

Texas Dairy Matters

Higher Education Supporting the Industry

KEEPING COMPLIANT WITH ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

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Although the drought has caused significant issues in the feed supply, the lack of rainfall has made it easier to deal with runoff issues that might cause environmental concerns. Since spring is a time of renewal, take time to recommit to maintaining your vigilance on environmental protection. Some of the most common areas of concern regarding environmental regulations include:

1. **Keep Paperwork Current** – Review your record log and make sure that you have documented what you are doing including such items as manure applications, retention control structure (RCS) marker readings, and rainfall events. Verify that you took the soil tests and file the reports so you can easily reference them. Make sure you filed the Annual Report required by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Keep site maps with your records as well as any notifications you sent to or received from TCEQ.



2. Check your RCS and make sure it is pumped down so you have adequate capacity for major rainfall events.
3. Prevent discharges by properly maintaining the banks of your RCS as well as the level. Don't allow trees and brush to grow on the bank and keep it mowed down regularly so that large roots don't compromise the integrity of the banks.
4. Evaluate your outside pens. Do they drain properly so that after a rainfall, water rapidly drains to the RCS and ponds don't occur within the drainage area. If you see potential ponding areas, rework lots to aid in drainage. Make sure all pens and even the calf hutch



area drain into the RCS. Well maintained, drained pens help cow comfort. If an animal dies in the pens, quickly remove it and dispose of it properly.

5. Review your dead animal disposal plan. If you are composting the carcasses, make sure you move animals to the compost pile in a timely manner and cover them immediately to minimize the potential for scavengers to drag them off and to reduce odors. Do not put other trash in the compost site; it has one and only one purpose, to

compost dead animals. For those using a disposal service, make sure the carcasses are temporarily stored away from public view and varmint access.

6. When applying manure to fields, avoid over application that could result in runoff. Follow your Nutrient Management Plan, using soil tests and manure analysis to provide the nutrients needed for the crop you are growing. Complete the calculations required to determine the amount of nutrients applied and record those numbers. Make sure you don't have an accidental discharge by over applying. Regularly inspect your system to quickly find broken lines to prevent a discharge.
7. Protect wellheads by keeping them covered and maintaining proper setbacks.
8. Train your workers or at least give them a refresher course. You can't be everywhere all the time, so train your employees on proper procedures and then document that training. Provide them with a protocol as to what steps they should take if you aren't around.
9. Talk to your neighbors and find out if they have any concerns. Responding to those concerns in a prompt and courteous manner can minimize the complaints they might make to others.

Although this list is by no means comprehensive, conduct a "spring tune-up" of your environmental stewardship to keep yourself compliant with regulations.