can cause numerous health problems, including eye irritation, breathing problems, nausea. At high levels, Hydrogen Sulfide can cause memory loss, loss of balance, even death.

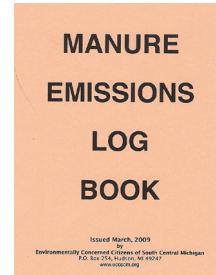
Most local CAFOs, including Vreba-Hoff, did not report their air emissions this year. CAFOs contributing a fee towards a 2007-2009 EPA Air Study were exempted. Most bought that exemption. Next year, however, all CAFOs will be required to report air emissions.

How to document symptoms from emissions

ECCSCM is documenting health concerns from CAFO emissions. On our website, we recently posted an Emissions Incident form for people to report their symptoms online. We have also published a printed *Manure Emissions Log Book*, available free to the public for recording and reporting health symptoms.

See next page for more details.

New from ECCSCM ► ► ►



KEEP THE AIR & WATER CLEAN, FOR US & FUTURE GENERATIONS

Vreba-Hoff ordered to pay \$223,500 no later than May 18

The Vreba-Hoff court saga continues...

On April 16, the 30th Circuit Court in Lansing ordered Vreba-Hoff CAFO to pay \$223,500 in fines no later than May 18.

The Michigan Attorney General's office filed a motion on February 3, asking the court to rule that Vreba-Hoff's fines are "due and owing immediately." Vreba-Hoff had requested "relief" from paying its fines until it could add more cows to produce more income. The Attorney General's brief concluded:

"Rather than reduce or eliminate the source of the waste, Vreba-Hoff is requesting to add even more cows, with the 'hope' that the treatment system (which has failed to meet the agreed upon standards) will somehow work as originally represented sometime in the future... MDEQ has no confidence in Vreba-Hoff's projections or abilities, and merely asks compliance with the negotiated agreements."

Vreba-Hoff still owes \$180,000 additional fines

However, Vreba-Hoff STILL owes \$180,000 in fines from November, 2008, to be paid when an engineer certifies that the Earth Mentor System is operating as designed. The system, designed to partially treat manure, has to this day not been certified.

4 NEW VREBA-HOFF VIOLATIONS

Feb 10, 2009 - DEQ inspection at V-H 1 finds ripped copper sulfate bags stored outside, with "a substantial amount of blue staining all around the pallet after the recent snow melt." Violation of Part 5 Rules, Spillage of Oil and Polluting Materials. (DEQ Notice Letter, Feb. 20, 2009)

March 16, 2009 - 3 violations of Interim Order at Vreba-Hoff 1 including leachate and feed-contaminated snow outside the bunker "where it would melt and flow into the clean storm water system," and discharge of leachate from the compost pad "due to same mismanagement as observed in August of 2007." In addition, V-H is not composting solids as required, "but simply piling them up." (DEQ Notice Letter, March 25, 2009)

Ag/Air Workgroup discusses emissions – health concerns, air standards, ag practices

A multi-agency, citizen-focused Ag/Air Workgroup has met three times in recent months with the Michigan Department of Community Health to address the gap in agency response to health complaints related to manure emissions. The Workgroup includes local health officials, MDA, DEQ, MSU, Sierra Club, and citizens including ECCSCM.

Recent discussions focused on the limits of MDA response – by law MDA investigates only whether or not a farm is following appropriate agricultural practices (GAAMPS). MDA does not document health problems or test for emissions. DEQ and local health departments also do not respond to health complaints, but instead refer callers to MDA.

The Workgroup has discussed air regulations and standards in other states (see chart below). Michigan has no air regulations for ag and no air standards for Hydrogen Sulfide or Ammonia.

So far the Workgroup has agreed:

- public health voices are important in dialogue with ag
- need to document health complaints. Local health departments and DEQ will document health-related complaints prior to referring them to MDA; ECCSCM will document health symptoms online and in print log book, develop database
- need to strengthen emission control practices in GAAMPS
- consider a petition for Public Health Assessment by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Control (ATSDR)

Air Standards – Ammonia		
Minnesota	Chronic	115 ppb
EPA	Chronic	141 ppb
Michigan		
NO STANDARD		
Air Standards – Hydrogen Sulfide		
Minnesota	Nuisance	30 ppb
Minnesota	Acute	60 ppb
Nebraska	Acute	100 ppb
California	Nuisance	30 ppb
California	Chronic	8 ppb
Michigan		
NO STANDARD		

Serious sediment pollution in Western Lake Erie March 2009



That's Maumee Bay at the far left, with brown sediment flowing into Lake Erie from the Maumee River (NASA photo, March 15, 2009)

After rains on bare agricultural fields, runoff to Lake Erie shows dramatically in this photo taken March 15 by NASA's Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) TERRA satellite.

On p. 1 photo, note the runoff at Vreba-Hoff, two days earlier.

The worst sediment pollution flows into Lake Erie from the Maumee River, and its tributaries, including Bean Creek, where Vreba-Hoff runoff flows.

Sediment is a pollutant, suffocating aquatic life – and it's flowing into the richest nursery area for Lake Erie's fish, the waters off the Michigan shore near Toledo.

Sediment also carries excess nutrients and other pollutants as it flows from CAFOs and ag fields. Excess nutrients contribute to algal blooms and the formation of dead zones. Think of the contaminants, the harm to fish and to us all, in that sediment.

NEWS: Livestock is main source of E. coli in Lake Huron – Manure from cattle and pigs far outweighs human sewage as the source of *E. coli* pollution in Lake Huron, says a new study published in the March issue of the *Canadian Journal of Microbiology*. See link and more details at www.nocafos.org

Your words help document the health impacts on our community

When you notice manure emissions and have physical or mental health symptoms, when you have to change your daily activities, please report the details to ECCSCM. All information will be anonymous. We use the health data to raise awareness and to inform policy makers, legislators and health departments.

To report health symptoms from manure emissions

1) go online: www.nocafos.org/reportform.htm

OR

2) use printed log: contact us for a free copy of *Manure Emissions Log Book*

ECCSCM Meetings - 3rd Wednesday of the month, 7:30 p.m. Hudson Community Center

JOIN US: Yes, I want to help protect our water and promote sustainable agriculture. Contributions support water monitoring and community education.

Name: _____

Address _____

City_____ State____ Zip_____

____ Annual Membership \$25 ____ Senior Membership \$10

Mail to: ECCSCM, P.O. Box 254, Hudson, MI 49247

Thank You!