

February 16, 2007

Dear Farmer,

As you know, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (Agency), under the direction of the State Legislature, has developed a Vermont-based water quality permitting program for Medium Farm Operations (MFOs). All dairies with 200-699 mature animals, whether milking or dry, qualify as a MFO. Other common MFOs include beef operations (300-999 cattle or cow/calf pairs), youngstock and heifer operations (300-999 youngstock or heifers), horse operations (150-499 horses), turkey operations (16,500-54,999 turkeys), and egg facilities (25,000-81,999 laying hens without a liquid manure handling system).

The goal of this permitting program is to assist you in managing your farm more economically while protecting water resources and meeting state water quality requirements. MFO permitting provides you a common-sense, Vermont-based, cost-effective alternative to a potentially burdensome federal permitting program by allowing you to seek coverage under a single Vermont state General Permit held by the Agency.

Agency staff is available to assist you in reaching compliance with water quality components of the General Permit. If you would like someone to visit your farm before the official inspection, please contact the MFO Coordinator for your county. Attached you will find a list of available resources to assist you in your attempt to comply with the permit conditions and contact information for the MFO Coordinator for your area.

The Draft General Permit for Medium Farm Operations was made available for official public comment last summer and 14 public hearings, one in each county, were held statewide during July and August 2006. Official public comment closed in September 2006 and based on written comments received and the public hearings, a revised Draft General Permit was made available in December 2006. A response to public comment and list of changes to the Draft General Permit were made available online (www.vermontagriculture.com). Comments were solicited with regard to these revisions through January 2007. No comments were received and the General Permit was issued effective February 13, 2007.

As the General Permit is now in effect as of February 13, 2007 and since your farm has been recognized as a potential MFO, you are being mailed this packet. Enclosed you will find the following:

- The finalized General Permit for Medium Farm Operations
- The Notice of Intent to Comply (NOIC) with the General Permit
- Instructions for the NOIC
- Resources available and contact information for the MFO Coordinators

The NOIC is your application for coverage under the General Permit. It is your declaration that you have read, understand, and intend to comply with it. Please read the General Permit thoroughly. The General Permit prohibits discharges of wastes (spoiled feed, manure, milkhouse waste, washwater, leachate, used bedding, carcasses, barnyard runoff, other dirty water, etc.) from the farm's production area to waters of the state and also requires manure, compost, and other wastes to be applied according to a nutrient management plan (NMP).

You have six (6) months from February 13, 2007 to complete the NOIC and return it to the Agency. Upon receiving your completed NOIC, the Agency then has 18 months to inspect your farm in verifying compliance with the General Permit. Your farm may be inspected anytime within this 18-month period.

Although many MFOs already have a NMP, the remaining farms seeking coverage under the General Permit must have a NMP by March 31, 2008. A NMP is a cost-effective tool that allows you to better utilize your manure nutrients and protect water resources. Generally speaking, the NMP must meet the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Technical Practice Code 590 for nutrient management and, in addition, must describe your farm's waste management system. These requirements are explained, in detail, in the General Permit.

If your farm has been incorrectly identified as a MFO and your farm is a Small Farm Operation (SFO), you must still return the NOIC. Check the box next to "Please check here if your operation is BELOW the animal number criteria listed (SFO)." As a SFO, you may still seek coverage under the General Permit for Medium Farm Operations although it is not required. In order to seek coverage as a SFO, also check the box next to "Please check if your farm is a Small Farm Operation seeking coverage under the MFO General Permit."

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, NEED ANY ASSISTANCE FILLING OUT THIS FORM, OR WOULD LIKE SOMEONE TO VISIT YOUR FARM BEFORE SEEKING PERMIT COVERAGE, PLEASE CONTACT US.

Sincerely,

Roger N. Allbee
Secretary
Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Enclosure