

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Feedlot Permitting

Topic Selection Background Information

May 2026

Program Overview	Livestock operations are important to Minnesota's economy, but waste from these operations can negatively impact water quality. To protect Minnesota's natural resources, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) regulates certain operations, including large feedlots. Feedlots house animals in a confined area where waste may accumulate. In cooperation with 50 of Minnesota's counties, MPCA registers, inspects, and permits feedlots to ensure these operations are environmentally safe.
Original Evaluation Questions	What factors affect the timeliness with which MPCA processes feedlot permits? How does MPCA's permit processing compare to processes in other states?
Revised Questions	How well does MPCA manage the permitting and registration processes for feedlots? How does MPCA's permit processing compare to processes in other states? How well does MPCA monitor environmental effects of feedlots? To what extent has MPCA established appropriate procedures for monitoring feedlot closures?
State Resources <i>Low</i>	In Fiscal Year 2025, MPCA's Watershed Division spent about \$21 million in state funds for all of its activities, a portion of which was for feedlot permitting.
State Control <i>Medium</i>	Certain feedlots must comply with both state and federal laws, including the federal Clean Water Act and Minnesota feedlot rules. Minnesota has implemented standards for certain feedlots; the state can implement higher standards than those required by federal law, but cannot propose lower standards.
Impact <i>Medium-High</i>	MPCA reports that there are about 18,000 registered feedlots in Minnesota. While they are important to Minnesota's economy and food security, they can also pose environmental risks to neighboring lands and water.
Timeliness <i>Medium</i>	MPCA has recommended changes to feedlot rules, estimating that agency officials will propose amended rules in 2027. Considering the timing of a potential evaluation and the rulemaking process, it is unclear whether the evaluation would be useful or too late.
Feasibility <i>Medium-High</i>	We could complete this evaluation using standard evaluation techniques, although we would likely need to focus on the work of MPCA and a sample of counties. We would also plan to focus on MPCA's feedlot permitting process, rather than its rulemaking activities.
Balance <i>Medium</i>	OLA evaluated animal feedlot regulation in 1999. We last evaluated MPCA's work in the 2022 report, <i>Petroleum Remediation Program</i> ; OLA is currently conducting a limited special review at MPCA.
Discussion	An evaluation of feedlot permitting could provide valuable insight into MPCA's processes at a time when change may be on the horizon.