

Clean Wisconsin Urges EPA to Address Air Pollution from Farms

Written by Clean Wisconsin

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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/wisc-dairy-farm-s5.jpg>



Organization seeks action on public health, environmental threats of ammonia pollution from concentrated animal operations.

MADISON – Clean Wisconsin, along with a national coalition of environmental groups, filed a lawsuit today urging the EPA to address air pollution from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), including ammonia.

“Ammonia emissions from large animal operations pose a serious health risk to Wisconsinites, irritating the eyes and throat and contributing to respiratory diseases like asthma,” says Clean Wisconsin staff scientist Paul Mathewson. “It’s critical the EPA use its authority to better regulate this pollutant.”

Since 2009, Clean Wisconsin and other coalition members have been petitioning the EPA to use its established authority under the federal Clean Air Act to reduce the noxious emissions of ammonia and other air pollutants from the estimated 20,000 CAFOs across the country. As the EPA has not yet responded to the petitions, the coalition is seeking action from the courts.

“We appreciate the efforts that EPA has taken to understand the air quality impacts of large industrial farming operations,” says Mathewson. “Now we are asking EPA to take action and regulate these air emissions in a meaningful and effective manner.”

In Wisconsin, state law exempts agricultural waste from ammonia pollution regulation. While the EPA has set limits on ammonia exposure, the lack of federal oversight means there are no state restrictions on the amount of pollution that can be released by any particular facility. Each year, Wisconsin livestock operations give off an estimated 82,000 tons of ammonia, over two-thirds of all ammonia emissions in the state.

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“We’re eager to see better standards to protect our health and environment, and we ask the EPA to act now and implement new rules for this contaminant,” Mathewson says.

The plaintiffs in the case are Clean Wisconsin, Environmental Integrity Project, the Humane Society of the United States, Center for Food Safety, the Sierra Club, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement and the Association of Irrigated Residents and Friends of the Earth.