

News Release

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For Immediate Release



San Joaquin Valley
Air Pollution
Control District

TO:

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Air District issues science-based dairy pollution estimate Methodology is sound, scientists say

(Fresno, CA) – Amid support from scientists, Valley Air District officials today announced an updated estimate for how much of a smog-forming gas comes from Valley dairies.

The updated dairy emission factor is 19.3 pounds of volatile organic compounds per head of dairy cattle, per year. The emission factor will help determine how many dairies in the eight-county Valley air basin will require Air District permits. The Valley air basin is home to 2.5 million dairy cattle. Another 400,000 head of cattle are expected to arrive with new dairy projects now planned.

The previous dairy emission factor of 12.8 pounds was based on research performed in the 1930s and was disputed in a lawsuit filed last year by dairy industry representatives. The new factor of 19.3 pounds is the result of a careful review of 15 dairy research studies.

“No one single study looked at all the types of VOC emissions that come from dairies,” said Dave Crow, Air Pollution Control Officer for the Air District. “Therefore, we evaluated all the available science and compiled an emission factor based on the best and most relevant scientific information.”

Crow said that more research is needed and that the emission factor will be reviewed on an ongoing basis as more study information becomes available.

David Grantz, Ph.D., director of the University of California Kearney Agricultural Research Center in Parlier, submitted a letter supporting the Air District’s methodology.

“[M]y current analysis is strongly supportive of the position you have taken,” wrote Grantz, who also served on the independent Dairy Permitting Advisory Group. “It appears to be based on thoughtful analysis of the ... available data.”

Michael Byers, Ph.D., an expert in dairy and feedlot cattle nutrition physiology, agreed. “The approaches used in the current report make common sense,” Byers wrote.

Although studies from throughout the country and the world were evaluated to help determine the emission factor, preference was given to California-based research. In fact, California studies were used to determine emissions for four of the five categories of dairy processes evaluated, and California research was used for more than 50 percent of the fifth category.

"It is extremely important for the [Air District] to establish VOC estimates for the processes and VOC components missing from the recent California-based research, and the basis for these estimates [to] be in rigorous science," wrote John Shears, a Visiting Research Fellow at the Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technologies, based in Sacramento.

In a draft report issued in June, Crow proposed an emission factor of 20.6 pounds. The proposed emission factor underwent a public workshop July 11 and public comment was accepted for four weeks. During that period, a researcher working on a dairy study at the University of California, Davis submitted new data. Today's report and the emission factor of 19.3 reflect that change. Responses to all the public comments received are included in the final report.

The emission factor does not measure methane, a greenhouse gas that does not contribute significantly to smog. VOCs combine in the atmosphere with nitrogen oxides – primarily emitted by cars and other internal-combustion engines – to form smog.

Dairies are the largest source of VOC emissions in the Valley air basin and under state law must be regulated by the local air district. About 230 Valley dairies already have applied for air permits. The new factor will result in another 150 to 250 dairies needing permits. Air District officials will immediately begin contacting those dairies and will work with them to determine a feasible deadline for applying for permits.

"With the issuance of the emission factor, dairy operators and the Air District can now start the important work of identifying cost-effective controls for the affected dairies," Crow said.

The full Air District report on the dairy emissions factor is available online at www.valleyair.org. For more information, call the nearest District office: in Modesto at (209) 557-6400; in Fresno at (559) 230-6000; and in Bakersfield at (661) 326-6900.

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