



Defending Agriculture

Legal, environmental hot button issues that impact U.S. farmers.

Pew's Poultry Pollution Promotion

Posted on September 06, 2011 at 10:02 AM

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The PEW [Campaign to Reform Industrial Animal Agriculture](#) issued a report in July, 2011, entitled "Big Chicken - Pollution and Industrial Poultry Production in America." The PEW experts on agriculture rip industrial poultry operations because the manure is disposed of by spreading it on open fields or cropland.

The PEW campaign also suggests that industrial poultry production presents a number of concerns such as the overuse of antibiotics, pollution caused by egg production and not to be left out are air quality problems created by poultry operations.

The Pew report is worth reading because poultry and all concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) are facing criticism on the pollution created by such operations. This report attacks big chicken as causing big waste.

"All livestock manure contains nitrogen and phosphorus, but poultry manure often has a higher nutrient content than other types of manure, and those nutrients may not be present in the proportions needed by crops."

The PEW report is organized by its managing director for the PEW Environment Group. The director's agricultural background includes working on problems of climate change, the preservation of large intact wilderness eco systems and the protection of global marine environments according to PEW's webpage.

The page asserts he is "...the chief architect and founder of various environmental entities including Oceana, the National Environmental Trust, SeaWeb, Earth Force, the Ocean Law Project, the PEW Center on Global Climate Change, Clear the Air..."

Agriculture should not underestimate the PEW Environment Group because as its webpage says, its managing director has columns which have appeared in more than 100 newspapers and he has been a guest on ABC's "World News" and the PBS News Hour. The director of the group does not hold a degree in any agricultural field but is a graduate of the University of California and has a master's and a doctoral degree in social anthropology from Princeton.

Another manager of the PEW report has been director of campaigns at Farm Sanctuary and a lobbyist on animal production issues in the Maryland legislature.

Deep concern

The PEW report reflects a deep concern about waste produced by CAFOs and strongly suggests that the treatment and disposal of poultry waste is not being adequately addressed. This waste is created because the average American "...eats almost 84 pounds of chicken a year, more than twice the amount eaten in 1970."

Some experts suggest that America invented industrial poultry production. When Herbert Hoover promised a chicken in every pot in 1928, America's per capita consumption of chicken was very small, with an average American consuming about ½ pound of chicken per year. In those days, chicken was more expensive than steak or lobster. Chicken was the holiday or Sunday fare and it wasn't until the early 1920s that producers started successfully operating confinement operations. Antibiotics were also major advances which allowed the maintenance of large flocks economically. The creation of large flocks obviously generated large amounts of waste which the PEW Environment Group believes is not sufficiently controlled by EPA and its state counterparts.

The PEW campaign wants to see more government control and regulations imposed on CAFOs. It recommends: "1. Caps on total animal density. 2. Shared financial and legal responsibility for proper waste management between farmers and corporate integrators. 3. Monitoring and regulation of waste transported off CAFO sites. 4. A requirement that all medium and large CAFOs obtain Clean Water Act permits."

Apparently, the PEW staff is not aware of the National Pork Producers case which made it very clear that if there is no discharge from a CAFO into a water of a state or the United States, there is no requirement for the CAFO to have a Clean Water Act permit.

The report asserts, "Today's poultry industry has evolved into a system of streamlined manufacturing, processing and sales, allowing for mass production. This concentrated production has led to a chronic and growing problem of excess manure..." The experts drafting the PEW report believe that this excess manure is harming water quality and believe that the solution to this excess is to put caps on total animal density.

If caps can be put on poultry then look out for caps on the number of cattle, hogs and turkey at specific locations. PEW and environmental groups cannot wait to impose more financial and legal obligations in order for EPA to gain absolute control over this segment of American agriculture.

It appears that PEW prefers going back to the 1950s when there were more than 1.6 million farms growing chickens for American consumers. The report points out that 98% of those chicken farms are gone and those of us involved in agriculture would also point out that enormous amounts of waste that used to wash into streams from those 1.6 million farms has also disappeared.

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Posted by Anonymous on September 28 at 5:55 PM

I recommend reading: The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan We need greater awareness and reflection on our people's consumption habits Francisco Cunha writing from Brazil

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