

# Which farms are counted as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)?

Rev. March 2007

## When is a farm a CAFO and required to get a DNR permit?

Any livestock or poultry operation with 1,000 or more animal units is a concentrated animal feeding operation under current regulations. CAFOs are required to apply for and operate under a DNR-issued water quality protection permit. Recent changes to the state's rule, NR 243, keep the same 1,000 animal threshold but modify the way it's calculated. Currently, of the 30,000 livestock operations in Wisconsin, about 160 are CAFOs, and that number is not expected to change greatly as a result of changes to NR 243.

## What are animal units?

Animal units are not the same thing as the number of animals on a farm. A conversion factor is used for each different animal type (beef, dairy, swine) and size (mature or immature) to determine how many equal 1,000 animal units. For instance, 1,000 animal units equals about 700 mature dairy cows, 2,500 pigs, or 55,000 turkeys. For farms having more than one animal type or size class, as most Wisconsin farms have, the state combines all animals together to determine total animal units at an operation. Revised federal regulations do not combine different animal types and sizes together. Rather, each individual animal type or size is counted separately toward its own 1,000 animal unit threshold.

## Only farms with the most manure affected

While the vast majority of Wisconsin's 30,000 livestock farms are generally very small – the average dairy herd size is around 70 cows – the number of very large farms is growing.

Proper manure management is important for all farms, but is particularly critical given the amount of manure these large farms generate. Since one cow produces as much waste as 18 people, a single CAFO has as much pollution potential from untreated waste as the cities of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin Rapids, Onalaska or Ashwaubenon. These large CAFOs are regulated by state and federal laws to ensure sound manure management.



## How has calculating animal units changed, why, and to what effect?

Recent changes to DNR regulations have modified some of the conversion factors used to calculate how many animals equal 1,000 animal units. The changes were spurred by changes to federal rules that DNR incorporated into state rules. After listening to a variety of perspectives on this issue during revisions to DNR regulations affecting CAFOs, the DNR has combined Wisconsin's traditional approach with the federal requirements. This approach requires a farmer to calculate animal units using both a) the state approach which combines all animals toward the same 1,000 threshold using state conversion factors, and b) the federal approach with federal conversion factors for individual animal types or sizes. If either calculation equals or exceeds 1,000 animal units, the farmer needs to apply for a permit. This modification preserves Wisconsin's practice of counting all animals toward a single threshold to appropriately protect public health, lakes, and rivers but meets federal requirements.

### Current CAFO Permit Statistics (Jan. 2007)

159 currently permitted operations statewide

#### CAFOs of each animal type

Animal Type	Currently Permitted
Dairy	134
Poultry	13
Hogs	6
Beef	6

#### CAFOs in each Wisconsin region

Region	Currently Permitted
Northern	13
Northeast	64
Southeast	11
South Central	31
West Central	40

### Trends in CAFO Permit Statistics Over Time

