

## **Air rule could force change at farms**

Warren Lutz - Record Staff Writer  
Stockton Record, Monday, June 12, 2006

STOCKTON - Hundreds of animal farmers across the San Joaquin Valley will have to change how they do business if officials adopt a new air-pollution regulation next week.

The new rule requires farmers to adopt new practices in order to reduce the release of volatile organic compounds, or VOCs. In the Valley, VOCs generally come from decaying animal manure, which combines with nitrogen oxides from farm tractors and domestic vehicles to make the Valley one of the dirtiest and deadliest air basins in the country.

The new regulation applies to both swine and dairy farms but is likely to cause a bigger impact among the San Joaquin Valley's 1.5 million-head dairy industry. The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District votes on the rule, which applies to the 230 dairy farms with more than 1,000 cattle, next week.

Because dairy farmers have never faced clean air rules before, some say it's a new era for the industry.

"We've moved into a new world of regulatory requirements, so it's not going to be business as usual," said Kevin Abernathy, a spokesman for the California Dairy Campaign.

The proposed regulation stems from a 2003 state law that requires dairy farmers to reduce emissions.

Officials and dairy groups spent the next two years battling over how much pollution each cow produces and where it comes from. It was first thought that VOCs came mostly from ponds where animal manure is stored for later use, but more recent research suggests it comes from the manure itself as it begins to decay.

George Heinen, an air district engineer, said the turning point came after the Western United Dairymen, a Modesto-based industry trade group, sued the air district in Fresno Superior Court. An advisory group created out of a settlement from that lawsuit recommended that dairy farmers be allowed to choose from a list of practices that would lower emissions.

"They paved the way," Heinen said.

The rule is designed to eliminate about 18 tons of VOCs per day, according to the air district.

Abernathy said the proposed rule gives dairy producers the opportunity to make their operations cleaner with practices that work for their individual farms. No two dairy farms are alike, he said.

The new regulation "will give us a good opportunities to come up with some good management measures that will benefit the whole environment," he said.

But some believe the changes aren't strong enough to make a difference.

Brent Newell, an attorney for the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment, said the proposed rule only requires what many dairy farmers already do.

"The rule codifies the status quo," Newell said. He called it a "paper exercise" and "an insult to the public."

He also is upset the proposed regulation doesn't take aim against ammonia, another problem area for dairies. Mixed with vehicle exhaust, ammonia helps produce tiny pollutant particles that

lodge inside human lungs, triggering serious illness and even premature death, according to health studies. The air district views ammonia as a separate air pollutant that does not affect ozone levels.

Heinen acknowledged the district won't actually measure the air quality of dairy farms but will perform unannounced spot checks to determine whether dairy farmers are using the promised practices.

Inspectors would investigate whether farmers are removing manure on a regular basis and keeping it covered at a certain height, Heinen said.

"With a visible inspection, you can see that," he said.

Some in the dairy industry said many dairy farmers already do control VOC emissions by flushing manure away from cows with water, or scraping it off and covering it.

"Just about everybody has implemented some kind of changes on his farm," said Mike Marsh, CEO of the Western United Dairymen.

Yet Marsh calls Newell's assertion that the rule is useless "absurd."

"The reductions would have already been realized if the practices were already in place," he said.

Several local dairy farmers, it seems, still are trying to find out how the new rule could affect them.

Ann Silva, owner of the Bacchetti and Silva Dairy in Tracy, said she doesn't know the details of the proposal except that it won't apply to her farm, which has 750 cows.

But she knows air district officials are planning future rules for smaller dairies. And she has questions about whether such regulations actually help the environment and whether farmers can afford it.

"We want something doable," Silva said. "We don't mind changing our practice at times, as long as it's financially feasible."

## **News briefs**

### **Children's art sought for air-quality calendar**

The Fresno Bee, Friday, June 9, 2006

VISALIA — The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is seeking Central Valley students — kindergarten through 12th grade — to participate in its 2007 Clean Air Kids calendar.

The deadline for submissions is Sept. 30.

Artwork should be in color and contain a message about a way to help clean the air.

Fourteen drawings will be selected and reproduced in a four-color calendar, and photos of the artists will be included.

About 20,000 calendars will be distributed at no charge to schools, community groups, health-care facilities, churches and nonprofit organizations.

The Valley Air District covers eight counties including Tulare, Kings, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno and the valley portion of Kern.

Details: (559) 230-6000; [public.education@valleyair.org](mailto:public.education@valleyair.org).

## **Air is bad, but getting better**

By Jillian Daley - Staff writer

Visalia Times Delta, Saturday, June 10, 2006

Valley air may be bad, but experts say it's getting better.

The San Joaquin Valley has consistently ranked among the worst areas in the nation in terms of air quality, said Brenda Turner of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District in Fresno. But there's good news.

"Pretty much everyone in the nation is seeing improvement in air quality," she said.

For three years in a row, the Valley has managed not to exceed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's "PM10" standard for particulate matter — soot, dust, ash, other solids and liquids. To achieve that standard, there must be fewer than 150 micrograms per cubic meter of air; Visalia's three-year mean score was 55, according to the EPA's Web site.

In 1990, two years before the formation of the air district, the Valley exceeded the PM10 standard on 55 days. In 2002, the Valley exceeded the standard on eight days.

Some aspects of pollution have worsened, however. Federal "PM 2.5" standards cover ozone and pollution like diesel exhaust, and in 2005 the Valley exceeded the standard 16 times — up from four in 2004, Turner said.

On violation days, the Valley had more than the allowable 65 micrograms — one millionth of a gram — per cubic meter of air.

## **Rural county rejects big city sewage on farmland**

By Juliana Barbassa - Associated Press Writer

in the Lodi News Sentinel, Saturday, June 10, 2006

Urban centers in Southern California will have to find some other place to dump their sewage after their rural neighbors to the north voted overwhelmingly to stop them from spreading treated human waste on farmland.

Each year, Kern County's open fields take in over 450,000 tons of treated human waste trucked from Los Angeles and other urban centers. The mixture is spread on land used to grow cattle feed.

While some residents swore by it, saying the sludge has no pathogens after treatment and works well as fertilizer, other residents worried that the unsavory mixture could seep into the region's water, increase air pollution or taint the name of Kern's \$3.5 billion agricultural industry, though sludge is never applied to crops consumed by humans.

Critics prevailed, with 82.69 percent of county voters saying they don't want sludge applied to their land anymore.

"It's time to start cleaning up our back yard, and the first step is to get neighbors to stop throwing stuff over the fence," said Larry Pearson, councilman for the rural farming town of Wasco.

Pearson was a fierce advocate of the measure. About 15 miles from Wasco a 1,280-acre sludge application site owned by the city of Oxnard takes in 24,000 tons of treated waste a year.

The practice of using treated waste as fertilizer took off in the early 1990s when U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency decided that applying treated sewage to farmland as fertilizer was preferable to sending it out to sea or pouring it in landfills.

Kern County's vast expanse of inexpensive land and its location, just across the Tehachapi mountains from the Los Angeles basin, made it an attractive option.

But residents in the area resented being seen as a dumping ground. A picture of a two-story outhouse, the top labeled "L.A. County" and the bottom labeled "Kern County" illustrated the Web site for the campaign to pass Measure E, and likely represented the feelings of many in the region.

"This county's been under siege, taking in one-third of California's sludge," said Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter. "They're finally taking their well-being into their own hands."

Now the urban areas that chose Kern's land as a solution for their waste management problems and invested money in the scheme are scrambling for an alternative.

Los Angeles has been sending about two dozen tanker trucks of sewage a day to Kern County since 1994. In 2000, it spent \$9.3 million to buy Green Acres, the 4,688-acre farm where it was applying its waste.

In 2000, when Kern County decided to take only sludge that's been cooked at high temperatures to kill pathogens, the city invested another \$40 million into its treatment system to comply.

It was costly, but all other options are even more expensive, said Diane Gilbert Jones, with Los Angeles' sanitation department.

"We are looking at technologies that are not readily available, at continuing to land-apply in other areas, farther away," she said. "We're not closing our minds to anything."

Cities and counties have six months to comply with the measure, or face fines of \$500 a day.

### **Big-box environment review coming soon**

Rick Brewer - Record Staff Writer  
Stockton Record, Friday, Jun 9, 2006

TRACY - A vote on whether Tracy will allow Wal-Mart to turn its big box into a bigger box is coming soon, but opponents may protest the creation of yet another proposed Supercenter in San Joaquin County.

The expansion plan and environmental review of the project at 3010 Grant Line Road is expected to come before the Tracy Planning Commission in August and the Tracy City Council after that for approval. It's been nearly three years since Wal-Mart executives conjured an 82,000-square-foot extension of the low-cost retailer's Tracy store. If the application is ultimately approved, the building is expected to grow to more than 208,000 square feet and become one of the 1,500 Wal-Marts across the nation to include a grocery store and bakery.

A similar Wal-Mart Supercenter is located on Hammer Lane in Stockton.

Tracy senior planner Victoria Lombardo said city officials did not require an environmental review of the new project because a sufficient report was filed when Wal-Mart built the store in 1993. Wal-Mart executives paid for one anyway.

"We wanted to ensure thoroughness," said Kevin Loscotoff, a Wal-Mart spokesman.

Several comments were filed during the public review phase of the new 300-page report of the project's potential impacts on traffic, utilities, noise pollution, [air quality](#) and water quality, Lombardo said. Most dealt with concerns about increased traffic and the impact to local merchants.

Even if the comments are answered satisfactorily, that doesn't mean opponents of Wal-Mart Supercenters will remain quiet if the council approves the expansion plan. More than 30 cities have been sued after approving Supercenters. Lawyers typically argue that local officials miscalculate the environmental consequences of the behemoth stores.

That's why company executives paid for the new review, Lombardo said.

"We've learned a lot from other cities the longer we've been doing this process," she said.

Stockton and Lodi are among the cities that have been sued. Those proposed Wal-Marts - at Eight Mile Road and Interstate 5 in Stockton and Kettleman Lane and Lower Sacramento Road in Lodi - would be new stores, not expansions. Wal-Mart officials are updating the environmental reviews of the Stockton and Lodi projects.

But Tracy's preparedness may not stop a lawsuit, Lombardo said. Grocers, unions and even rank-and-file citizens may team up against the world's largest retailer.

Teamsters Local 439 President Sam Rosas led several weekend pickets in front of Stockton's Wal-Mart in 2005 to protest its employment practices. He called Wal-Mart an anti-union corporation that pays low wages and provides substandard benefits.

That disparity is particularly pronounced among grocery workers, who are unionized throughout Northern California, he said. Wal-Mart's policies, he said, lead to an unfair competitive edge in grocery costs.

"We will continue to tell Wal-Mart to do the right thing and provide better wages and a decent health-care plan to their employees," Rosas said.

Wal-Mart's Loscotoff said the company simply provides choice in the marketplace.

"We've seen competitors, unions and special interests announce that they have been opposed to some of our locations," he said. "But we've heard consumers want the ability to choose where they spend their hard-earned money, and we'll stand up for them."

## **BUSINESS ITINERARY**

### **More Companies Weighing Environmental Cost of Travel**

By James Gilden, Special to The Times  
L.A. Times, Saturday, June 10, 2006

When a jet flies round-trip from Los Angeles to New York, it leaves behind an estimated 1,600 pounds of carbon dioxide in the skies — and that's per passenger.

And for business travelers, the numbers add up. Consider electronics giant Hewlett-Packard Co. It figures its business travel activities generated an estimated 279,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions in 2005.

Carbon dioxide is the nation's most common type of greenhouse gas, and transportation is the largest contributor, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Greenhouse gases are considered a major contributor to global warming.

Increasingly, corporations are finding that their bottom lines can be helped by efforts to reduce their business' effect on the environment. And it's not just about recycling and cutting electricity usage.

Business travel is getting a once-over for its effect on the environment, and corporations are taking action, with some companies cutting back on travel and hotels changing sheets and towels only occasionally during a guest's stay.

"It's a grass-roots movement," said Jack Riepe, spokesman for the Assn. of Corporate Travel Executives.

The nonprofit group with more than 2,500 members worldwide is seeing a bottom-up growth in interest in the subject, Riepe said. It sponsored a seminar on environmentally responsible purchasing at its conference last month in Atlanta.

The primary focus for many companies is the amount of carbon dioxide their travelers generate.

For example, it was London-based Carbon Neutral Co. that made the estimate of what the round trip between Los Angeles and New York cost environmentally. The firm has a website on which one can calculate a company's production of carbon dioxide.

Just being aware that business travel has an effect on the environment is a start, said Jim Peacock, spokesman for Carbon Neutral. The for-profit firm advises companies on strategies for reducing their carbon emissions.

When that is not feasible, it helps find projects that can offset those emissions. And unlike the tree-hugger environmentalist image, that doesn't necessarily mean just planting some trees to help absorb carbon dioxide.

"It's less about trees and more about investing in renewable energy and energy-efficient projects in developing countries that will save the equal amount" of carbon dioxide, Peacock said.

Europe is ahead of the game when it comes to attention to business travel's effect on the environment, he said, but that is changing.

The corporate travel executives association and Carbon Neutral have teamed to offer an online "carbon calculator" to measure the carbon dioxide emissions from companies' air and ground transportation.

A chart with the calculator shows the average carbon dioxide emissions of different types of transportation.

Not surprisingly, when you look at vehicle emissions per passenger, the most come from gasoline-powered cars; the least polluting are trains. The second-most environmentally friendly way to travel is in a gasoline-electric hybrid car. Load three people into a hybrid, and it becomes the most environmentally friendly.

Hybrid vehicles have become something of a poster child for the environmental movement.

Hewlett-Packard has added Ford Escape hybrids to its fleet of corporate vehicles in an effort to reduce its carbon dioxide emissions.

EV Rentals specializes in renting environmentally friendly vehicles. It was founded 10 years ago with 11 electric cars at Los Angeles International Airport, and it now has 400 hybrid vehicles and ambitions to add another 400 by the end of the year.

It rents its hybrids through Fox Rent a Car at eight locations in the Western U.S. including LAX, San Diego, San Jose, Oakland and Las Vegas. About 25% of its customers are business travelers, company President Jim Demb said.

With gasoline prices near record highs, he expects continued demand for those fuel-efficient vehicles.

"People now see the hybrid not just as some kind of fluke but rather a practical solution for personal and business use," he said.

Rental car companies aren't the only ones capitalizing on the popularity of hybrids. Chauffeured car services in Los Angeles (Eco Limo, <http://www.eco-limo.com>), San Francisco (Green Car Limo, <http://www.greencarlimo.com>), New York (Ozocar, <http://www.ozocar.com>) and Boston (PlanetTran, <http://www.planettran.com>) are shunning the ubiquitous black Lincoln Town Car in favor of hybrids.

Hotels too are getting on the green bandwagon. Over the last 10 years, Green Hotels Assn. in Houston has distributed thousands of cards urging guests to reuse their bedding and towels. It says that more than 70% of guests participate and that it leads to a 5% reduction in utility costs.

For meeting planners, it offers a two-page questionnaire to put a hotel's commitment to the environment to the test. Among the 46 questions are, "Will your property use chips or coins rather than disposable paper tickets for coat checking and auto parking?" and "Will your property use cream pitchers, sugar pourers and washable spoons rather than individual creamer and sugar packets, etc. for our meeting?"

Nobody ever said it was easy being green.

[Fresno Bee column, Friday, June 9, 2006:](#)

### **Cutting grass can save you some green**

By Eddie Jimenez / The Fresno Bee

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has a deal that will help clean up our yards and the air: a \$379 electric lawn mower for \$150. Tax included.

More than 300 electric mowers will be available beginning at 9a.m. Saturday at Fresno State, Lot Q — an annual event dubbed as the air district's Clean Green Yard Machine program. The only catch: You must trade in your gasoline-powered mower, drained of all fluids.

We all talk about cleaning up the Valley's air but assume someone else will do the work. On Saturday, we'll all have a chance to do more than complain and actually do something.

The air district's goal is simple: It wants to help wean us from gas mowers, which are huge air polluters.

The district will be selling Neuton rechargeable lawn mowers, which don't require any cumbersome electrical cords to operate. The rotary mower charges overnight, runs for up to an hour and has a 14-inch cutting width.

Our vehicles remain the biggest contributors by far to dirty Valley air. But pollution from gas mowers is significant — and every effort helps.

Running a standard gas-powered lawn mower for one hour pollutes about as much as 40 late-model cars operating for the same period.

You might ask, "So what? How often do you use your lawn mower?"

Look at it this way: My daily commute, going and coming, takes one hour in a '95 Jeep Cherokee. (We're looking for a more fuel-efficient car.) So running our gas mower for one hour pollutes the air about as much as me driving back and forth to work in June and July.

I've been wanting to replace our gas mower. I've been leaning toward the ultimate clean-air solution — a manual push mower. But my wife isn't crazy about the idea, so we're going to take the air district's offer.

Brenda Turner, air district spokeswoman, says Saturday's sale is one of five held or planned recently. About 85 electric mowers were sold each in Bakersfield and Visalia, far below district expectations.

"The thing I've been telling people is that we all can't go out and buy a hybrid car, but most of us can afford \$150 for a lawn mower," Turner says.

Another sale is planned at 9a.m. June 17 at Merced College in Lot C, and another in Stockton on June 24.

Steve Garver bought a rechargeable mower in Visalia. The English teacher and baseball coach at Exeter High School says he rides his bicycle everywhere and wants to help clean up the air. Still, his wife, Maureen, was the one who pushed for the electric mower.

"I was reluctant," he says. "I wanted a push mower. [But] I have to say I really like it."

But wait, there's more.

Turner says those buying mowers Saturday will be part of a drawing for two edger attachments. And the first 150 customers will get a rake.

Lot Q at California State University, Fresno, is along Barstow Avenue near Cedar Avenue. Checks and credit cards will be accepted. The district's number is (559) 230-6000 and its Web site is [www.valleyair.org](http://www.valleyair.org).

So save a few bucks, mow your lawn and breathe a little easier knowing that you're sparing the air.

[L.A. Times editorial, Saturday, June 10, 2006:](#)

**GREAT DANES**

**Taming L.A.'s killer ports**

**Maersk will save lives, and hopefully set a California precedent, by switching to low-sulfur fuel.**

California's ports will kill an estimated 2,400 people prematurely this year. They won't die in train or crane accidents — they'll simply breathe the air. The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are the biggest polluters in Southern California, and the biggest source of pollution at the ports is container ships that burn cheap "bunker" fuel — the crud that's left over in the refining process for cleaner fuels. It contains up to 3,000 times more sulfur than the fuel used in modern diesel trucks.

This fatal pollution has been allowed to continue thanks to loose international maritime regulations and indifference by shippers. That changed dramatically last month. Maersk Inc., a Danish firm that is the biggest shipper in the world and operator of the busiest container terminal in Los Angeles, announced that it would voluntarily switch to low-sulfur fuel in all of its 37 cargo ships that call on California. It also said it was pursuing development of a new catalytic converter

that would reduce ship emissions even further. If port officials follow through, Maersk's move could set a precedent that would have a noticeable effect on Southern California's air quality. Shipping companies have long claimed that switching to low-sulfur fuel is impractical; it's simply too scarce, they say, and the cost of converting their engines would be prohibitive. Maersk has just proved these companies wrong.

Port officials should use their leverage to compel other shippers to follow Maersk's lead. One way they can do this is by setting new terms as the leases on container terminals expire. When it comes time to renew the leases, the port could insist that shippers switch to clean fuel and use electric power while unloading, rather than keep their engines running. They also could offer more favorable lease terms to any company, such as Maersk, that clean up voluntarily.

There are other efforts underway to clean up ship emissions, all of which will benefit from Maersk's decision. The state's Air Resources Board approved a plan in April that called for cutting diesel emissions from the goods-movement industry by 85% by 2020. Though the plan has no guaranteed funding or mandatory controls, Maersk could help persuade shippers to go along with emissions cuts voluntarily before the state puts teeth in its regulations. At the federal level, activists are pursuing a sulfur-emissions control area around North America, which could be imposed by the International Maritime Organization under petition from the U.S., Canada and Mexico.

If shippers haven't yet figured out that business as usual is no longer acceptable, they soon will. The next time they claim cleaner ships are impossible, all anyone has to say is, "If Maersk can do it, why can't you?"

[Letters to the Fresno Bee, Friday, June 9, 2006](#)

### **Not so 'efficient'**

I was in my vehicle in the southbound left-turn lane at Blackstone and Shields avenues recently when I heard on the radio that the city's Traffic Division had successfully synchronized the lights on Blackstone between McKinley and Herndon.

It was great news, the report said; traffic will flow better, there will be less pollution from vehicles and Fresno will have more courteous drivers. It was certainly a paradoxical moment, because by the time I could turn, the newscast was over and a second song was playing.

Does the synchronization meet the Traffic Department's objectives? How does allowing fewer vehicles to turn during each signal improve air quality? How safe is it to have traffic in the left-turn lane backed up into the No. 1 lane? Where are the courteous drivers? I've witnessed drivers, seemingly irritated at waiting through two or three signals, run the red light.

Efficient and safe traffic flow I applaud. However, I invite the traffic engineers to put away their slide rules and software and take a "test drive" to see how practical their changes are. I encourage them to re-think the timing of the left-turn signals on Blackstone.

*Susan Trotter, Fresno*