



Quality Watch

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Livestock *A* Syst

The Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) has developed a new tool for livestock producers to assist them with implementing environmental pollution prevention practices. The new tool, called “Livestock *A* Syst” is patterned after the current Farm* A* Syst or Crop* A* Syst program.

Livestock *A* Syst was developed by MAEAP partners to provide producers with information contained in one publication concerning environmental rules, comprehensive nutrient management plan requirements, Right to Farm Guidelines and requirements needed to become MAEAP verified in Livestock Systems.

Increased market demands are being placed on suppliers of retail markets to demonstrate that their products are produced and marketed under sustainable practices.

Similar demands are being placed on MMPA, and will likely continue. The definition of “sustainability” may vary from person to person, but the bottom line is that our customers want to know that MMPA’s dairy products are produced and manufactured in an environmentally friendly manner. I believe that the MAEAP program and producers who participate in the program will be viewed as using environmentally sound practices. I also believe the MAEAP program exceeds any expectation of our customers. In the future, many environmental practices will be driven by the marketplace and customer demand rather than regulatory rules and government. For those reasons I believe it’s important for MMPA members to participate in the Livestock *A* Syst program.

The Livestock *A* Syst tool helps farmers use the Progressive Planning approach to achieve environmental assurance. The Livestock *A* Syst consists of a series of risk questions that producers answer about environmental management practices on the farm. Producers may elect to complete the tool on their own time and pace or may elect to have assistance from their MMPA Member Representative or another “Local Coordinator” of MAEAP such as Michigan Farm Bureau, Local Conservation Districts or Michigan State University Extension.

The Livestock *A* Syst tool, once completed, will identify areas that need improvement on the

farm to reduce the risk of potential environmental contamination or discharge. It also prepares producers for the completion of a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) if they so choose. A CNMP is required for verification in MAEAP’s Livestock System, but Livestock *A* Syst does not require a CNMP.

Once the producers complete the Livestock *A* Syst tool, they will develop an action plan, to address areas that need improvement. All MAEAP partners are available to assist with the plan including MMPA. Once the farm’s action plan is established, the producer can request Michigan Department of Agriculture MAEAP verifiers to conduct a Livestock *A* Syst certification. Your MMPA Member Representative can help assist you in completing the program.

Member Representatives have been instructed to distribute and review the Livestock *A* Syst tool with all MMPA member farms. It is important that members know current environmental requirements and know where to acquire the information. I believe the Livestock *A* Syst is an exceptional tool that provides that information to dairy farmers. I encourage all MMPA members to participate in and work toward completing the Livestock *A* Syst program and to further pursue MAEAP verification in Livestock System.

Livestock *A* Syst addresses the following areas on the farm:

- Whole Farm Nutrient Balance
- Farm Site Review
- Manure Spreading Plan
- Conservation Practices on fields used for manure application
- Emergency Plan and Employee Training
- Mortality Management and Veterinary Waste Disposal
- Odor Management