

# In Balance

A Newsletter for the Whatcom County Livestock Industry



## CASH FOR CONSERVATION!! - EQIP: Signup Ends January 14<sup>th</sup>

Ag and forest producers have until January 14, 2005 to submit application with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). A cost-share assistance program, EQIP funds conservation practices, including those aimed at helping farmers get better use of irrigation water; managing run-off nutrients and/or animal waste; improving the health of native plant communities; and reducing soil loss. Producers who have previously applied for EQIP but were not funded can have their previous application reconsidered for the 2005 program, but they need to contact the NRCS office to complete a new Producer Eligibility Questionnaire before the January 14<sup>th</sup> deadline. In 2004, EQIP provided about \$15 million in cost-share assistance to producers in Washington State, with \$829,802 in contracts awarded to seven Whatcom County producers.

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*Whatcom*  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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## Use EQIP to Reduce Phosphorous Loading!



Manure pipeline installation under a road. Pipelines lower the cost of applying manure to distant fields.



On-farm compost facility under construction. The facility is enabling this farm to reduce its on-farm nutrient inputs and to manufacture a marketable product.

## Public Hearings Notice: CAFO Permit

The Department of Ecology (DOE) will host a workshop and hearing on January 10, 2005 at 6 p.m. in Mount Vernon at Skagit County PUD (1415 Freeway Drive) concerning the draft General Permit that describes how AFO/CAFOs will be treated. DOE is asking for public comment on the draft document, with the final permit proposed to be issued beginning in March 2005. Permit drafts are available on their

Public Hearing cont. on page 2

## STOP AFOs FROM BECOMING CAFOs!

**What is an AFO? What is a CAFO? Why Should You Care?**

**What is an AFO?** Animal Feeding Operations, or AFOs, are all dairies and many other livestock farms in Whatcom County, according to federal regulations developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The regulations define an AFO as a "lot or facility" where animals "have been, are, or will be stabled or confined and fed or maintained for a total of 45 days or more in any 12 month period, and crops, vegetation, forage growth, or post-harvest residues are not sustained in the normal growing season over any portion of the lot or facility". It is when an AFO is determined to be a CAFO, or a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation, that federal regulations require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit (NPDES) for the facility's continued operation. The NPDES permit involves a fee and the expectation of more frequent farm inspections. Requirements of a NPDES permit also include extensive record-keeping and nutrient management.



**So, how do you stop your farm from becoming a CAFO?** These are the two principal ways to avoid becoming a CAFO:

- Keeping herd sizes below 700 mature cows is the easiest way to avoid automatic NPDES coverage. All dairies with 700 or more mature cows are CAFOs and will be required to obtain a NPDES permit.
- Any AFO that pollutes water may be designated a CAFO, regardless of the number of animals. Make sure no contaminants from your farm can enter water. This includes direct discharges in cases where surface waters run through or next to confinement areas, as well as indirect discharges to surface water through a ditch or pipe.

For the time being, the Department of Ecology will administer NPDES permits and state Department of Agriculture personnel will inspect farms to determine if a permit is needed. As a condition of their permits, all CAFOs will be required to obtain and implement a nutrient management plan. These plans will be similar to the Dairy Nutrient Management Plans that most dairy producers have already adopted, but with several key changes. Among them:

- 1. Liquid level markers.** All open surface liquid impoundments will need to have a depth marker that at all times clearly indicates the excess capacity available to contain runoff and direct precipitation.
- 2. Phosphorous Indexing.** Nutrient management plans will now require an assessment of every field on a farm to determine its risk potential

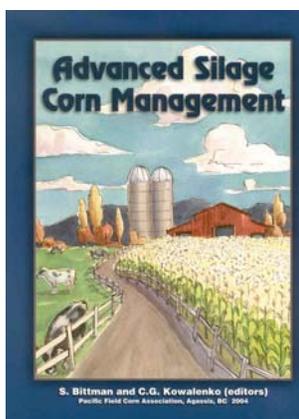
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**Whatcom**  
 CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
 6975 Hannegan Road  
 Lynden, WA 98264

Phone: (360) 354-2035 ext. 3  
 Fax: (360) 354-4678  
 Email: wcd@whatcomcd.org



**Advanced Silage Corn Management:  
 New Pacific Field Corn Association Publication Aims to Stimulate Growers**



The Pacific Field Corn Association, based in Agassiz, British Columbia, has just published *Advanced Silage Corn Management*. This book describes silage corn (in comparison to grain corn) as the largely forgotten cousin in the corn world. Silage corn as a distinct crop has emerged only in the past decade or so when plant breeders started to identify attributes of special importance for whole-plant silage use like leafiness and stovers with low fiber concentration and high fiber digestibility. The *Breeding Corn for Silage – The Industry Speaks!* article provides an excellent overview on work being done by 6 different seed companies to improve silage quality.

*Advanced Silage Corn Management* is not a primer for the beginner. This publication, edited by a pair of research scientists from the Pacific Agri-Food Research Center in Agassiz (Shabtai Bittman and Grant Kowalenko), provides a wealth of information from

60 different contributors. Articles of special interest for local producers include *Timing Harvest of Silage Corn* (the harvest window for silage corn is longer than it is for grain) and *Feeding High Corn Silage Diets* (there are five things the Abbotsford nutritionist author says must be considered). Please stop by our office to pick up your copy of *Advanced Silage Corn Management* (we can order more copies if we need to!).

**Public Hearing** *cont. from page 1*  
 web page at [www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/permits/cafo](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/permits/cafo), or by contacting Andrew Kolosseus at (360) 407-7543 or [akol461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:akol461@ecy.wa.gov). The DOE must receive all written comments by January 28, 2005. Oral comments may be made at the January 10th workshop and hearing.

**WCD Annual Plant Sale**  
 March 4-5, 2005!!

**AFO/CAFO** *continued from page 1*

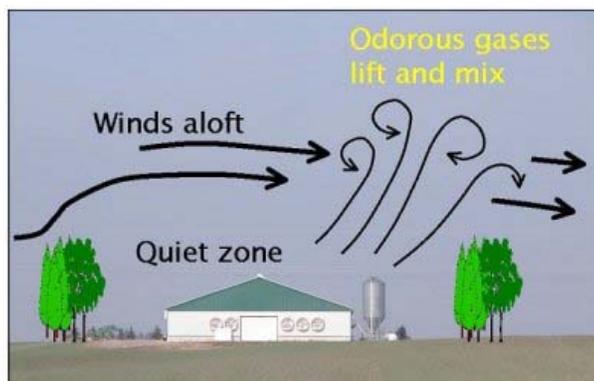
for becoming a source of water pollution from phosphorous (P). Nutrient budgets for fields with high site vulnerability for P loss will be limited by the amount of P that can be applied - not by the amount of nitrogen, as was the case for state dairy plans. Since crop requirements for P are much lower than they are for nitrogen, it will mean that significantly less manure can be applied to those fields. Another change is that types of livestock keeping operations other than dairies will be inspected and may be required to come under permit coverage.

**3. Records documenting transfer of waste.** Records of manure transfer to other persons must include when, how much, and to whom it was sold/given, and the current nutrient analysis of the manure.

**TREES: NATURE'S OWN ODOR EATERS**  
**Reduce Odors With Windbreaks and Shelterbelts**

An article in the March/April 2004 issue of *Manure Manager* (REDUCING MANURE ODOR by Todd Leuty) cited five ways that treed windbreaks reduce the effects of livestock odor and improve visual perception:

1. **Dilution and dispersion:** The atmospheric mixing effect created by shelterbelts lowers the concentration of odor causing gases.
2. **Deposition:** Like snow fences, windbreaks cause odor dusts and other aerosols to fall to their windward and leeward side.
3. **Collection and Storage:** Windbreaks incorporate the chemical constituents of odor pollution into their wood and other plant tissue.
4. **Physical interception:** Shelterbelts behave like filters by collecting dust and aerosols.
5. **Aesthetic appearance:** Perception often becomes reality. Trees create a visual barrier to barns and waste handling and storage facilities.



Contact us soon for advice on planning a windbreak or shelterbelt on your farm. We will be offering a good selection of trees suitable for use in windbreaks at our spring plant sale scheduled for March 4-5, 2005!