

New Research Says Burps, Not Manure, Are Worst Cow Emissions

Air pollution regulators may have worried too much about the wrong end of the dairy cow.

Researchers in California recently found that cow manure and lagoons probably contribute less smog-making particles and gas than previously suspected. Bovine belches look like the real culprit, researchers say. Frank Mitloehner from University of California at Davis made one of nine presentations in Fresno recently as part of a livestock emissions symposium, called by the California Air Resources Board.

By current estimates, the cows produce about as much smog-making gas as cars. The 25,000-square-mile San Joaquin Valley, home to several of the nation's largest milk-producing counties, has had more daylong smog violations than any other place in the country since 1999. But while California has been singling out dairy farms as prime targets for pollution reduction, regulators are using 66 year-old cow pollution estimates focusing on the wrong kind of gas. Mitloehner's results indicate cows might emit only half the current estimate.

Mitloehner created a laboratory-type experiment, making a tented corral for cows. He wanted to get the animals away from the wind and other elements to measure whatever gas he could find. He found manure and urine, by themselves, did not produce as much potential pollution as the cows themselves before they began making the waste.

USDA Launches New Website On National Animal ID

The USDA introduced a new web site to inform stakeholders about the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). The web site is www.usda.gov/nais, and is designed to be a one-stop resource to facts about NAIS.

In addition to providing national news, this site provides contact information for state and tribal animal health authorities.

With the implementation of NAIS, USDA's goal is to provide animal health officials the ability to identify all animals and premises that have had contact with an animal disease within 48 hours after discovery. As an information system that provides for rapid tracing of animals during an outbreak situation, the NAIS will help limit the scope of such outbreaks and ensure that they are contained and eradicated as quickly as possible.

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