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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-03-285](#), a report to the Ranking Member, Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

Congress is concerned that waste from animal feeding operations continues to threaten water quality. In light of this concern, GAO was asked to review the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) administration of its regulatory program for animal feeding operations and to determine the potential challenges states and EPA may face when they begin to implement the revisions to this program. GAO surveyed all EPA regional offices and four states with large numbers of animal feeding operations that may be subject to EPA regulations.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that EPA

- develop and implement a comprehensive tactical plan that identifies resource requirements and how the agency will carry out its increased oversight responsibilities under the revised program; and
- work with authorized states to develop and implement their own plans that will identify resource needs and how they intend to carry out their increased permitting, inspection, and enforcement responsibilities within specified time frames.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-285.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Larry Dyckman at (202) 512-3841 or dyckmanl@gao.gov.

LIVESTOCK AGRICULTURE

Increased EPA Oversight Will Improve Environmental Program for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations

What GAO Found

Until the mid-1990s, EPA placed little emphasis on and had directed few resources to its animal feeding operations permit program because it gave higher priority to other sources of water pollution. In addition, regulatory exemptions have allowed many large operations to avoid regulation. As a result of these problems, many operations that EPA believes are polluting the nation's waters remain unregulated.

Implementation of revised regulations raise management and resource challenges for the states and the agency. For example, because the number of animal feeding operations subject to the regulations will increase dramatically, states will need to increase their efforts to identify, permit, and inspect facilities and take appropriate enforcement actions against those in noncompliance. For its part, EPA will need to increase its oversight of state programs to ensure that the new requirements are adopted and implemented. Neither the states nor EPA have determined how they will meet these challenges.

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation



Source: USDA.

A concentrated animal feeding operation is a facility that discharges animal wastes to surface waters under certain conditions and is, therefore, subject to regulation.