



Answers to questions about structures, ventilation, soil, water, waste, energy, machinery and safety.

Ag odors: keep your distance

I've visited with numerous farmers and non-farmers alike about controlling odor from agricultural operations. The farmers are recognizing that the only way they will stay in business in some locations is to make sure odors or water pollution don't trigger a complaint by neighbors. Non-farmers (and some farmers!) who call are objecting to farm odors and want to know who is the regulatory agency to contact. In some cases, their concerns are legitimate; others are "smelling with their eyes" rather than their noses.

In excessive agricultural odor situations, the only legal recourse is through a civil suit. As a result of a 1983 state regulatory exemption, the [Missouri Department of Natural Resources](#) won't prosecute on these odor complaints.

While you cannot totally eliminate the risk of odor complaints, here are a few tips to help prevent problems.

Watch prevailing winds. Warm weather breezes will carry odors toward neighbors to the north and east. If the air is damp and still, the odors will travel downhill (in any direction) following the same drainage pattern as water. Odors can travel several miles, depending on size and type of operation, topography and weather conditions.

Reduce odors by not overloading lagoons and by frequently moving manure to storage instead of leaving it on open lots. Spread manure on dry, windy days for quickest odor dilution. Observe DNR's minimum separation distances (Table 1) when spreading. Keeping greater distances away is encouraged.

Finally, evaluate likely residential growth before expanding any existing facilities. "Being there first" does not guarantee immunity from litigation. Your farm's best defense begins with keeping a tidy road-front appearance and good public relations with neighbors.

Table 1. Separation distances for land application waste

Location	Minimum Distance in Feet
From public roads, streams and lakes	50
From property boundaries	50
Between human dwellings and manure solids spreading areas	50
Between human dwellings and waste irrigation wetted areas	150
From water supply wells, sinkholes and losing streams	300
On fields exceeding 10% slope	Not allowed
On fields with a flood frequency greater than once every 10 years	Not as sole spreading site

For more details, see MU Extension publication EQ219, [Separation Distances for Livestock Manure Management Systems](#).