

Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning Assistance Available From Technical Service Providers

The New Federal Rule on Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations

On February 12, 2003, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released in the Federal Register its revised National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and Effluent Limitation Guidelines (ELGs) Rule affecting concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO Rule). The revised Rule contains changes that will affect primarily large livestock and poultry operations nationwide. One change requires CAFO owners and operators to develop and implement a nutrient management plan as a permit requirement. EPA recognizes that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) defined Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) will address the requirements of the nutrient management plan. Technical and financial assistance is available to USDA program participants from the NRCS to help them plan and implement CNMPs for CAFOs.

EPA estimates that the revised CAFO Rule applies to about 15,500 of the largest livestock operations across the U.S. Under the new Rule, all large operations will be required to apply for an NPDES permit (or demonstrate no potential to discharge), submit an annual report, and develop and implement a plan for properly handling manure and wastewater. In addition, the Rule intensifies efforts to protect the environment by: covering all major animal agriculture sectors, placing controls on land application of manure and wastewater, and increasing public access to certain information through CAFO annual reports.

Conservation technical assistance is now available to USDA program participants directly from NRCS or through certified Technical Service Providers. Technical assistance may include conservation planning, conservation practice design, and guidance with implementation.

NRCS Technical and Financial Assistance Available

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill) expanded the availability of financial and technical assistance funds for the implementation of conservation programs. It also introduced the certified Technical Service Provider as a source of technical assistance for producers.

CAFO owners and operators may seek out certified Technical Service Providers to assist with Farm Bill program conservation technical activities. These activities include conservation planning, design and implementation of conservation practices, including the development of CNMPs. The NRCS defined CNMP, which is a producer-led, science-based tool that can be crafted to fit livestock and poultry operations of all types and sizes, will help CAFO owners and operators meet regulatory requirements. The NRCS CNMP Technical Guidance (December 2000) provides a framework to assist CAFO owners and operators in developing their site-specific, scientifically sound CNMPs based on NRCS policies, processes, planning procedures, and technical materials. The NRCS CNMP consists of: manure and wastewater handling and storage; nutrient management; land treatment practices; and record keeping. Other manure and

wastewater handling and utilization alternatives, along with feed management, offer additional options to complete or enhance a CNMP.

Technical Service Providers

Technical Service Providers are individuals, entities, or public agencies that are certified and placed on the NRCS approved list of Technical Service Providers. Technical Service Providers may provide technical services to program participants or USDA. Only those individuals who are certified for specific categories of technical services and are included on the approved list may receive payments for technical services provided.

Technical Service Standards

All technical services provided must meet NRCS standards, specifications, and program requirements, and must comply with all Federal, State, Tribal, and local laws and requirements. Technical Service Providers are legally responsible for the services they provide.

Technical Service Acquisition and Payments

Technical services may be acquired by program participants in conjunction with their conservation program contract or agreement. Conservation program participants select certified Technical Service Providers off the approved list, hire the providers, and pay the providers. USDA reimburses the program participant for the technical services provided, in accordance with the payment rates established by USDA.

Technical Service Provider assistance also may be acquired directly by NRCS through contracts, contribution agreements, and cooperative agreements. Payments for these technical services are paid by USDA directly to the Technical Service Provider. Contracts and cooperative agreements will be established through competition and in accordance with Federal Acquisition Regulations.

For More Information

For more information about Technical Service Providers, please contact your NRCS State Conservationist or your local USDA Service Center. Additional information is also available on the NRCS home page at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>. Visit the NRCS “TechReg” website, <http://techreg.usda.gov/>, for information on certification and to locate certified TSPs working in your State. Refer to the NRCS “Animal Feeding Operations” website, <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/afo/>, for a list of CNMP related training opportunities.

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