

1. INTRODUCTION

The Environmental Farm Practices Guidelines Project for Livestock Producers in Newfoundland and Labrador, November 2001, was funded by the Canada/Newfoundland Agreement on Green Plan (Sustainable Agriculture), managed by the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture, supported by the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Forest Resources and Agrifoods. Gardner Pinfold Consulting Economics Ltd. and P. Jacobs and Associates Ltd. prepared the initial version of the document

These guidelines describe management systems and practices that will reduce the risk of pollution and minimize the odour experienced by neighbours. They establish acceptable farming practices for poultry producers in Newfoundland. The objectives of these guidelines are:

- ! to assist livestock producers in their efforts to prevent pollution and to minimize odour;
- ! to provide a standard that may be used by industry and government in determining normal, acceptable farming practice;
- ! to provide local governments with a basis for evaluation of livestock operations;
- ! to provide information to the general public and government officials who evaluate livestock operations for their potential effects on the surrounding area; and
- ! to explain farm practice to the general public with the objective of increasing the public's appreciation of the agriculture industry and an understanding of how farms operate.

Commercial dairy, hog, sheep, beef and fur farms generate nearly 40% of the total farm cash receipts in Newfoundland and Labrador. Much of this production tends to be concentrated near larger urban markets. The Avalon Peninsula, in particular, has several dairy farms operating within the city of St. John's. The potential for conflict with neighbours is more pronounced near urban centres. This potential has increased in recent years for two reasons:

- 1) greater concentration of production on fewer farms; and,
- 2) an urban population expanding into rural areas.

The general trend in modern intensive agriculture - larger numbers of animals on a smaller number of farms - is apparent in Newfoundland and Labrador. These management practices result in the concentration of large amounts of manure, which must be effectively managed if a range of environmental, health and public relations problems are to be avoided.

The character of the expanding rural residential population has also changed. People have built or bought houses in and around land that had previously been used for agriculture alone. These rural properties represent a major personal investment and the owners are sensitive to any activity that may interfere with their enjoyment of the property, or reduces the property's value. These changes have created a situation where conflicts between livestock producers and urban-rural residents are more likely to occur.

Conflicts Caused by Pollution

The viability of the livestock industry depends on the sustainability of the environment. Therefore the protection of the environment must be a major concern for the livestock industry. Groundwater and surface water pollution is an environmental and health concern, and is regulated under federal (Environment Canada) and provincial (the Department of Environment) legislation. Pollution of water sources is illegal, and these agencies are responsible for preventing pollution, detecting pollution if it has occurred and taking legal action if necessary.

Society is becoming increasingly concerned with environmental protection and there will be more pressure to regulate livestock operations closely if there is reason to suspect that pollution is occurring. Producers who follow the recommended practices described in these guidelines can expect to be in compliance with the relevant federal and provincial regulations.

Conflicts Caused by Odour

Although odours may be a nuisance, they are not considered a health hazard. They must therefore be treated as a land use issue. The best opportunity for avoiding odour problems occurs during land use planning, when conflicting uses can be separated. Some jurisdictions have been unwilling or unable to prevent residential development in agricultural areas. Subdivision lots are often sold to people who are unaccustomed or unwilling to accept the odours associated with livestock operations. As well, local government officials often lack the resources required to evaluate manure management practices properly. This can result in developments that lead to conflicts between rural residents and livestock producers.

Livestock odours are as much a social problem as they are a technical problem. The prudent farmer will recognize his/her responsibility to minimize odours, and the inconvenienced neighbour must recognize that odours are an unavoidable consequence of livestock farming. Responsible day-to-day farm management and open communication within the community are probably the most significant final determinants in odour conflict avoidance.

Economics have forced most farmers to specialize in one commodity and to consolidate into larger units. The resulting high concentration of animals, manure, buildings and equipment has increased the potential for localized conflicts. Odour conflicts tend to increase as separation distances between farms and neighbouring homes become smaller.

While land use planning and public relations are methods of avoiding conflict, another process is required to resolve conflicts once they occur. In some other provinces, complaints concerning disturbances such as odour, noise, dust or smoke are dealt with under a Farm Practices Protection Act. Newfoundland and Labrador is currently considering this legislation for the province. It is the responsibility of the farm operator to maintain facilities and farm practices that avoid environmental problems and that fall within the current and future accepted guidelines for Newfoundland and Labrador.

These guidelines have been prepared with the assistance of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Department of Forest Resources and Agrifoods, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture, Manitoba Agriculture and other provinces.

These guidelines are not legislated. They merely provide the livestock industry with various options for managing their operations in an environmentally sound manner.

As technological changes occur, revisions of the Guidelines will be necessary periodically. Your comments on this publication and future revisions are encouraged. Contact the Department of Forest Resources and Agrifoods, Agrifoods Branch at 709-637-2081 for inquiries