

Pollution source eludes dairy industry

By Sarah Ruby, staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Monday, March 27, 2006

A few years ago dairy air regulators believed most cow pollution wafted from manure lagoons.

Last summer prevailing wisdom favored cow flatulence.

Now it looks like a larger chunk comes from piles of cow feed.

The bottom line? We have no idea where the dairy air pollution comes from. We know it's there, and we're learning more about its provenance, but each new study seems to shift the pollution spotlight to a new corner of the dairy.

That's why the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District is shying away from requiring dairies to install expensive and perhaps ineffective technologies, such as lagoon covers and indoor pastures. Its board will vote in June on a proposed rule that lets existing dairymen choose 19 pollution-cutting measures from a menu of nearly 50.

Most of those are operating techniques, not infrastructure investments.

"This gives them enough flexibility to do things they are sure of," said Seyed Sadredin, the air district's new executive director. "It's only a first step."

Dairymen can live with changing their operations without knowing exactly where dairy pollution comes from, said Michael Boccadoro, a spokesman for the Community Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship.

What they can't live with is buying expensive technology without knowing if it will result in lower emissions, he said.

It's a principle they've pushed in the past, going so far as to sue the district a few years ago for requiring lagoon covers at new dairies, among other controls. The lawsuit settled in 2004, giving dairymen a stay on lagoon covers and other mitigations while all sides mined the science.

They found that manure storage lagoons might not be as big a source of smog-forming chemicals as initially thought.

"I think a lot of people assumed these (lagoon) digesters were going to be a silver bullet to solve the dairy emission problem," Boccadoro said.

Dairy emission suspicions have shifted once more, this time to piles of cow feed. New studies indicate that cow digestion is less of a source of emissions than the district thought last summer, when it made the calculation that individual dairy cows produce 19.3 pounds of smog-forming chemicals, known as volatile organic compounds (VOCs), each year.

Dairy groups aren't quarreling with this number as a whole, but believe the relative contribution from lagoons, corrals and feed piles, etc., could change.

"The numbers are all over the map right now," Boccadoro said. "Rather than guess again ... I think we're all willing to stick with what we've got."

The most recent studies by Frank Mitloehner at UC Davis and C.E. Schmidt, an independent researcher, were paid for by air-quality agencies and dairy-industry groups.

They aren't yet final, but both the air district and the dairy industry say they open entirely new avenues of scientific study on dairies.

"We need more science and more answers," said Sadredin.

More detailed results from the studies will be available later this year, according to the district.

Valley lawmakers offer legislation, hope for success

By E.J. Schultz / Bee Capitol Bureau
Fresno Bee, Sunday, March 26, 2006

SACRAMENTO — How does a four-day workweek sound? What about getting a refund for all those fees you paid to go to community college? Have a pollution-belching car? Wouldn't it be nice to have it replaced?

These proposals and many more could become reality if San Joaquin Valley lawmakers get their way. During the next six months, legislators will scramble to get these and other bills passed, a mostly uphill battle considering the sheer volume of bills introduced each year.

One measure would levy tougher fines for polluting the air. Another would increase penalties for identity theft.

Local officials would get greater control over failing schools if one bill gets passed. Another measure would increase monitoring of convicted child molesters. One bill with a more modest aim would make it illegal to carry paint into a park. The goal? Less vandalism.

The deadline to introduce legislation into this year's session was Feb. 24. Now the key date is Aug. 31, the day by which bills must be passed by the Assembly and Senate. From there, it's on to the governor's desk for a signature or a veto.

The road will be filled with debate, amendments and committee hearings. Many bills will die along the way. But if lawmakers beat the odds and find enough support, their bill just might be turned into law.

Here's a sample of what Valley lawmakers will push this year, broken down by category. For a complete list, go to www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html, click author and plug in your lawmaker's name.

Environment

Assembly Member Juan Arambula, D-Fresno, wants to give tax incentives and low-interest loans to businesses buying equipment that reduces emissions. His Assembly Bill 2553 would extend the benefits to companies operating in the worst air quality zones in the state.

Sen. Dean Florez, D-Shafter, has introduced similar legislation, Senate Bill 1230, that would give incentives only if equipment reduces pollution by 30% below current mandates. Through another bill, SB 1252, Florez will push to increase fees for pollution violations.

San Joaquin Valley residents driving high-polluting vehicles could apply for a replacement vehicle under a bill being pushed by Assembly Member Dave Cogdill, R-Modesto.

AB 1997 would set up the pilot program in the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Low-income residents would be eligible if a smog check technician determines that repairs would not result in long-term smog compliance. The supply of replacement cars would come in donations from residents across the state. The Assembly Transportation Committee on Monday passed the bill by a 12-0 vote.

Study Doubles Estimate of Smog Deaths

USC researchers amass measurements of lethal particulate matter from hundreds of locations in the L.A. Basin. State may raise its official figures.

By Janet Wilson, Times Staff Writer

L.A. Times, Saturday, March 25, 2006

The number of deaths from breathing sooty smog in California may be more than twice as high as previously estimated, based on a recent USC study that examined the risk of such deaths in the Los Angeles Basin.

A team of researchers headed by Michael Jerrett, associate professor of preventive medicine, found two to three times greater risk of mortality from heart attacks, lung cancer and other serious illness tied to chronic exposure to fine particulate matter than did previous studies. The study looked at specific soot measurements and deaths in hundreds of neighborhoods — rather than relying on citywide annual averages used in the past — and detected the largest increased risks in the Inland Empire, Jerrett said.

Fine particulate matter spewed out by cars, trucks, locomotives, ships, planes, refineries and other sources lodges deep in the lungs and is widely considered the most lethal form of air pollution.

The staff of the California Air Resources Board said this week they are considering boosting statewide death estimates based on the USC data, pending independent review.

"I think candidly it's likely," said Michael Scheible, deputy executive director of the board. "The research suggests we will end up raising our estimates ... but we want to be cautious."

Currently, state officials estimate 9,000 Californians die annually from diseases caused or aggravated by air pollution, more than half of them in Southern California.

That number could double or even triple if the Air Resources Board incorporates the USC data into its estimates, Scheible said.

He said the board decided Thursday that the USC study and two others examining the effect of air pollution on mortality should undergo one more layer of review to determine the best possible way of applying them statewide. That review could be completed by the end of summer.

The other studies include one by researchers at Harvard University who found that as soot pollution declined in six northeastern cities, related deaths declined as well. The other, a recent study by Loma Linda University, found increased coronary deaths among women exposed to both fine particulate matter and ozone.

The Times reported earlier this week that one in every 15,000 Californians — about 66 per million — is at risk of contracting cancer from breathing chemicals in the air over his or her lifetime, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's recent National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment. The study was based on emissions of 177 chemicals in 1999.

"The more we learn about particulate, the worse the news is," said Jerry Martin, a spokesman for the Air Resources Board, who added that as recently as 10 years ago, ozone and toxics were

considered the problem. "Part of that is the technology for looking at very fine particles keeps improving.... A fine particle is less than one-twenty-eighth the size of a human hair. At that size, it can actually permeate right through your lungs into your bloodstream and cause heart problems."

Other air regulators and clean-air advocates said the USC study points to the need to toughen national standards for fine particulate.

"The study underscores the extremely grave severity of the threat from air pollution," said Frank O'Donnell of Clean Air Watch in Washington, D.C. "It draws a huge line under the need for the federal government to take aggressive action against existing sources of diesel soot."

Sam Atwood, spokesman for the South Coast Air Quality Management District, said the agency's chief health expert "considers it a significant study that bolsters the need to strengthen particulate matter standards."

EPA administrator Stephen L. Johnson has drawn criticism for proposing new standards for particulates considered too lax by his own scientific advisory panel. He is facing a court-ordered September deadline to make a final decision.

The highest death rates from smog-related illnesses in the USC study were found in the Inland Empire, where diesel soot is blown by prevailing winds. In western Riverside and San Bernardino counties, the soot is trapped by four mountain ranges.

"Somebody living in San Bernardino is two or three times more likely to die from smog during a given period than someone in Venice," Jerrett said.

The risk of fatal heart attacks tied to soot was as much as 39% higher in the smoggiest areas. Deaths from diabetes, though few, were twice as high in those areas.

The current mortality estimate is based on a 2002 national study of 500,000 people that found a 6% increased risk of death with each additional 10 micrograms of fine particulate per cubic meter of air. But the national study used just three monitors in the L.A. basin, missing major pockets of pollution, according to Jerrett.

He said the new study, co-written by the lead researcher on the 2002 work, found sharply higher rates of risk, between 11% and 17%, because it analyzed soot measurements and deaths in 269 ZIP Codes and 23 monitoring sites across the basin.

He said researchers studied nearly 23,000 Los Angeles-area residents who are part of a long-term study of the effects of air pollution begun by the American Cancer Society in 1982. He said more than 40 variables, including smoking habits and diet, were taken into consideration.

A separate USC study published this week in Environmental Health Perspectives Journal found that ozone, a different type of air pollution, reduced sperm counts in Los Angeles men. Other pollutants did not affect sperm counts.

"The data indicated that for every 14 parts per billion increase in ozone, we had an approximate drop of 3 million sperm per millimeter," said lead author Rebecca Sokol, a USC endocrinologist. That is about a 3% drop in sperm as the ozone level rose, especially on smoggy summer days.

The smoggiest day measured was 50 parts per billion, but she said that such heavy smog days were rare.

"These changes are not going to put men in the infertile scenario," she said. Still, she noted that all the days measured had smog levels below the current California legal standard of 80 parts per billion.

More than 5,000 samples from men known to be fertile were taken. Next, the researchers plan to study the possible relationship between ozone and infertile men.

[Bakersfield Californian editorial, Monday, March 27, 2006:](#)

Effort deserved to be mowed down

The name's Bond. Not James, who played a good guy in the movies, but Kit as in U.S. Sen. Kit Bond, R-Mo. He's playing the bad guy in the Senate. He tried to keep California from trying to get cleaner air by mowing down the state's plans to implement regulations limiting pollution from lawn mowers and other small-engine machines.

But the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has ruled California can require catalytic converters on small-engine machines. Bond argued adding the converters to small engines could create fire risks. An EPA study concluded that are no such risks and there even can be safety benefits from adding catalytic converters.

It happens that Bond's home state has factories owned by small-engine maker Briggs & Stratton Corp., which doesn't want the task of adding catalytic converters to its mower engines.

The California Air Resources Board said lawn mowers and other machines with engines under 25 horsepower account for 7 percent of the state's smog-forming emissions from mobile sources, the equivalent of more than 3 million cars.

We're glad Bond lost the battle.

[Commentary in the Washington Post, Sunday, March 26, 2006](#)

Balance Costs Against Clean-Air Gains

The Maryland Senate and House are grappling with legislation to reduce emissions that contribute to smog and mercury pollution. Most of the regulatory requirements of the proposed Healthy Air Act (S.B. 154, H.B. 189) focus on emissions from electric power plants: sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and mercury. But one provision addresses greenhouse gases and requires Maryland to join the Northeast Regional

Greenhouse Gas Initiative that is proposed by seven states.

The administration of Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr. has put forward its own rules to reduce emissions, and amendments to the act recently approved by a Senate committee move the bill closer to the governor's proposal. Unlike the Healthy Air Act, however, the governor's regulations would not force Maryland to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. There is wisdom in this course.

Baltimore Gas and Electric Co. customers are facing a 72 percent electricity rate increase in their bills as rate caps expire, and the costs of any new emission controls certainly would increase monthly electric bills even further.

The Northeast climate agreement covers seven states that have little in common with Maryland. The participants are Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York and Vermont.

Massachusetts and Rhode Island have bailed out of the agreement out of concern about its likely effect on electric rates and economic development. The agreement requires participating states to freeze emissions of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, from electric utilities at current levels by 2009 and to reduce emissions by 10 percent beginning in 2015. In Maryland, participation in the

Northeast climate pact would mean buying more electricity from other states and less use of lower-cost coal generation.

The states participating in the agreement rely on coal for just 15 percent of their electricity generation, while Maryland generates more than half of its electric power from coal. These differences are reflected in electric rates. New York, for example, has the highest electricity rates of any of the lower 48 states. Maryland's average retail electricity rate in 2004, about 7 cents per kilowatt hour, was in line with the national average. Like Maryland, most of the nation relies on coal to generate about half its electricity.

Reducing emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides will help clean up Maryland's air and create jobs in the pollution-control field. But reducing emissions of carbon dioxide in Maryland, New York or New England won't stop global climate change. A recent study concluded that the Northeast climate agreement would slow the projected increase of global temperatures by .0003 of one degree Celsius 100 years from now. It would have no measurable effect on global sea levels or on the Chesapeake Bay. Climate change is a global problem, and piecemeal state or regional action does little more than raise energy prices with no measurable environmental benefit.

The Maryland General Assembly can find middle ground in the clean-air debate by confining the Healthy Air Act to emissions reductions that will benefit public health. The governor's proposed regulations are significantly more stringent than Environmental Protection Agency emissions rules issued last year.

Most legislators seem to accept increased electricity rates as an inevitable consequence of more stringent state emission standards, but striking a balance between higher energy costs and environmental gains will be easier if Maryland avoids entanglement with the New England climate pact.

Eugene M. Trisko is a lawyer who represents the United Mine Workers of America.

[Letter to the Fresno Bee, Friday, March 24, 2006:](#)

To get rid of lawnmowers, get rid of grass lawns

I'm very pleased California now has the authority to cut the pollution from lawnmowers (story March 18). The Environmental Protection Agency finally did something to protect our environment, instead of protecting businesses at the expense of clean air and water.

But why not completely eliminate the need for thousands of lawnmowers, edgers and leaf blowers?

There appears to be an unwritten landscaping rule in this great Valley that every house must have a 25-foot by 40-foot lawn tacked to the front and back, lawns that must be mowed, edged, fertilized and generally pampered on a regular basis.

I could see the logic if you have kids who like to play soccer in the back yard, but 99% of lawns just lie there untouched except by canine compost and mower blades.

The alternative? A ground cover, such as creeping thyme, that requires mowing and edging maybe once a year, if at all, and can even tolerate some foot traffic. It looks more like a meadow than a golfing green.

A neighbor and I converted our yards from grass to thyme a few years ago. We now have more time for other pursuits. And I checked: EPA permission is not required.

Don H. Gaede, Fresno

[Letter to the Modesto Bee, Monday, March 27, 2006](#)

Those talking cows are onto us

Those of you who suspect that the local air board pundits' campaign against the cow may be a political ploy to misdirect your attention from the real problems would do well to consider:

1. The cow is an intelligent biological lawn mower whose primary goal is the takeover of the planet.
2. A few centuries ago, a similar plot by those other rascally ruminants, the buffalo, nearly succeeded. Fortunately, right-thinking European immigrants who recognized cows as the true cause of London's smog problem corrected the problem.
3. Cows are catered to and served by a drone-like subspecies (*dairymanus Caleeforneeyum*) who diligently toil 24-7 because of cows' arrogant refusal to recognize holidays or weekends.
4. They're on to us. I know that cows can talk because I've seen it on television. Over the past few days, I've attempted to interview several local cows, and not a single one would speak a single word on the record.

I only hope there is still time for these hardworking bureaucrats to convince the general public of the cows' insidious threat to our way of life.

Roy Cook, Modesto

[Letters to the L.A. Times, Monday, March 27, 2006:](#)

Calculating the risks of the state's air pollution

Re "State's Air Is Among Nation's Most Toxic," March 22

Your article repeatedly mentions "cancer risk" but never documents diagnosed rates of cancer in California or anywhere else. If you write that Los Angeles and Orange counties have "twice the national average" risk of cancer but, in fact, have the same diagnosed rate of cancer, what does that tell you?

What it should tell you is that your correlations between levels of exposure and levels of diagnosed conditions are wrong. Therefore, your efforts to reduce levels of exposure are moneys spent and jobs lost for no good reason.

Frank Natoli, Newton, N.J.

•

It comes as no surprise that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's air pollution numbers are lower than California's. Remember, the Bush EPA framed its behind-the-scenes undoing of environmental protection regulations as the "Clear Skies" initiative. The EPA's failure to include diesel emissions in its pollution calculation, the best carcinogenic cocktail, is akin to classifying gas-guzzling sport utility vehicles as trucks.

A good friend of mine who lived in Los Angeles died of leukemia a year ago. The cost of his last month in the hospital, where tests were done to extend his life, was \$944,000.

Roger Newell, San Diego

-

Here we go with the headline-grabbing press terrorizing L.A. residents again, suggesting that if we don't spend billions more chasing commerce and industry from Southern California, we'll all die of cancer. So the risk of cancer exists at a level of 1 in 10,700 in L.A. County.

Tell us, by comparison, what the risk is of dying in an auto accident in L.A. County, or getting shot — or suffering irreparable childhood malnourishment because there are no jobs here because business has been chased away by overtaxation and overregulation.

Kip Dellinger, Los Angeles

-

Perhaps the time has come for the beautiful and caring people of Calabasas to outlaw cars and diesel trucks.

Theodore de Vries, Castaic