

Introduction

The environmental issues surrounding open feedlot (both paved and earthen lots) production of food animals continue to evolve due to increased public interest in all environmental matters. Productivity, quality control, marketing, and profitable operations have resulted in feedlots being an accepted practice in the United States.

The overall goals of using open lot feedlots for animal production are to

- Minimize animal stress during feeding and handling.
- Provide feed and water in an adequate, efficient manner.
- Provide well-drained, adequate feedlot space for the animals.
- Maintain efficiency and profitability of feeding operations.
- Protect the surrounding environment.

Compared to pasture operations, feedlots result in a greater potential for both water and air pollution. Open lots or feedlots are broadly defined as any outdoor facility where livestock are fed and the lot area is devoid of vegetation for animal consumption. Outdoor paved and earthen lots for animal confinement are often overlooked as areas that need water pollution control facilities. However, feedlot operators are responsible for maintaining the quality of ground or surface water near their operations. Potential pollution problems can be minimized when operators design, construct, and manage rainfall runoff systems. As the demand grows for cleaner water, large and small open lot confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) will need to reduce and control the nutrient and sediment loading of the runoff leaving the feedlot. Existing CAFOs will need to evaluate their runoff potential. Older feedlots may have to be modified to comply with new environmental regulations. The costs of controlling the existing runoff must be weighed against new lot construction on an alternative location. New feedlot facilities will need to address current regulations and be designed for compliance with future regulations.

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