Cows' effect on pollution reassessed

Hundreds of dairies may have to obtain permits.

By Jennifer M. Fitzenberger

Fresno Bee, Modesto Bee and Merced Sun-Star, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2005

Up to one-third of dairies in the San Joaquin Valley will have to obtain air-operating permits under a revised emission estimate released Monday by air regulators.

After reviewing 15 dairy studies, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District officials determined that a single dairy cow emits 19.3 pounds of volatile organic compounds per year, keeping dairies the largest source of the smog-making gas above trucks and passenger cars.

Volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, combine with nitrogen oxides to form ozone, which can reduce lung function and aggravate asthma. The Valley's air is among the most polluted in the country.

Regulators estimate that, under the new figure, dairy owners with more than 1,290 cows will have to get permits from the district. As many as 500 of the Valley's 1,500 dairies fall into that category.

About 230 dairies have permits under a previous emission estimate that set the permit threshold at about 1,900 cows. Permits could require dairy owners to put in place more pollution controls at their expense.

The updated figure is less than the 20.6 pounds of VOCs per year that district officials estimated in June. The higher number infuriated dairy industry leaders who said scientific studies don't support it.

The estimate dropped by 1.3 pounds because new data were submitted by a University of California at Davis researcher, district officials said.

Rick McVaigh, director of compliance for the district, said the new estimate is based on the best possible data from California and around the world. "We really think we did a comprehensive review of all the available research," he said.

McVaigh said the estimate could change as new scientific data becomes available: "The district is looking forward to seeing more research."

Dairy advocates were unhappy with the new estimate, saying it still is too high and based on insufficient data. They said much of the research was performed outside of California and is not applicable to conditions here, and they pointed out that some local scientists questioned the June figure.

"It's pretty clear to me that [board staff members] haven't changed anything and they're trying to cover their mistakes," said Michael Boccadoro, executive director of Community Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship, a dairy advocacy group.

Boccadoro said the industry will appeal to the district's governing board. At least one board member questioned the June estimate. Chairman Thomas Mayfield wrote a letter last month to David Crow, air pollution control officer with the district, asking him to delay the decision so concerns could be addressed.

"We believe they will provide a much needed opportunity to bring some common sense and rationality back to this process," Boccadoro said.

Industry leaders fear complying with new rules will be expensive.

Dairy owner Rob Fletcher worries that regulation will put some dairies out of business. The $4 billion industry is huge in the Valley with an estimated 2.5 million dairy cows.

Fletcher is glad the emission estimate isn't final.

"This air pollution thing is probably going to get worse before it gets better. It is probably going to drive a lot of guys out of business or move them out of state," said Fletcher, who runs a 700-cow dairy about 2 miles south of Tulare. Fletcher's dairy is too small to need a permit.

Permits are required for large dairies under a state law passed in 2003. Permits will be used to enforce emission rules when regulations are created by the district. The district has a June 2006 deadline to develop operating rules for dairies.

The district initially estimated dairy emissions at 12.8 pounds per cow per year, but that figure was challenged by the industry because it was based on studies conducted in the 1930s.

Last year, the industry sued the district over the permits. The lawsuit was settled, with the district agreeing to update the old estimate. The deadline to do so was Monday.

An advisory group was formed to discuss the results of more recent studies and make recommendations to the district.

The group -- with representatives from the dairy industry, health advocacy groups, environmentalists, academics and the district -- recommended three emission estimates ranging from 5.6 to nearly 35 pounds.

Kevin Hamilton, coordinator of the asthma program at Community Medical Centers and member of the advisory committee, said the district's new estimate is on the low end.

"They're going in the wrong direction," Hamilton said of the 1.3-pound drop. "The evidence we saw showed we should be going up with this factor."

Top sources of smog-making gas
dairy cattle
light- and medium-duty trucks
light-duty passenger cars
oil and gas production
pesticides
consumer products
prescribed burning
lawn/garden, construction
equipment
aircraft
paint and thinners (no agriculture)
Source: California Air Resources Board

Dairy cows still Kern's top polluters

Opponents question air district's final estimates, urge further study before acting

By SARAH RUBY, Californian staff writer
Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2005

Dairy cows are still the Central Valley's biggest source of one type of smog-forming gas, according to the valley air district, which finalized dairy air pollution estimates Monday.

Each dairy cow produces 19.3 pounds of volatile organic compounds each day, according to the district. That's about a pound per day less than its initial estimate released weeks ago, but well above the scientifically defensible level, according to critics.

The announcement means any dairy with 1,290 cows or more will need a permit from the air district, adding about 200 existing dairies to the rolls of permitted facilities. It also could affect whether county supervisors approve 19 new dairies that want to come to Kern with roughly 200,000 cows.

The district's naysayers include dairymen, scientists and politicians, who say existing scientific evidence is incomplete, and urge the district to wait until further studies are done.

The most controversial aspect of the district's "emission factor," as it is known, has to do with vinegar and other so-called volatile fatty acids, which make up 80 percent of the district's emissions calculation. Airborne vinegar molecules can form smog and are fair game for regulation, according to the district.

The science is compelling enough to start making rules, air district staff say. It might seem incredible that cows pollute more than cars and trucks, but with the valley's 2.5 million cows each excreting 100 pounds of manure daily, traces of air pollution add up, said Rick McVaigh, director of compliance for the district.

"Cows run 24 hours a day," he said, comparing them to cars and trucks.

If McVaigh and the district are correct, dairy cows pollute almost 40 percent more than light and medium duty trucks, and 30 percent more than previous dairy estimates, which were based on 1930s data.

A critic of the district's reliance on fledgling science is Thomas Mayfield, a Stanislaus County supervisor and farmer who chairs the valley air district board. His criticism echoes the researchers themselves, who say their work is too preliminary to be a basis for policy.

"The science they're using is all over the place," he said.

He's going to raise the issue at the air district's next board meeting Aug. 18. The staff decision will stand if the board chooses not to get involved, but the dairy industry has joined Mayfield in calling for a second opinion.

"I don't want staff to think we can do any damn thing we want" when it comes to air quality, Mayfield said.

Bakersfield City Councilman Mike Maggard agreed that the board should review the science.

But others close to the debate say the district has good reasons for its position, which is moderate compared to the industry-backed emissions factor of 5.6 pounds per head per year, and the environmentalists' desired calculation of 38.2 pounds per head per year.

"Until 2004, the dairy industry was exempt from air quality regulations," said Bakersfield resident Bill Descary, who has reviewed the science. "There was no reason to study it. We have a lot of catching up to do."

The industry is hiding behind science because it doesn't want to be regulated, said Brent Newell, attorney for the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment.

"(The dairy industry's) objective is to achieve scientific deregulation," Newell said.

That argument misses the point, dairymen say.

"The foundation for regulating the dairy industry needs to be based on sound science," said Michael Boccadoro, a spokesman for the dairy industry group known as the Community Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship. "That foundation doesn't exist."

District staff has yet to figure out what controls it will put on individual dairies. It has until July 1, 2006, to figure that out.

WHAT'S NEXT

- Air district board members have indicated they will raise questions about the new dairy emission factor at their next meeting Aug. 18.
- District staff plan to meet with dairymen and encourage them to apply for permits if they have more than 1,290 cows.
- The permit requirements are still being determined, and air officials have until next July to come up with a rule to cut air pollution from dairies.

Calif. air regulators announce new emission factor for dairies

By KATHLEEN HENNESSEY, Associated Press Writer
in the S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2005

Sacramento -- Dairies are the No. 1 source of smog-producing pollution in the San Joaquin Valley, producing more than even cars and light trucks, according to a report released by air regulators.

The San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District, in a report released Monday, has determined that a cow annually emits 19.3 pounds of volatile organic compounds, the gases that contribute to smog. That is 50 percent more than currently thought, the report said.

At that new rate, dairies in the San Joaquin Valley produce more than 50 tons of VOCs a day, exceeding the amount released by cars and light trucks in the region by nearly 20 tons a day, district officials said.

"Without a doubt, we have a legal and public health responsibility to move forward with (regulation)," said Dave Crow, the district's Air Pollution Control Officer. "This emissions factor provides us with some insight into what each of the processes on the dairy contribute."

The new emissions factor will force up to 250 more dairies to apply for permits, and force them to comply with regulations that are to be announced next summer.

Jared Fernandes, a dairy farmer who milks 3,000 cows in Tulare, said he finds the district's report hard to believe.

"It a joke," he said. "Common sense tells me that I doubt cows are producing more than cars. Would you rather sit in your garage with your car running, or sit in a garage with a cow all night?"

Regulators say cow emissions cannot be directly compared to car emissions because they contain different types of VOCs.

Environmentalists, meanwhile, contend that the new emission factor doesn't reflect all the pollution created by dairies because it doesn't account for VOCs released by manure used as fertilizer, feed storage and other dairy processes.

"The number is a low-ball number," said Brent Newell, a lawyer for the Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment, a group that has sued to force the industry to apply regulations. "I think in the future it will be revised and revised upwards."

Several scientists involved in the research used to devise the new emission factor have criticized the report. They take issue with the way district staff determined the amount of VOCs known as volatile fatty acids.

The district relied on research conducted in Great Britain and a feedlot study from Texas for its data on the acids.

"We've been cautioning them that a large component of their estimate is something for which there was very little California data," said Charles Krauter, a researcher at California State University-Fresno.

Michael Marsh, head of Western United Dairymen, said his group will ask the district's Governing Board to review the findings.

"If they don't and our farmers are caught being forced to rely upon on an emission factor for regulation that's not based on science, we will, of course, review all our legal options," he said.

Air regulators announce new emission factor for dairies

By KATHLEEN HENNESSEY, Associated Press Writer
in the Sacramento Bee, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2005

SACRAMENTO (AP) - Air regulators said Monday that dairies are the number one source of smog-producing pollution in the San Joaquin Valley, producing more than even cars and light trucks.

In a much-disputed report released Monday, the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District determined that a cow annually emits 19.3 pounds of volatile organic compounds, the gases that contribute to smog. That's 50 percent more than currently thought.

At that new rate, dairies in the San Joaquin Valley produce more than 50 tons of VOCs a day, exceeding the amount released by cars and light trucks in the region by nearly 20 tons a day, district officials said.

The new emission factor will force up to 250 more dairies to apply for permits. Permitted dairies also will have to comply with regulations set to be announced next summer.

"Without a doubt, we have a legal and public health responsibility to move forward with (regulation)," said Dave Crow, the district's Air Pollution Control Officer. "This emissions factor provides us with some insight into what each of the processes on the dairy contribute."

The factor also stokes an ongoing debate among industry groups, environmentalists and scientists over how much of the valley's pollution should be blamed on one of its largest agricultural industries.

Several scientists involved in the research used to devise the new emission factor have criticized the report's finding. They take issue with the way district staff determined the amount of VOCs known as volatile fatty acids. The VFAs make up 15.5 of the 19.3 pounds of pollutants blamed on the cow.

"We've been cautioning them that a large component of their estimate is something for which there was very little California data," said Charles Krauter, a researcher at the California State University, Fresno.

The district relied on research conducted in Great Britain and a feedlot study from Texas for its VFA data.

Frank Mitloehner, an air quality specialist from the University of California, Davis who studies cow emissions, said he could not support the district's findings on VFAs.

"I think that it is very obvious there are very large knowledge gaps in this area," he said.

Air district officials said they saw no reason to make changes.

"We did consider their comments, but we did not make any changes based on their objections," said Rick McVeigh, the district's director of compliance.

Environmentalists called Mitloehner biased because he accepts funding from industry groups. They contend that the new emission factor doesn't reflect all the pollution created by dairies because it doesn't account for VOCs released by manure used as fertilizer, feed storage and other dairy processes.

"The number is a low-ball number," said Brent Newell, a lawyer for the Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment, a group that has sued to force the industry to apply regulations. "I think in the future it will be revised and revised upwards, and it's incredibly important that the district has taken this step."

Michael Marsh, head of Western United Dairymen, said his group will ask the district's Governing Board to review Crow's findings.

"If they don't and our farmers are caught being forced to rely upon on an emission factor for regulation that's not based on science, we will, of course, review all our legal options," he said.

Jared Fernandes, a dairy farmer who milks 3,000 cows in Tulare, said he finds the district's report hard to believe.

"It a joke," he said. "Common sense tells me that I doubt cows are producing more than cars. Would you rather sit in your garage with your car running, or sit in a garage with a cow all night?"

Regulators say cows emissions cannot be directly compared to car emissions because they contain different types of VOCs.

Mitloehner's research found that those VOCs are released during the cow's natural rumination process, another reason dairy farmers feel they're being unfairly singled out.

"There is no technology, there's nothing we can do about it," Fernandes said. "Most of what's coming out is coming from the cow."

That dairy air? It's here to stay 'til the cows go home

Thumb your nose or hold it, but report says our bovine neighbors cause more smog than cars

By Kathleen Hennessey, Associated Press

Tri-Valley Herald and Stockton Record, Tues., Aug. 2, 2005

SACRAMENTO - Air regulators said Monday that dairies are the No.1 source of smog-producing pollution in the San Joaquin Valley, producing more than even cars and light trucks.

In a much-disputed report released Monday, the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District determined a cow annually emits 19.3 pounds of volatile organic compounds, the gases that contribute to smog. That's 50 percent more than previously thought.

At that new rate, dairies in the San Joaquin Valley produce more than 50 tons of VOCs a day, exceeding the amount released by cars and light trucks in the region by nearly 20 tons a day, district officials said.

The new emission factor will force up to 250 more dairies to apply for permits. Permitted dairies also will have to comply with regulations to be announced next summer.

“Without a doubt, we have a legal and public health responsibility to move forward with (regulation),” said Dave Crow, the district’s air pollution control officer. “This emissions factor provides us with some insight into what each of the processes on the dairy contribute.”

In San Joaquin Valley, Cows Pass Cars as Polluters

Air district says bovines on the region's booming dairy farms are the biggest single source of smog-forming gases. The industry takes issue.

By Miguel Bustillo, Times Staff Writer

LA Times, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2005

Got smog?

California's San Joaquin Valley for some time has had the dirtiest air in the country. Monday, officials said gases from ruminating dairy cows, not exhaust from cars, are the region's biggest single source of a chief smog-forming pollutant.

Every year, the average dairy cow produces 19.3 pounds of gases, called volatile organic compounds, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District said. Those gases react with other pollutants to form ground-level ozone, or smog.

With 2.5 million dairy cows - roughly one of every five in the country - emissions of almost 20 pounds per cow mean that cattle in the San Joaquin Valley produce more organic compounds than are generated by either cars or trucks or pesticides, the air district said. The finding will serve as the basis for strict air-quality regulations on the region's booming dairy industry.

The San Joaquin Valley, Houston and Los Angeles have the three worst air-pollution problems in America. Their relative rank varies from year to year depending in part on weather conditions. Over the last six years, however, the San Joaquin Valley has violated the federal limit on ozone smog over an eight-hour period more than any other region. That "eight-hour standard" is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's main barometer for the severity of smog.

The dairy industry will be forced to invest millions of dollars in expensive pollution-control technology in feedlots and waste lagoons, and may even have to consider altering animals' diets to meet the region's planned air-quality regulations. Not surprisingly, industry officials challenged the estimate as scientifically unsound.

"Science is supposed to guide this regulation, not fairy dust," said Michael Marsh, chief executive officer of Western United Dairymen, a lobbying group that said it was considering a lawsuit to block regulations based on the new finding. "It's impossible to capture emissions that scientists can't even detect."

Air-quality regulators defended their estimate as a conservative one based on the best available research. But it was criticized by some scientists -- including one whose work was used by the district to arrive at the figure.

"If you closed all the dairies in California tomorrow, you would not see much of an impact on ozone formation," said the scientist, Frank Mitloehner of UC Davis, who was hired by air-quality officials to study cow emissions and now contends his findings were misconstrued.

"We really don't have the science to back this number up," he said.

Five members of Congress and 12 state legislators had demanded that the district reconsider a similar draft estimate, calling it absurdly high. Environmentalists and some community groups, meanwhile, called the same figure too low.

The entire exercise of estimating cow emissions has been lampooned on talk radio as "fart science" run amok -- although most gas actually comes from the front end of the cow.

"I'd like to challenge the people that came up with this information to enclose yourself in a shop with a cow, and at the same time have someone enclose themselves in a similar shop with a car or truck

running," one critic, Steve Hofman of Ripon, Calif., wrote to the Modesto Bee. "Then let me know the results."

Cars do emit many significant pollutants that cows do not, and they are responsible for more smog-forming emissions overall. But in a region where many children suffer from asthma and officials issue smog warnings on hot summer days, supporters of strong regulations said the role of cows in emitting organic gases is no laughing matter.

"This is not some arcane dispute about cow gases," said Brent Newell, an attorney for the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment. "We are talking about a public health crisis. It's not funny to joke about cow burps and farts when one in six children in Fresno schools is carrying an inhaler."

The dairy industry is growing fast in the San Joaquin Valley as farms driven out of the Chino area in Southern California by urbanization move into the Central Valley. Government officials estimate that over the next several years, the number of cows in the San Joaquin air basin will increase from 2.5 million to about 2.9 million.

Although air-quality officials now have a figure on the extent of the cow pollution problem, it remained unclear how far they could push dairies to reduce bovine emissions.

Most of the gases, scientists believe, come from the bovine digestive process, which consists of constantly swallowing and regurgitating food. This is known as rumination, or "chewing the cud," which produces large amounts of gas.

Cow manure is also a major source of emissions and will probably be targeted for regulation. Officials said they may also require dairies to alter the food cows eat in order to reduce flatulence.

New dairies will be required to use the best available equipment to curtail emissions. Existing dairies will face less-restrictive requirements, but will also be forced to make changes to reduce cow gases.

Possible measures include scraping manure from cow corrals more frequently so it won't fester in the heat and installing digesters to break down pollution in the lagoons where cow waste is later flushed.

"We need immediate regulation now. We know the pollutants are coming off these dairies," said Tom Frantz, a native of Shafter, Calif., who heads a group called the Assn. of Irritated Residents. He says that he developed asthma in the last five years as factory dairy farms moved into the region. "Ag hasn't been regulated in the past, but times are changing. Our lungs will not become an agricultural subsidy."

Dairies cause more pollution than cars, study says

Posted on KGET-TV 17 (Bakersfield) website, Monday, Aug. 1, 2005

BAKERSFIELD - Air quality watchdogs put a number on the amount of smog-forming gases emitted annually been individual dairy cows.

The number, hotly contested among environmental and industry groups, one day could become the basis for expensive new pollution control regulations for dairy farmers in the valley.

Kern County is home to nearly 300,000 dairy cows. The herd could swell to more than 500,000 if 19 more dairies are allowed to move to Kern from Chino.

After reviewing more than a dozen scientific studies, air quality regulators arrived at the magic number. They said a single adult dairy cow produces 19.3 pounds of smog-forming gases each year.

The gases, known as Volatile Organic Compounds, are emitted by cows at both ends as they digest their food.

The VOC's combine with nitrous oxide, which is emitted by industry and vehicles, to form the ozone.

The updated emissions factor means dairies are the No. 1 source of VOC's in the valley, ahead of cars and trucks, and must be regulated by the air district.

The last definitive study on dairy cow emissions was in 1938, and concluded one cow emits nearly 13 pounds of VOC's per year.

The new number is substantially higher than figures previously developed in research like the Bovine Bubble Study at U.C. Davis.

Frank Mitloehner has built a series of air-tight corrals. In each bubble are 10 Holsteins. Air gets in and is tested on the way out.

Mitloehner believes data from the 1938 study grossly over-estimated dairy pollution.

“Because that study is being used, the dairy industry is the second largest polluter in California right now,” said Mitloehner.

Mitloehner said data collected so far from his study indicates dairy cows emit roughly a third less smog-forming gas than the new Air Quality Control District study says.

He stresses more research needs to be done, but regulators can’t wait that long.

Dairyman Hank Van Exel said he’s sure he’ll be spending more money to reduce air pollution. He too would like to see the research run its course before he spends money.

“I know some of the science they're using now is not correct,” said Van Exel. “I want to clean up the air problems myself. I didn't have asthma, I'm getting asthma now, but I think maybe we're throwing rocks at the wrong building here.”

An air district spokesman said the emission factor will be reviewed on an ongoing basis as more study information becomes available.

Debate Over Dairy Pollution

Posted on KFSN, ABC30 (Fresno) website, Monday, Aug. 1, 2005

A new report from the local air district paints cows as a top polluter in the Valley, but reaction to the news ranges from satisfaction to utter disgust.

The issue may not be as black and white as a dairy cow, but the air district now says cows are responsible for 50% more pollution in the Valley than first thought.

It puts them first, even above trucks and cars, for a key ingredient in smog called "volatile organic compounds."

Based on available science, we think we may be underestimating," says Kelly Hogan Malay, from the Air Pollution Control District. "We anticipate the number might actually go up."

But, dairy owners and their supporters say cows are getting too much of the blame for bad air. They say letters and research by Fresno State and UC Davis scientists back them up.

Assemblyman Mike Villines told Action News, "Cows and gas is not going to solve the problem. It's cars and gross polluting cars. We've got to stop saying, 'You, because you have a few cows, you're in trouble.'"

Environmentalist Kevin Hall says despite competing estimates, controlling pollution from dairies has to be part of the solution, "We'll continue to fight over the science, but given the human health crisis in the San Joaquin Valley, dairy owners, those 700 or 800 businesses, really need to step up and do their share."

If the new report holds up, as many as 250 more dairies in the Valley will have to apply for air permits and they could have to add new pollution controls by next summer.

Members of the dairy industry say those new controls will be costly and some worry it could have a negative impact on the Valley's economy.

Tejon Industrial Complex clears further environmental hurdles, backers say

By SARAH RUBY , Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2005

Several years and many air quality studies later, proponents of Tejon Industrial Complex believe they've proven themselves as an environmentally friendly development.

In 2003, a Kern County judge told Tejon Ranch to go back to the environmental drawing board and do further studies of the project's impact on air quality and two endangered species. The Tejon Industrial Complex would add more than 15 million square feet of industrial and commercial space near an existing 5-million-square-foot project along Interstate 5.

"We think we have gone way beyond the extra mile" to quantify the project's air quality impacts, said Andrew Daymude, vice president of land planning and entitlements for Tejon Ranch Co.

For the emissions it couldn't control, Tejon Ranch paid $531,000 to the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Unavoidable emissions include construction pollution and car and truck trips spawned by the new facility. The air district has already cashed the check and will use the money to buy off-site air quality improvements, such as cleaner diesel engines for agriculture.

"We've got a very positive solution across the board," Daymude said.

When the district has spent the money, net air quality impact of Tejon Industrial Complex should be zero, according to environmental documents.

A coalition of environmental groups filed suit against the project in early 2003, arguing that its environmental impacts hadn't been thoroughly studied. Hundreds of pages of new studies were released in July, and the public has until Aug. 29 to let the planning department know what it thinks about them.

"We're certainly not going to take their word for" the project's environmental friendliness, said John Buse, staff attorney for the Center for Biological Diversity, which was one of the groups that sued in 2003.

Once the public comment period is over, the project will go to the county Board of Supervisors for approval this fall. It will be the second time supervisors have voted on the project.

If it's approved, Tejon Ranch Co. will present its new research to the judge, who has the ultimate say over whether the company adequately studied the project's environmental impact.

EPA Warns States on Plans to Cut Pollution

By John Heilprin, Associated Press Writer
in the S.F. Chronicle, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2005

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The Bush administration told 28 states Monday it plans to order specific pollution cuts from their power plants if state officials don't have their own plan by fall of next year for making the air cleaner for people downwind.

A new program the Environmental Protection Agency announced in March requires states in the East, South and Midwest, plus the District of Columbia, to reduce power plant pollutants that form smog and soot and drift downwind.

The states have until September 2006 to submit plans for achieving the pollution reductions. If they miss that deadline, the EPA said Monday it would write the plans for them.

North Carolina and two advocacy groups, Environmental Defense and the Southern Environmental Law Center, sued EPA, saying the state can't meet federal air quality standards if upwind states don't clean up their pollution.

Jeff Holmstead, EPA's assistant administrator for air and radiation, said the agency's enforcement proposal would go a long way toward cleaning up the nation's air while ensuring that North Carolina can meet federal standards on time.

But EPA's enforcement would only go so far. In North Carolina, for example, the agency says it will only step in to curb soot but not smog. The agency says its analyses show that upwind states don't contribute to smog in North Carolina.

"EPA just strengthened its hand to make sure states implement clean air rules on time and on target, but it failed to take the extra steps to fully address the pollution blowing into North Carolina," said Michael Shore, a senior air policy analyst for Environmental Defense.

Under the March regulations, by 2015, nitrogen oxide pollution in the 28 states will have to be reduced by 1.9 million tons annually, or 61 percent below 2003 levels. Sulfur dioxide pollution must drop by 5.4 million tons, a 57 percent reduction.

EPA says electric utility customers can expect their monthly electric bills to eventually rise by up to $1 to pay the projected $4 billion annual costs to meet the new standards.

But it estimates the financial benefits of preventing breathing ailments by cutting nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide are at least 20 times greater. Both chemical compounds contribute to the formation of tiny airborne particles, while nitrogen oxides also lead to smog.

Other states affected by the new regulations are Alabama, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin.

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On the Net:
EPA:
<http://www.epa.gov/interstateairquality>www.epa.gov/interstateairquality
<http://www.epa.gov/interstateairquality>

Suit fights ethanol mandate

By Dale Kasler -- Bee Staff Writer
Sacramento Bee, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2005

California's attorney general sued the U.S. government Monday to wipe out the federal rule requiring the use of ethanol in California gas tanks.

But new federal energy legislation awaiting President Bush's signature could soften the ethanol requirement and possibly render the lawsuit meaningless, a spokeswoman for Attorney General Bill Lockyer acknowledged.

For years California has been fighting a federal requirement that says ethanol must be blended into the gasoline sold in most of California.

The federal government says ethanol helps clean the air, but California says the corn-based additive is expensive and, because of its chemical properties, actually worsens air pollution in hot weather.

Congress recently passed an energy bill that would delete the ethanol requirement in California. Lockyer, however, couldn't wait to see if Bush would sign the bill, spokeswoman Teresa Schilling said.

That's because he had just 60 days from June 2 to challenge the federal government's latest refusal to lift its ethanol requirement, she said.

Lockyer filed suit Monday in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco.

Because of the uncertainty over the energy bill's fate, "we didn't want to miss out on the only opportunity we had" to challenge the EPA's ruling, Schilling said.

Even if Bush signs the energy bill, it seems certain ethanol will stay around in California.

While exempting California from its current ethanol requirement, the legislation would force refiners around the country to blend a certain amount of ethanol into gas sold to consumers.

Fresno Bee, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2005:

Cow emissions or diesel fumes is an easy choice

After reading about how cows make more toxic gases than diesel trucks, I had to laugh. Apparently the people who did the study have never seen the big black cloud that hangs over Highway 99 on a summer day. I have never seen a big black cloud hang over a dairy.

I challenge the people who did the study to close themselves in a building with a running diesel truck for 10 minutes, and then try the same with a cow for two hours. I am sure that they will choose cow gases over truck gases every time.

Even though I don't have a college education, I would rather breathe cow exhaust than truck exhaust any day of the week.

John Gregori, Tollhouse

Bakersfield Californian, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2005:

Buffalo and ROGs

To make decisions about our air pollution, we need to understand that air pollution means air that has too much of one or more of several kinds of chemicals. The main groups of chemicals our air has too much of are:

- Reactive organic gases (ROGs), among which are gasoline and digestive tract gases. In concentrations found in the air around us, ROGs by themselves do not harm us.
- Oxides of nitrogen that are mostly made by burning gasoline or natural gas.
- Ozone, the chief chemical that harms us in the summer. Ozone is made when oxides of nitrogen are combined with reactive organic gases in warm sunshine. Smog sometimes means air with too much ozone; smog is not a helpful word.
- Particulate Matter (PM 10, PM 2.5), which is small enough to be inhaled into our lungs. These particles are mostly made from dust, burning something or combining oxides of nitrogen and ammonia.

The tens of millions of buffalo that roamed central North America two centuries ago made much more reactive organic gases than the less than 2 million cows now in the San Joaquin Valley. The buffalo did not make ozone because there were almost no oxides of nitrogen to combine with the reactive organic gases.

The buffalo were spread out, not confined to a small walled valley like ours.

-- ARTHUR UNGER, Bakersfield

Modesto Bee, Letter to the Editor, Tuesday, Aug. 2, 2005:

Dairies are crooked agencies' victims

As I sat behind a diesel truck, breathing in that fine carcinogenic aroma and wondering about smog laws, I came to the realization that it is time for dairy farmers to wake up to the horrible truth about air pollution caused by their industry. They will continue to be the focus of all these studies -- and get all the blame for our poor air quality -- until they follow the lead of the trucking, diesel and automotive industries.

To solve their part in this, the dairy industry must throw much more cash at the elected officials and special-interest groups. After this, the EPA and those other groups will find a new target to blame -- until they pay up.

Let's get together and point the finger where the true problem lies before we all need personal air purifiers.

A.G. NEWTON, Oakdale