

A neat, pleasing appearance contributes to the positive image of an animal production operation.

Aesthetics and Appearance

Aesthetics and appearance may not be critical factors in protecting the environment or complying with environmental regulations. However, these characteristics are major factors in the perceptions formed by the general public, tour groups, regulatory or inspection personnel, and others who may not be intimately associated or familiar with the livestock industry. Therefore, aesthetics and appearance should be given major priority for the overall benefit and viability of animal agriculture.

General cleanliness and sanitation

The general cleanliness and sanitation characteristics of a livestock enterprise are often perceived as a measure of the concern of that enterprise for environmental stewardship and environmental compliance. A clean, well-landscaped production area will project a positive image for the operation, while the presence of debris, litter, and poorly maintained buildings will project a negative image. Typical items of concern for livestock production enterprises include leftover construction debris or refuse; old, unused vehicles; worn-out equipment; rusted equipment from the buildings (farrowing crates, pen dividers, feeders); torn and worn-out ventilation curtains; and loose roofing panels, etc.

All livestock production operations experience animal death loss. A specific plan for managing animal mortalities should be developed and implemented. The visual and olfactory perceptions generated by the presence of dead animals in or around the production facility are highly offensive and likely will be attributed to the industry as a whole by the general public. Additionally, poorly managed mortalities represent a very real health and disease risk to the enterprise.

Mowing

Few activities undertaken by the producer are as effective as frequent mowing in conveying a positive image of livestock production. Producers who maintain “front yard quality” around the production and manure storage facilities provide a powerful first impression of pride and responsibility. Conversely, the presence of tall grass, weeds, shrubs, and trees in undesirable locations creates an impression of laxity and disrespect for environmental responsibility. Regulatory personnel inspect most livestock production and manure storage facilities at some interval. If tall grass, weeds, brush, and trees hamper the inspector, a positive report is an unlikely outcome. Routine inspections for seepage, rodent burrowing, erosion, or other damage are much more effective if the areas have been mowed at regular intervals.

Control of surface water

As confined production units become larger, control of surface water in the production area is a primary concern. Wider, longer buildings, placed relatively close together, create high rates of discharge from roof and paved areas. Special considerations and landscaping are needed to manage this water in a manner that does not create erosion and unwanted ditches and washed-out culverts or waterways. A surface water management plan should be developed based on a design storm event, expected runoff rates, soil types

and erosive velocities, and properly designed and vegetated channels for carrying surface water away from the production area. Some states may require that surface water from production areas be contained and/or checked for contaminant levels before discharge to a watercourse.