

Annual dairy reports studied

Tulare County supervisors consider requiring submission of key data each year.

By Javier Erik Olvera, The Fresno Bee, November 26, 2002

A major part of Tulare County's effort to keep tabs on its dairies will move before the Board of Supervisors today.

Supervisors will review creating a dairy monitoring system, which would require dairy operators to provide annual reports to county leaders on cow count, ground water and soil.

The system -- called the Tulare County Animal Confinement Plan -- would allow officials to make sure the area's 300 dairies are meeting all requirements outlined in their operational agreements with the county.

The supervisors' review this morning is routine and is required to bring the proposal back to the five-member board for consideration at its Dec. 10 meeting, officials said.

"It will allow us to have a much better understanding of what goes on out there than we have at the present time," said George Finney, assistant director of the Tulare County Resource Management Agency.

If the proposal is approved, it will be the first system of its kind in the county, which is the largest dairy producer in the nation with about 396,000 dairy cows and \$1.2 billion gross annual production.

Dairies now are reviewed only when their operational agreement with the county is analyzed, usually when they are built or they expand.

Under the proposal, the annual reports would become a part of each operational agreement and be overseen by members of the

county's four-member code enforcement team, Finney said.

The reports would include:

Address, name, operator and property owner.

Total number of cows.

Amount of waste produced.

Wastewater sump capacity.

Sump description and waste separator.

Soil testing results.

Dairy operators would be required to pay a fee to the county, but the exact amount wouldn't be known until early next spring.

Additionally, the county's code enforcement team would add a member specifically to make sure dairies are meeting requirements, Finney said.

The proposal would affect not only dairies, but also other confined areas -- barns, corrals and pens -- where beef cattle as well as other similar, ox-like animals are housed.

Finney said leaders began working on the proposal shortly after the Tulare County grand jury said in the late 1990s that the county was not monitoring dairies closely enough.

Three years ago, the county was sued by California Attorney General Bill Lockyer, who said leaders were allowing dairies without in-depth environmental studies.

Lockyer agreed to settle the case as long as the county completed the proposed system, mandated environmental studies and meted out tough regulations so dairy construction wouldn't hurt surroundings.

Those regulations weren't good enough for the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment, which filed a lawsuit in 2000 against the county demanding that air and water regulations be tweaked.

The San Francisco-based center and the county settled more than a year ago, but center officials are waiting to see the additions to the regulations, which are expected within the next several months.

Caroline Farrell, an attorney with the center, said the proposed monitoring system appears OK, but the center is more concerned with the details of the revamped county regulations.

The lawsuits slowed the county's dairy-building process. Finney said at least 80 dairy-building applications are waiting to move forward.

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Is it the end of the road for family's beloved minivan?

Dry weather, winds spur burn suspension

The Stockton Record, November 26, 2002

SAN ANDREAS -- High winds and dry conditions have prompted the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to suspend all burning, including yard waste, in all state-responsibility areas except incorporated cities within Calaveras, Tuolumne, and parts of San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties.

Burning will be suspended at least through Wednesday.

The CDF was busy with about a dozen fires Monday, including one that grew to about 25 acres near Cottage Springs.

That fire and another in the same area started as debris burns on Sierra Pacific Industries land.

Sustained winds of 20 to 30 mph helped blow several debris burns out of their piles, but most of them were contained quickly by homeowners, the CDF said.

[Opinion Piece, Modesto Bee, November 22, 2002:](#)

It's Smog Check time for my minivan.

By CONSTANCE NGUYEN

More than a decade old, it has been like a family member. The first new vehicle we purchased, it has been a good friend from day one.

There's the rub: When to say good bye to such a friend.

The van has more than 200,000 miles on it and has crossed the United States from north to south as well as east to west. It has taken junk to the dump, hauled lumber and carried visitors with nary a breakdown.

The registration renewal arrived weeks ago, but as happens, got put off repeatedly. There's plenty of time.

Two weeks before the deadline, the van starts making noise. Son No. 1, the primary driver, mentions it but says it's no real problem since it quiets down when the car is warmed up.

It's old, we understand.

A few days later, I decide to take Son No. 2 to school in it. I crank it and wow! This is definitely not right.

It's Thursday. Spouse will look at it Saturday, confident he can repair it.

We are one week before renewal deadline. No problem. Once we repair whatever the noise is, we're golden. Car has new filters, oil change, etc., and always passes.

Lousy weekend. Weather is miserable and husband is too. Can't find the problem. Uh-oh. No garages open Sunday. Our best guess is the catalytic converter.

Located a smog check place that offers a free retest, so on Monday, hoping against hope this won't affect the emissions, Son No. 1 takes van in. Failure!

Surprise!

Man at station suggests another garage to resolve the problem since they only test.

OK, it's Monday. We have until Saturday. We're still all right, and this new man will fix it.

Drop it off, get a call a few hours later. Yup, we're right. Catalytic converter.

Will he replace it? Nope, sorry, they don't do that there. \$40, please. Augh!

Call and find out that it will cost about \$200 to replace in the larger chain shops. (That's how they can afford George Foreman.)

We can do it ourselves for half the price. Order it, but will take until Wednesday to arrive. OK, we still have a couple of days.

Tuesday: Take van for much-needed alignment. While talking, the mechanic mentions a place that is really reasonable. I call. It's only \$5 more than the cost of just the part.

Cancel that part order!

On my way to get catalytic converter replaced. Done in record time. Something going my way. On to the retest. Keeping my fingers crossed.

With apprehension, I wait. Will I face a dilemma not unlike asking one to put their beloved pet to sleep because the illness is too great to repair?

The technician approaches.

He shows me the paperwork. We're all set.

As I drop my registration in the mail precisely one day before deadline, I breathe a sigh of relief.

While we are spared for yet another two years, I think I have aged at least that much this past week.

Letter to the Editor, Modesto Bee, November 26, 2002 :

It's a good life

I am thankful I have a family to return to each night and a job to support them. After a mentally exhausting day, I am thankful half to two-thirds are usually asleep when I walk through the door at 9:30 p.m. I am thankful for the cat that sits by the window and waits for me to come home, even if he does try to run out the door when I open it. I am thankful for my church family and the right to worship freely. I am thankful for our one-bedroom house, even if it is small for six people to occupy, for its roof does not leak, the heater works and the ants took a sabbatical.

I am thankful the leaves of the trees are turning vibrant red, orange and brown, even if it means I have to rake them up. As they waft from the trees and carpet the earth, their beauty is stunning. I am thankful for the occasional overcast day and the chill it brings, for it gives me reason to wear my favorite sweater. **I am thankful for the rain, for it cleans the valley air and lets me see the mountains to the west and allows an occasional peek at Yosemite to the east.**

I am thankful eggnog is populating the refrigerated section of the grocery store and that I can afford to purchase an occasional gallon. I am thankful for each day, living it as if it were my last, and I thank God for sugar to go with lemons.

CARI COHRS

Turlock