



Industrial Animal Agriculture and Endangered Species

Protecting Resources for Wildlife and People

The Center for Biological Diversity (Center) is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to the protection of diverse native species and their habitats through science, policy, education and law. The Center has approximately 1.1 million members and online activists throughout the United States.



Ozark hellbenders. Photo by Jeromy Applegate/USFWS.

The Center is working on the national and local levels to address ongoing harm to wildlife and communities from industrial animal agriculture. At the national level, the Center is seeking to improve federal safeguards of the factory farming industry. At the local level, the Center is working with communities across the country to fight for their continuing right to clean air and water, and healthy ecosystems.

The Center is also working at all levels to educate the public and government officials about the significant risks communities and threatened and endangered species face from perilous industrial animal agricultural practices. Our main objective is to protect biodiversity and human health from noxious industrial animal agricultural pollution while promoting healthy environments and a deep understanding of the inextricable connection between the health of humans and all other species.

Industrial Animal Agriculture Significantly Impairs Environmental Resources

People and wildlife depend on clean water and a healthy environment to survive and thrive. Over the past forty years, animal agriculture in the United States and internationally has grown and changed from smaller, diversified farming systems to industrialized operations that concentrate hundreds to thousands of animals in one confined location to be raised for meat, eggs, and dairy. Replacing the balance of organic nutrient production and beneficial cropping practices with this systematized production model produces a variety of environmental harms.



Dangers to Air and Water Resources

Industrial animal operations release a variety of air pollutants from their confinement barns or feedlots, waste management systems, and land application areas. These pollutants can significantly impair air resources, and include:

- ammonia, hydrogen sulfide, particulate matter, volatile organic compounds, harmful odorants, and the greenhouse gases methane and nitrous oxide.

Further, due largely to their conventional design, reliance on pharmaceuticals (including antibiotics) for prophylaxis and growth, and waste management and disposal methods, these operations are regularly at risk of discharging pollutants into nearby waterways. The discharge of these pollutants can significantly impair water resources, harming species health and habitat. Pollutants can include:

- nutrients, including nitrogen, phosphorus; heavy metals; pharmaceutical residues; pesticides; organic matter and solids; and pathogens.

Climate Change, Excess Water Use, and Habitat Destruction

Industrial animal agriculture also drives climate change, consumes of immense amounts of freshwater resources, and can devastate wildlife habitat. Industrial animal operations rely on a constant stream of cheap commodity crops, such as corn and soy, to feed the animals. These commodity crops, often grown on an industrial scale, cause additional secondary environmental harms including habitat fragmentation, pesticide use, water degradation, and soil erosion.



Commercial Broiler Poultry House. Photo by Larry Rana/USDA.

Promoting Sustainability

The Center for Biological Diversity believes that sustainability has to be about more than just what we can take from the environment and from other species. It has to be about sharing the planet and creating a livable future for all of us inhabiting the Earth.

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