

Press Release
CONSUMER

This is a joint press release by Compassion in World Farming, GreenLaw, Sierra Club, and Waterkeeper Alliance.

29th June 2011

EPA finds deficiencies in environmental waste management in 70% of Georgia factory farms

Georgia's factory farms are inadequately overseen and managed, posing significant threats to water quality and human health. That is the conclusion of a recent report by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The report found deficiencies in 70% of Georgia's Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO).

Georgia's many factory farms pose huge environmental threats. Georgia is the largest producer of poultry in the U.S., slaughtering 1.3 billion chickens annually, mostly in North and Northeast Georgia. There are 22 times more chickens than people in Georgia - 99% of which are raised on factory farms. At any given time, the nearly 205 million broiler chickens, 9 million egg-laying hens, 235,000 hogs, and 35,000 dairy cows in Georgia's factory farms produce as much untreated manure as 85 million people - nearly 9 times the population of Georgia.¹

The EPA's Office of Inspector General initiated the review after receiving a Hotline complaint charging that EPA Region 4 was not adequately overseeing Georgia's CAFO program. The investigation found numerous deficiencies in the management and oversight of factory farms. EPA had previously given the Georgia program a positive assessment for all 48 of the CAFOs with liquid manure waste systems inspected in 2010. However, the Inspector General's review identified a number of deficiencies for over 70% of CAFOs inspected.

These included:

- operating without correct permits or plans,
- inspection reports were missing required components,
- the Georgia Department of Agriculture was not assessing compliance with permit conditions,

¹ www.factoryfarmmap.org

- Region 4 did not assure that these components of Georgia's CAFO program met the requirements outlined in a 2007 memorandum of agreement between Region 4 and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD).

Leah Garces, USA Director at Compassion in World Farming says: "This amounts to a major failure by regulators to protect Georgians from the environmental and health risks that factory farms present. We know that keeping farm animals in such inhumane and unsustainable conditions presents real risks to our health and environment, not to mention to the welfare of the animals. But now we learn that the very mechanism set up to protect us against these risks has failed. It's time for Georgia to abandon its animal factories for a system that is more sustainable and humane."

"The EPA's Office of Inspector General confirmed what we've known all along," stated Waterkeeper's Director of Advocacy, Scott Edwards. "Region 4 has been allowing not just Georgia, but all the states within its jurisdiction, to ignore the Clean Water Act when it comes to the devastation of our waterways by factory farming. Hopefully, this report will pave the way for oversight changes that are so obviously and desperately needed."

The EPA report concludes that "*there is a significant risk that the Georgia's CAFO program is failing to protect water quality. These facilities raise concerns about water quality because the animals produce large quantities of waste—many times more waste than humans annually. The discharge of waste into surface water is associated with a range of human health and ecological impacts, and contributes to degradation of the nation's surface waters.*" The report recommends that EPA Region 4 strengthen its oversight of Georgia's factory farms.

The groups publishing this press release call for immediate action to protect Georgians and their environment.

-Ends-

Notes to Editors:

For further information, images or to arrange interviews contact Leah Garces +1-404-313-7838 (out of office hours) or email Leah.Garces@ciwf.org

This is a joint press release by Compassion in World Farming, GreenLaw, Sierra Club, and Waterkeeper Alliance.

Compassion in World Farming was founded over 40 years ago in 1967 by a British farmer who became horrified by the development of modern, intensive factory farming. Today we campaign peacefully to end all cruel factory farming practices. We believe that the biggest cause of animal cruelty on the planet deserves a focused, specialised approach – so we only work on farm animal welfare.