



Minnesota
Pollution
Control
Agency

Regional
Environmental
Management

Feedlot
Program

Pasture Operations and Minnesota Feedlot Rules

Water quality/feedlots #6-53 Updated November 2003

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Minn. R. ch. 7020

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Refer to these fact sheets
for the feedlot portion of a
pasture operation:

Under 300 Animal Units:
Operation and Management

300 to 999 Animal Units:
Operation and Management

1,000 or More Animal Units:
Operation and Management

MPCA Area Offices:

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218/828-2492

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218/723-4660

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Pastures are a common type of livestock operation in Minnesota, typical examples include beef grazing and cow/calf operations. Distinguishing pasture operations from other types of livestock operations is not always easy, in addition, some operations include both pasture and feedlot components. The purpose of this fact sheet is to explain the conditions under which Minn. R. ch. 7020 (feedlot rule) applies to pasture operations.

Keep in mind:

- **Pastures are exempt from feedlot rules.**
- **Pastures are not exempt from Minnesota's water quality rules (Minn. R. ch. 7050 and 7060).**
- **A pasture developing feedlot conditions, such as manure accumulation and lack of vegetative cover, within the immediate vicinity of supplemental feeding or watering devices, working areas, and access lanes (including winter feeding areas), will not be considered a feedlot and are exempt from feedlot rules.**

Minnesota Rule Chapter 7020

Minnesota's feedlot rule governs the application for and issuance of permits for construction and operation of animal feedlots and manure storage facilities. The rule also regulates the storage,

transportation, disposal and utilization of animal manure and process wastewaters.

This rule does not regulate pasture-only operations. **Pasture operators need to ask themselves this question: Is part of my operation a feedlot?**

The definitions of "animal feedlot" and "pasture" according to Minnesota's rules and statutes are:

Animal Feedlot: Animal feedlot means a lot or building or combination of lots and buildings intended for the confined feeding, breeding, raising, or holding of animals and specifically designed as a confinement area in which manure may accumulate, or where the concentration of animals is such that a vegetative cover cannot be maintained within the enclosure. For purposes of these parts (of the rule chapter), open lots used for the feeding and rearing of poultry (poultry ranges) shall be considered to be animal feedlots. Pastures shall not be considered animal feedlots under these parts (of the rule chapter).

Pasture: Pastures means areas, including winter feeding areas as part of a grazing area, where grass or other growing plants are used for grazing and where the concentration of animals allows a vegetative cover to be maintained during the growing season except that vegetative





cover is not required: (1) in the immediate vicinity of supplemental feeding or water devices, (2) in associated corrals and chutes where livestock are gathered for the purpose of sorting, veterinary services, loading and unloading trucks and trailers, and other necessary activities related to good animal husbandry practices, and (3) in associated livestock access lanes used to convey livestock to and from areas of the pasture.

Vegetative cover and manure accumulation

Vegetative cover and manure accumulation are the two main criteria owners must consider when deciding if a portion of their pasture operation is a feedlot. The duration animals are held in an area does not determine if the area is considered a feedlot.

Clarifying the meaning of vegetative cover and manure accumulation

The intent of the term vegetative cover is to require cover throughout the pasture, such that soil erosion and runoff from the area is not an environmental problem. There are areas in a pasture, for example cow paths and shady gathering spots, that may not maintain vegetative cover throughout the year. It is not the intent of the feedlot rule to define these areas as feedlots.

Manure accumulation is important only with regard to its affect on vegetative cover. If manure accumulation in an area is minimal enough that vegetative cover can be maintained during the growing season, it is not considered a feedlot. If manure accumulates in an area to an extent that vegetative cover cannot be maintained without regular manure removal, the area is considered a feedlot except if it meets the definition of a supplemental feeding or watering device area, working area or access lanes.

Combination operations

If an operation is really a combination of pasture and feedlot, then only the portion of the operation that is a feedlot is regulated by the feedlot rule. Examples of requirements for the feedlot portion of a combination operation include registration, permitting, site restrictions and manure management. Pasture-only operations are not required to register.

Feedlot rule requirements vary depending on the size of the feedlot. For further information, the MPCA has

produced fact sheets on the registration, operation, management, construction and permitting requirements for facilities under 300 animal units, 300 to 999 animal units and 1,000 or more animal units. These fact sheets may be obtained at

<http://www.pca.state.mn.us/hot/feedlots.html#factsheets>.

Livestock access to waters

Livestock on pastures are not restricted from accessing lakes, rivers or other waters. On a voluntary basis, owners of pasture operations with access to lakes, rivers or other waters can implement best management practices to reduce or eliminate erosion and run-off. Pasture operators interested in establishing these practices should contact their local soil and water conservation district or other local governmental unit for assistance.

If a pasture operation has a feedlot located adjacent to a lake, access from the feedlot must be restricted. Lakes included in the restriction are lakes classified by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as natural environment, recreational development or general development.

Pasture requirements

Properly maintained pastures reduce surface run-off and soil erosion by slowing down and using surface water and plant nutrients. Well-managed pastures have significantly less environmental impact than open lots. Developing and maintaining best management practices on pasture operations to avoid a pollution hazard or an imminent public health threat is the owner's responsibility. The MPCA or county feedlot officer will work with pasture owners on a case-by-case basis to prevent and abate any water quality violations (Minn. R. ch. 7050 and 7060) that may be created by poor pasture management practices.

More information

For more information about the feedlot rule or to download a copy of the rule, log onto the MPCA website at:

<http://www.pca.state.mn.us/hot/feedlots.html>.

Or, for information call your area office listed on the first page of this fact sheet.