



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

## Don't ignore DNR letters

Environmental concern about agriculture is here to stay. Here's a brief version of how the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) letter to the landowner usually goes.

"Our office has received a complaint concerning the disposal of waste from your farm in (name) County. The complaint was investigated on (date) . Violations of the Missouri Clean Water Law were observed.... ....Within 60 days, you will need to report to this office who has been contacted to assist you with developing a waste management plan. In the interim, steps will need to be taken to eliminate further discharges as much as possible."

Farms I've been on that have received such a DNR letter were indeed guilty of creating a water pollution problem off their property. Although some farmers object to "government telling me how to farm," it should be remembered that while landowners have the option of polluting their own property however they want, they do not have the right to pollute property belonging to other landowners or to the state.

The DNR will not prosecute on agricultural odor complaints. However, neighboring landowners can file a civil suit over offensive odors. The winner in court is the one who can demonstrate that "best management practices" were followed. Ignorance of the laws and regulations is not an excuse.

If you get one of DNR's letters, don't ignore it. DNR is willing to be flexible with farmers who are cooperative and are making progress toward solving their pollution problems. Refusal to cooperate can result in fines, expensive attorney's fees, and loss of federal cost-share funds for correcting pollution problems.

Remember that managing waste is a cost of doing business. Check with your regional Extension natural resource engineering specialist if you're not sure where you stand on compliance with the regulations. All inquiries are confidential.