

Midwest Environmental ADVOCATES

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Livestock Factories Seek Exemption From Air Quality Laws

Madison, WI—In an effort to insulate agribusiness from air pollution laws, Senator Neal Kedzie and Representative DuWayne Johnsrud have sent a letter to the DNR requesting that the DNR exempt livestock factories and other agricultural sources of air pollution from the state's hazardous air pollution regulations.

“This exemption will let livestock factories off the hook for emitting hazardous air pollutants like ammonia,” said Russ Tooley, leader and member of Centerville Citizens for Air, River, and Environmental Solutions (Centerville CARES). Mr. Tooley believes that, “Senator Kedzie and Representative Johnsrud should try getting out of Madison and experiencing the air pollution from a livestock factory before giving these factories any more special favors.”

Livestock factories emit noxious odors and air pollution, including ammonia, from their animal waste pits and freestall barns. Ammonia is a toxic gas that is generated from animal waste and can cause eye, nose, and throat irritation as well as general discomfort to those exposed. The DNR has identified ammonia as a hazardous air pollutant.

When mixed with other atmospheric gases, studies show that ammonia can also form a chemical variant known as ammonium nitrate that contaminates nearby land and water. The nitrogen-based compound acts as a catalyst for algal growth in streams similar to runoff from animal waste and residential lawn fertilizers.

“This is another example of how powerful agribusiness refuses to be held accountable for harming the rural quality of life in Wisconsin,” said Andrew Hanson, attorney with Midwest Environmental Advocates, Inc., a nonprofit environmental law center that represents the public interest in clean air and water. “We can't sacrifice our public health standards to protect polluting livestock factories,” he added.

The effort to exempt factory farms from air quality regulations is the latest special favor to agribusiness in Wisconsin. Wisconsin's Right to Farm law already protects livestock

factories from being held accountable for causing odor and dust problems for their neighbors. There is also an ongoing legislative effort to limit local control over land use problems associated with factory farms.

“Combine these agri-business protections with the proposed air regulation exemption for livestock factories and Wisconsin’s rural communities will have few, if any, rights under the law to defend themselves,” according to Melissa Scanlan, Executive Director of Midwest Environmental Advocates, Inc.

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