Industrial Food Animal Production: Who is Protecting Affected Communities?

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Outline

- Industrial food animal production (IFAP)
- Research questions and methods
- Results
  - Health departments
  - Community members
  - Permitting agencies
  - Agriculture agencies
- Conclusion

Image credit: NIEHS
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Image credit: NIEHS
Industrial Food Animal Production

1949
Chicken processing plants

- Each dot represents a plant processing 50,000 or more chickens each year

2007
Chicken production

- Each dot represents annual production of 1 million or more chickens

Industrial Food Animal Production

335 million tons (1 ton per U.S. citizen)

7.6 million tons

Image credit: B Kim, Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
How is IFAP regulated?

• IFAP vs. AFO/CAFO
• Clean Water Act- provides framework (EPA)
• Most states run permitting program
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• Clean Water Act- provides framework (EPA)
• Most states run permitting program

• State Permitting Agency:
  • Dept. of the Environment or Natural Resources
• Other potentially involved agencies:
  • Health Departments (HDs)
  • Agriculture Departments
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Research Questions

1. Are state/local government agencies contacted about this issue?

2. How do they respond?

3. If not fully responsive, what are the barriers they face?

4. What is the experience of community members who may have contacted government agencies?
Methods

• Eight states chosen based on hog and census data
  • 1 or 2 counties per state

• Semi-structured telephone interviews
Methods

• Eight states chosen based on hog and census data
  • 1 or 2 counties per state

• Semi-structured telephone interviews
  • 21 health departments (13 county & 8 state)
  • 8 community members

• 7 state permitting agencies
• 5 state agriculture agencies
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Results- Health Departments

- Complaints: few times/yr to a few times/month
  - some not contacted

- Most common: odor, water quality, respiratory health, general health concerns

- Largely case-by-case response and no records kept

- In almost all instances, people are referred to other agencies
  - Most common referral: permitting agency
Results - Health Departments

- State & county HD staff:
  
  • “The best we can do is bring it to the operator’s attention and hope they take care of it voluntarily.”
  
  • “We have no control over manure spreading or manure management, all we can do is consult with the farmer to try to work with them.”
Results - Health Departments

- Lack of jurisdiction
- Resources (funding) and infrastructure
  - “Hard enough handling our mandated programs”
  - Limited flexibility with funds
Results- Health Departments

- Lack of jurisdiction
- Resources (funding) and infrastructure
  - “Hard enough handling our mandated programs”
  - Limited flexibility with funds
- Lack of expertise
- Political factors
  - Networks/family
  - Economic importance in rural areas
  - Industry efforts
  - Factors influencing elected officials
Results - Community Members

- Community members reported little HD engagement
- Do not continue contacting HDs after referred to another agency
Results- Community Members

- Community members reported little HD engagement
- Do not continue contacting HDs after referred to another agency
- Community members noted:
  - Limited HD resources
  - Political /economic barriers
  - Active efforts by industry to limit regulatory attention
- Range of activities performed by citizen groups
Results - Permitting and Ag. Agencies

- All had been contacted
  - Permitting agencies more often
- Most common: odor, respiratory health, ground water, violation of regulations
Results- Permitting and Ag. Agencies

- All had been contacted
  - Permitting agencies more often
- Most common: odor, respiratory health, ground water, violation of regulations
- Perm. response: gather more information, inspect, refer
  - Records generally kept
- Ag. response: investigate or refer (varies widely by state due to jurisdiction differences)
- Majority said HDs should play a role due to their health expertise
“[There] used to be more calls about odor, but there are no odor regulations, so there is nothing we can do about it; the public learned there’s no point in calling about odor complaints.”

“If the problem is not covered under the agency, it might be a phone call or email to let people know why we can’t address their concerns. Water issues are our primary jurisdiction. There are no state/federal regulations over air emissions.”
“If anyone’s going to [address health issues], it would have to be the health departments. From our perspective, we don’t really have expertise in that area.”
Results- Permitting and Ag. Agencies

- Permitting- limited budgets, staff size, and political factors
  - Wary of producer or environmental groups with lawyers due to lack of clarity in regulations

- Ag.- less concerned about barriers due to less authority
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Conclusion

- **Health Departments:** not playing major role
  - **Barriers:**
    - political factors
    - lack of jurisdiction, expertise, and resources
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  - Barriers:
    - political factors
    - lack of jurisdiction, expertise, and resources

- **Permitting and Agriculture Agencies:** limited actions taken to address public health concerns
  - Barriers:
    - narrow or inadequate regulations
    - a lack of public health expertise within these agencies
    - limited resources
Conclusion

- IFAP impacts health, and our results indicate wide gaps in a system that should protect public health

- Purpose/significance of study
Conclusion

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- Purpose/significance of study

- What should be done?
  - Comprehensive regulations designed to protect health
  - Adequate funding
  - Trainings
  - Agency collaboration
More Information

- CLF website: www.jhsph.edu/clf

Investigating the Role of State and Local Health Departments in Addressing Public Health Concerns Related to Industrial Food Animal Production Sites (Plos One, 2013)
Acknowledgements

Study Participants

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