

BLUE EARTH COUNTY

Survey Results – December 2019

Livestock Manure

Management Ordinance



Background

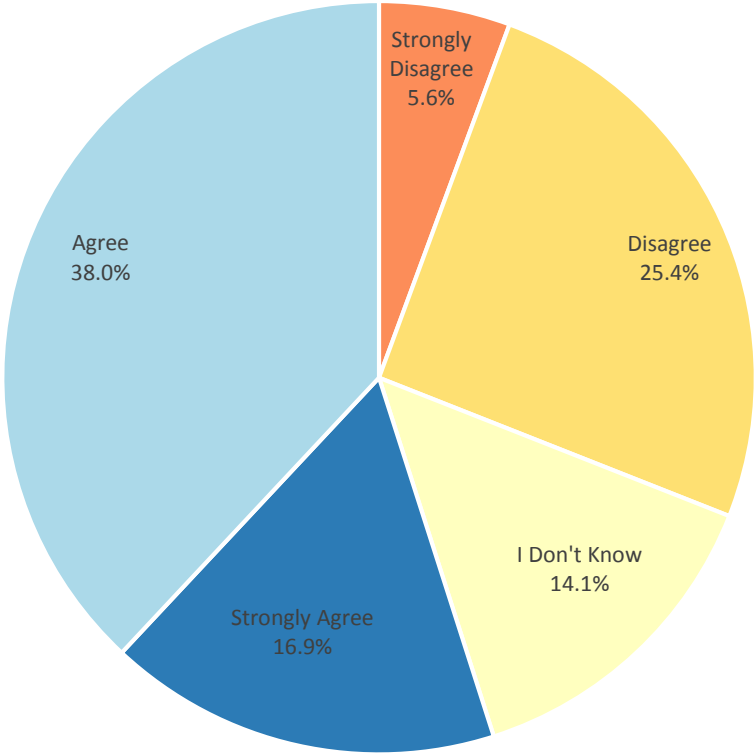
Blue Earth County is in the process of updating its Livestock Manure Management Ordinance. To help obtain input and direction for potential revisions to the Ordinance, the County held an open house on December 11, 2019 and administered a survey. The survey was a 20-question online survey using Microsoft Forms. The survey was opened on November 22, 2019 and closed on December 20, 2019.

The survey was promoted using the county website, social media, and press releases. In addition, over 350 post cards were mailed to all feedlot operators in the County regarding the open house and survey. Printed copies of the survey were available at the open house that was hosted by Blue Earth County on December 11, 2019.

A total of seventy-one responses to the survey were received.

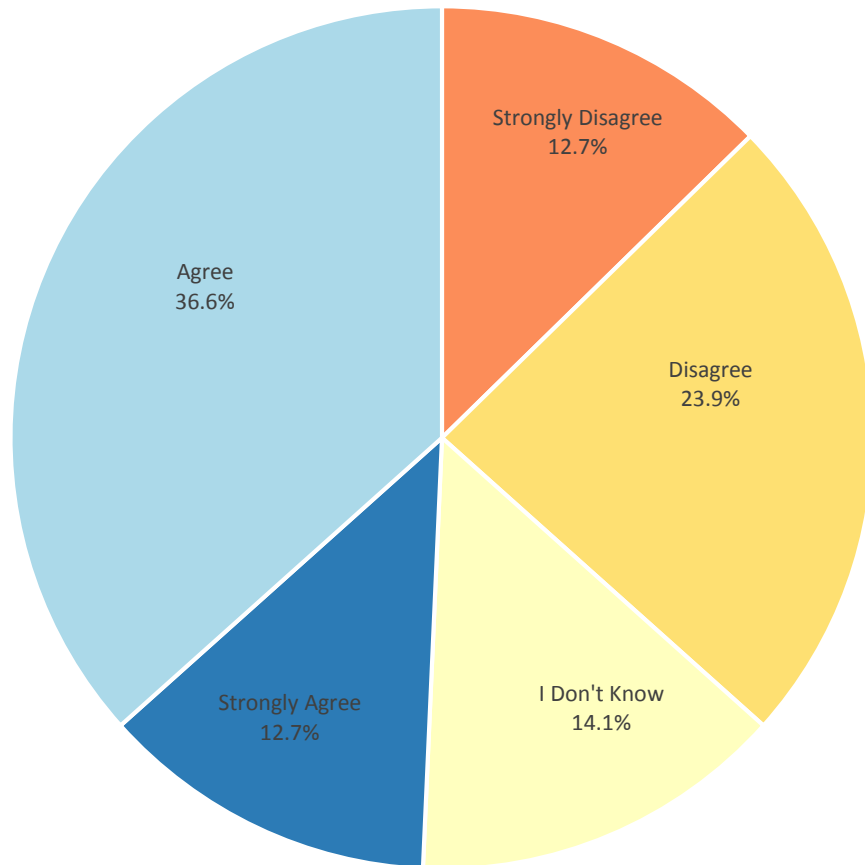
The survey and results are summarized in this document.

Question 1: Thinking of Blue Earth County's feedlot program, what is your level of agreement with the following statement: The County's feedlot program does a good job of protecting water quality.



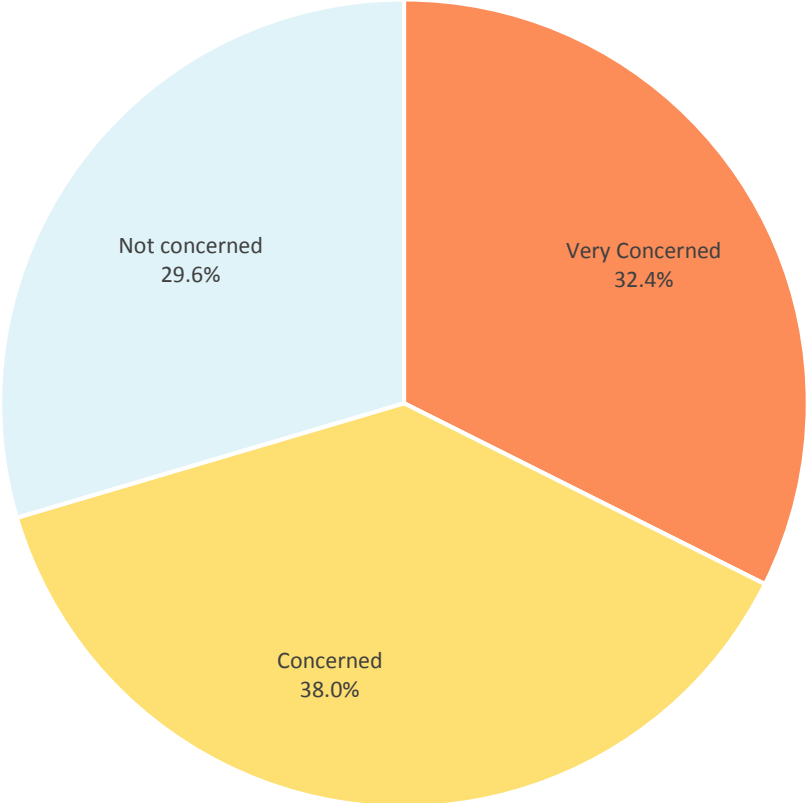
Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Strongly Disagree	4	5.6%
Disagree	18	25.4%
I Don't Know	10	14.1%
Strongly Agree	12	16.9%
Agree	27	38.0%
Total	71	100.0%

Question 2: Thinking of Blue Earth County's feedlot program, what is your level of agreement with the following statement: The County's feedlot program does a good job of preventing conflict between feedlots and residential uses of land.



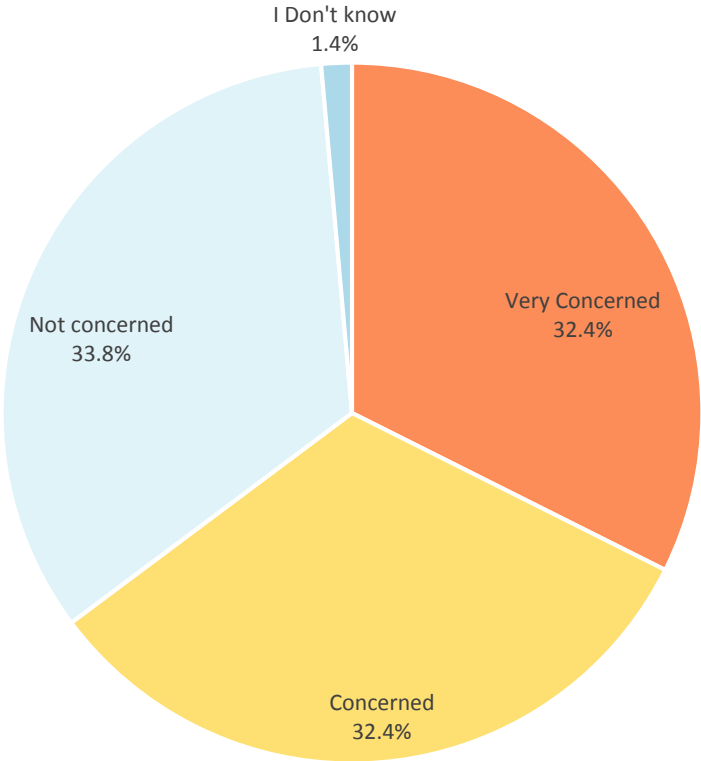
Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Strongly Disagree	9	12.7%
Disagree	17	23.9%
I Don't Know	10	14.1%
Strongly Agree	9	12.7%
Agree	26	36.6%
Total	71	100.0%

Question 3: Please rate your level of concern with runoff from livestock facilities with open lots:



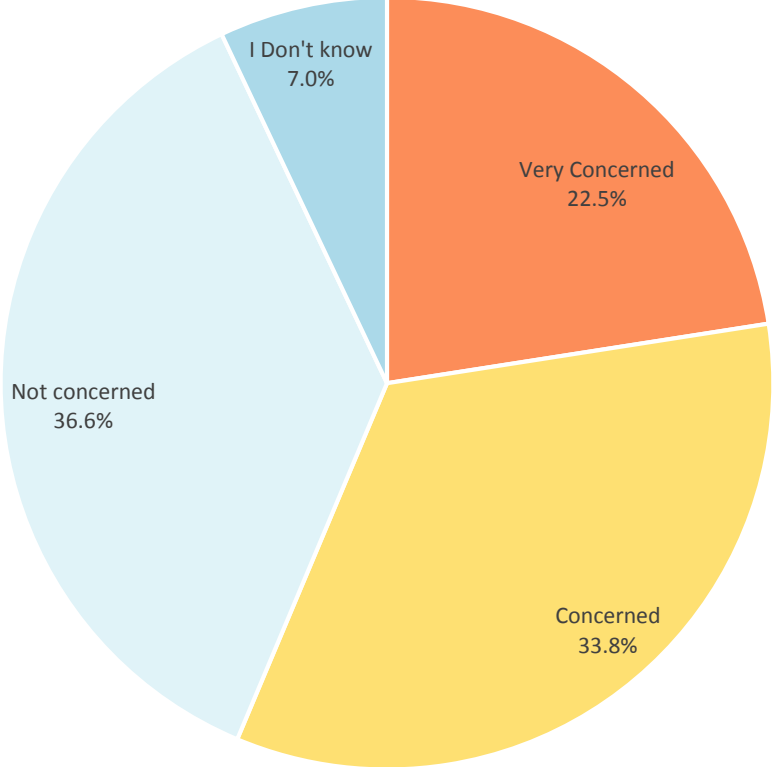
Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Very Concerned	23	32.4%
Concerned	27	38.0%
Not concerned	21	29.6%
Total	71	67.6%

Question 4: Please rate your level of concern with runoff from livestock manure being applied to fields:



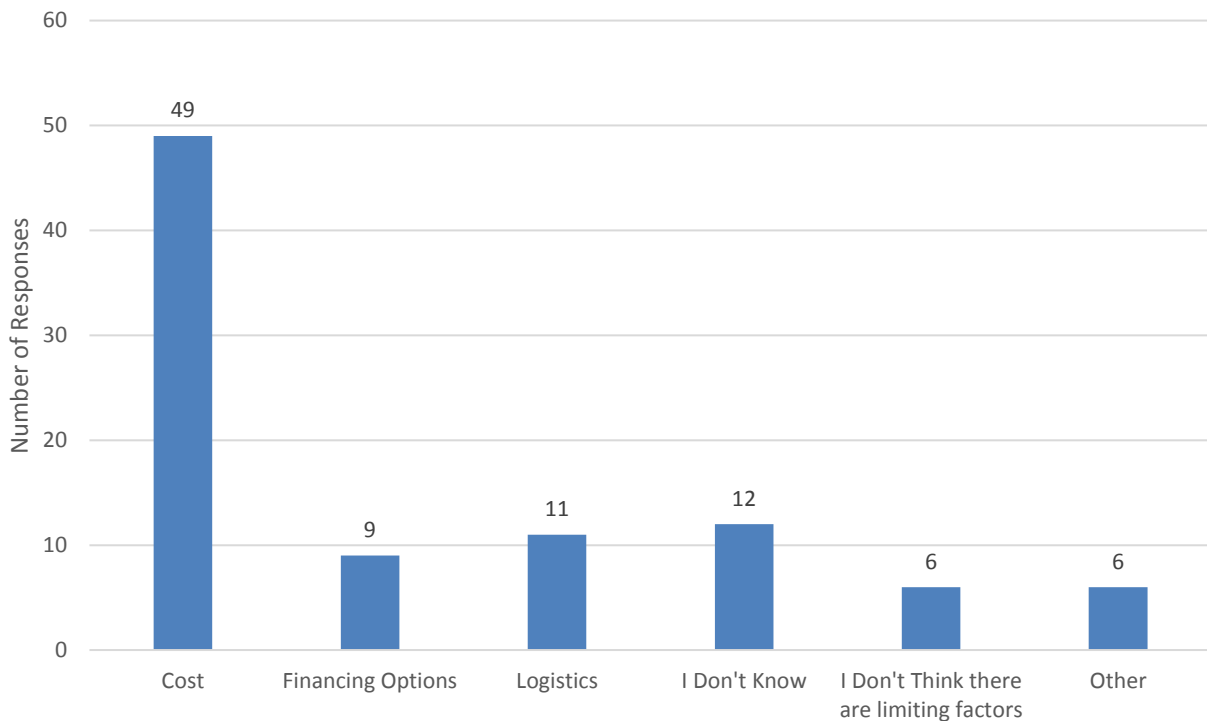
Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Very Concerned	23	32.4%
Concerned	23	32.4%
Not concerned	24	33.8%
I Don't know	1	1.4%
Total	71	100.0%

Question 5: Please rate your level of concern with abandoned manure pits or unused manure storage basins:



Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Very Concerned	16	22.5%
Concerned	24	33.8%
Not concerned	26	36.6%
I Don't know	5	7.0%
Total	71	100.0%

Question 6: What do you think are limiting factors for properly abandoning manure storage basins (removing all manure and sludge)?

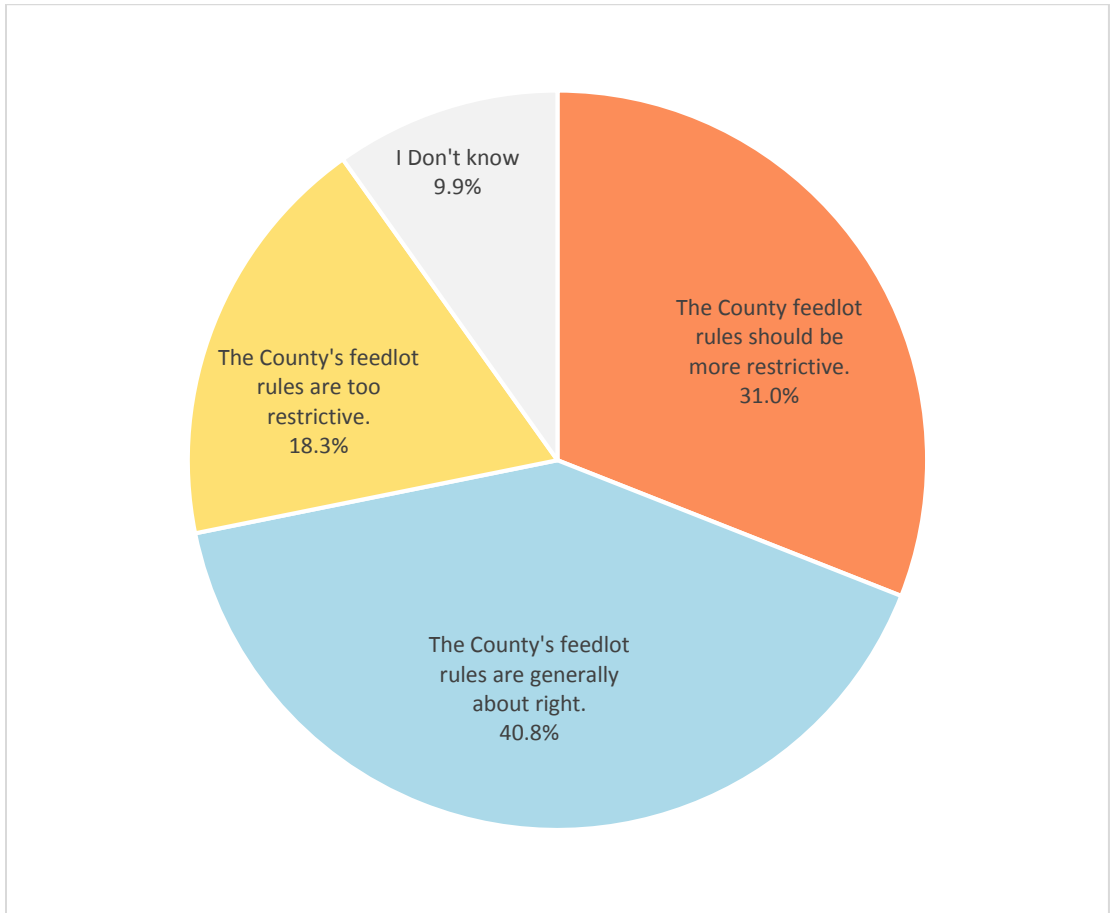


Response	Number of Responses
Cost	49
Financing Options	9
Logistics	11
I Don't Know	12
I Don't Think there are limiting factors	6
Other	6

Other Responses:

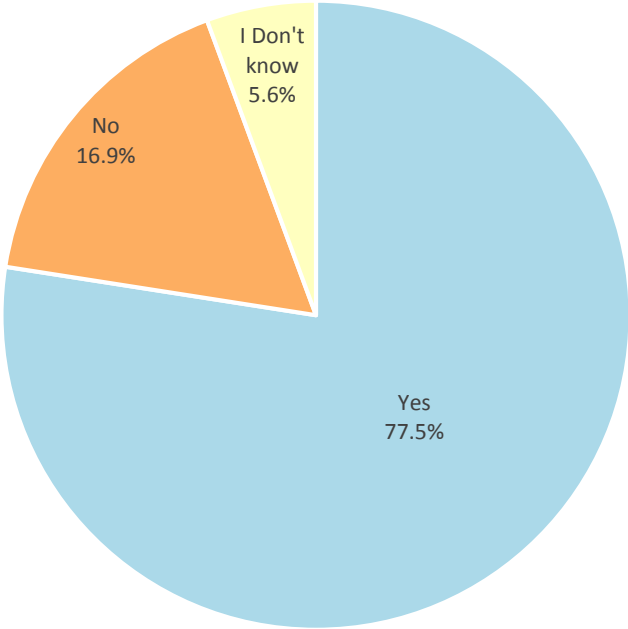
- We need to develop enforcement tools to have manure applicators bid annually to become the designated entity that staff contacts to empty facilities that are in violation and slated for abandonment. In lieu of payment the value of manure would pay contractor.
- Will to get it done.
- Greed
- They don't care.
- Indifference on the part of farmers and lack of oversight.
- Application area acreage and distance

Question 7: Thinking of Blue Earth County's feedlot rules in general, what is your opinion about how restrictive the rules are?



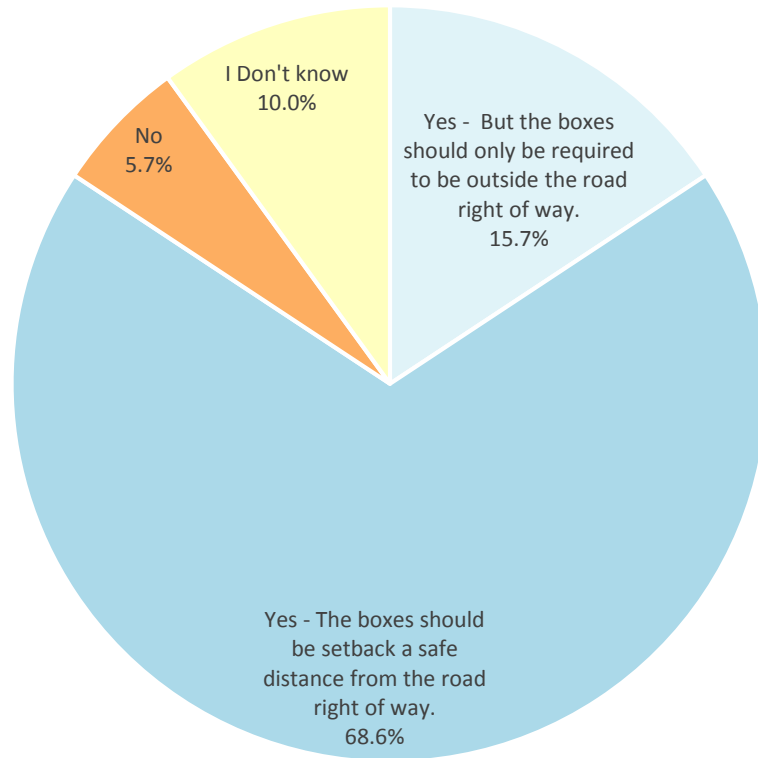
Response	Number of Responses	Percent
The County feedlot rules should be more restrictive.	22	31.0%
The County's feedlot rules are generally about right.	29	40.8%
The County's feedlot rules are too restrictive.	13	18.3%
I Don't know	7	9.9%
Total	71	100.0%

Question 8: Blue Earth County currently has different animal units standards than the State of Minnesota. For example, 2,400 finishing pigs is 960 animal units with Blue Earth County and 720 animal units with the State of Minnesota. Do you think the County animal unit standard should be changed to match the State of Minnesota's standard?



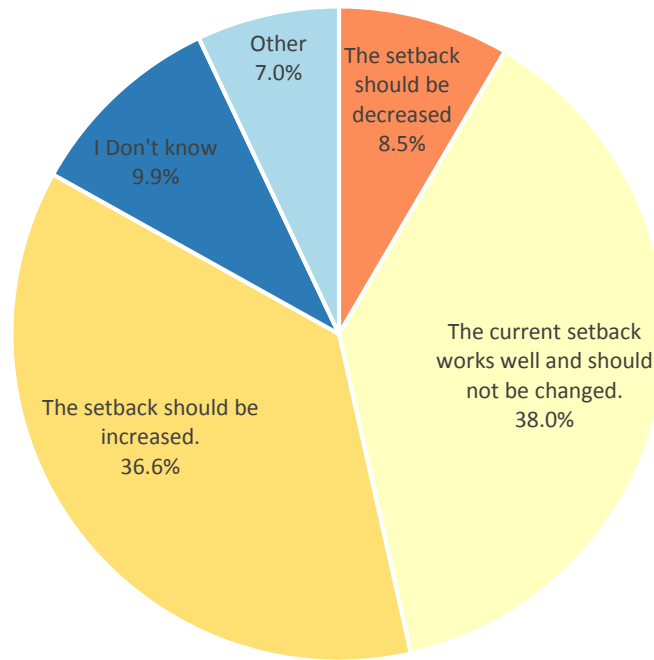
Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Yes	55	77.5%
No	12	16.9%
I Don't know	4	5.6%
Total	71	100.0%

Question 9: Blue Earth County does not have any requirements specifically for the placement of animal mortality boxes. Should the County have requirements for the placement of animal mortality boxes to address safety and water quality?



Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Yes - But the boxes should only be required to be outside the road right of way.	11	15.7%
Yes - The boxes should be setback a safe distance from the road right of way.	48	68.6%
No	4	5.7%
I Don't know	7	10.0%
Total	70	100.0%

Question 10: Blue Earth County currently has a 1,000 or 1,500 foot feedlot setback (separation distance) from dwelling that is based on prevailing wind patterns. What is your opinion on this setback?

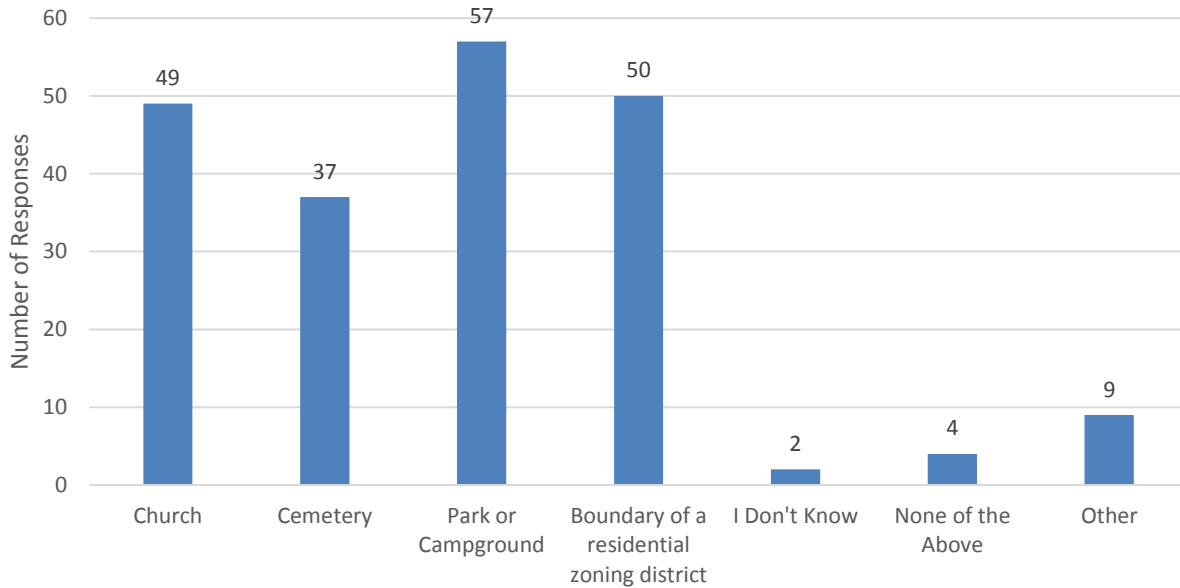


Response	Number of Responses	Percent
The setback should be decreased	6	8.5%
The current setback works well and should not be changed.	27	38.0%
The setback should be increased.	26	36.6%
I Don't know	7	9.9%
Other	5	7.0%
Total	71	100.0%

Other Responses:

- 3 – 1,500 Feet in all directions
- 1 – How about a quarter mile?
- Every situation is different, hard to say.

Question 11: When a new feedlot is constructed, should there be a minimum setback (separation) distance from any of the following features (Choose all that apply):

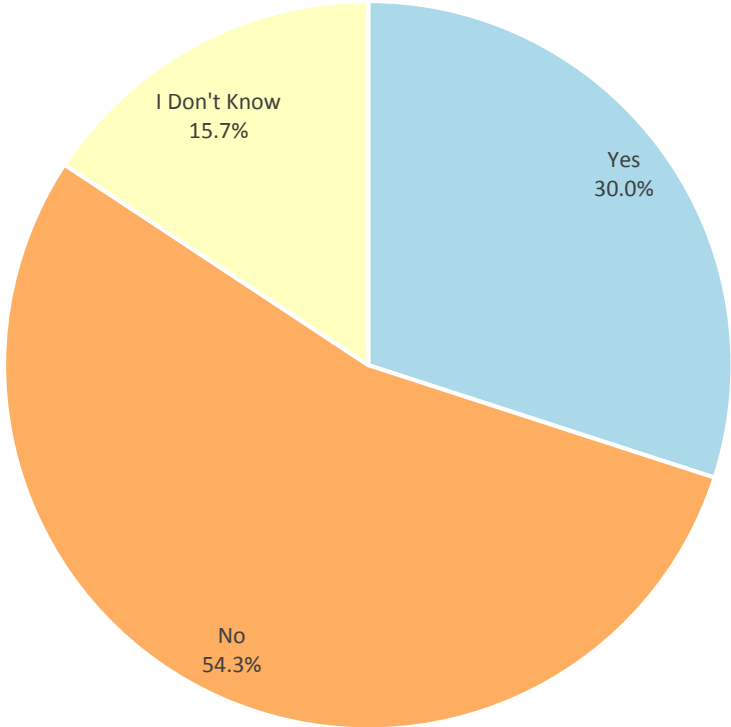


Response	Number of Responses
Church	49
Cemetery	37
Park or Campground	57
Boundary of a residential zoning district	50
I Don't Know	2
None of the Above	4
Other	9

Other Responses:

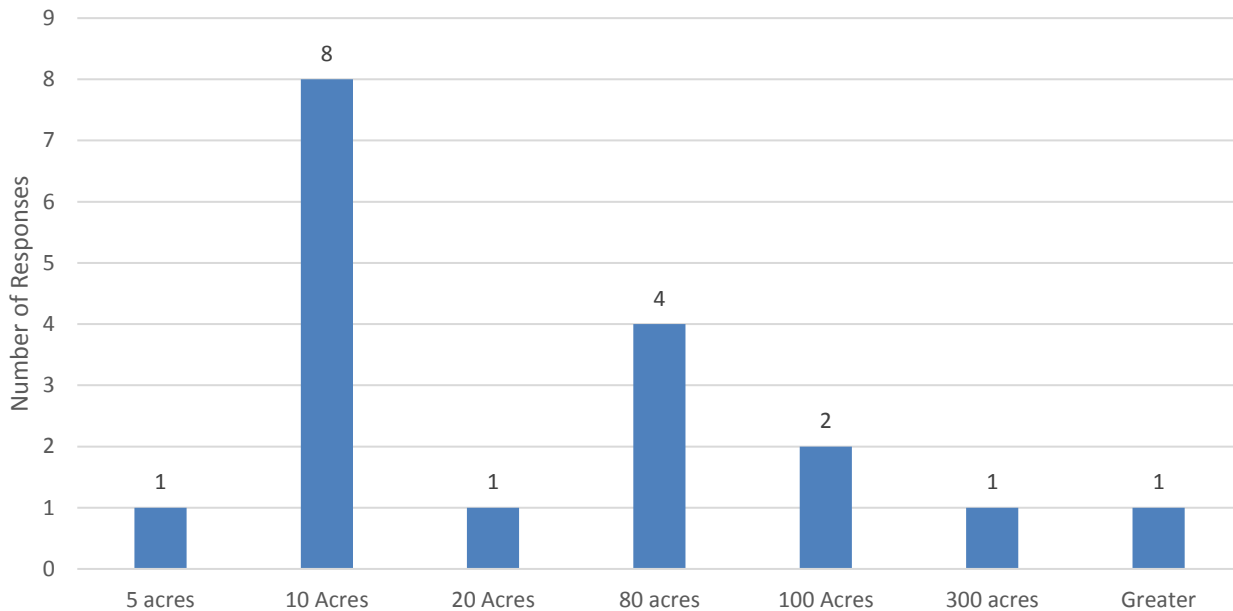
- Schools – 3 responses
- Water features, lakes, streams, rivers/wetlands;
- Should be the same as a residents ,they live with it every day not once a week or once a year ;
- Playgrounds
- Lakes
- 1,500' setback
- It would depend on the size of the feed lot. 10 horses is not the same as 500 hogs.

Question 12: In Blue Earth County, a lot area (Property size) of 40 acres is required for all feedlots 1,000 animal units or more. Should the required lot area for feedlots that are 1,000 animal units or greater be changed?



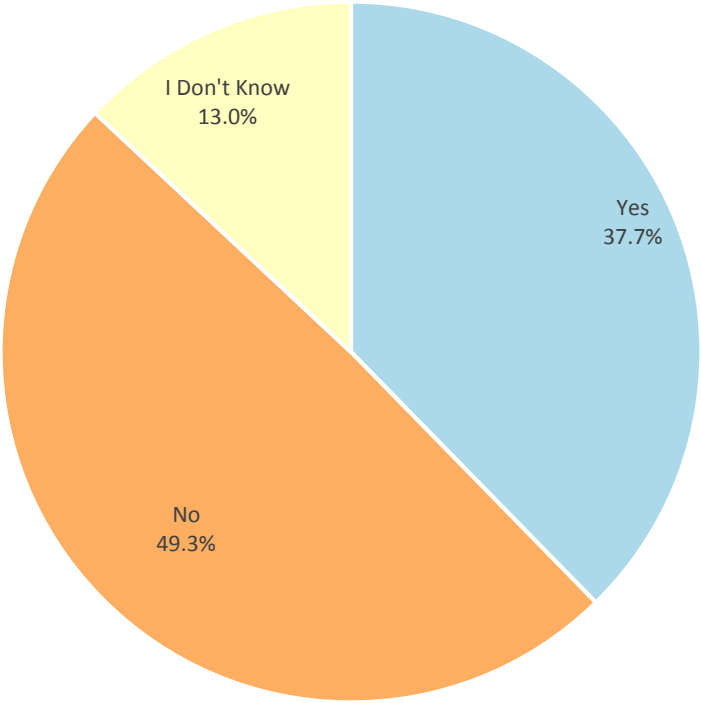
Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Yes	21	30.0%
No	38	54.3%
I Don't Know	11	15.7%
Total	70	100.0%

Question 13: If answering yes to question 12: What should the lot area requirement be for feedlots 1,000 animal units or more be changed to?



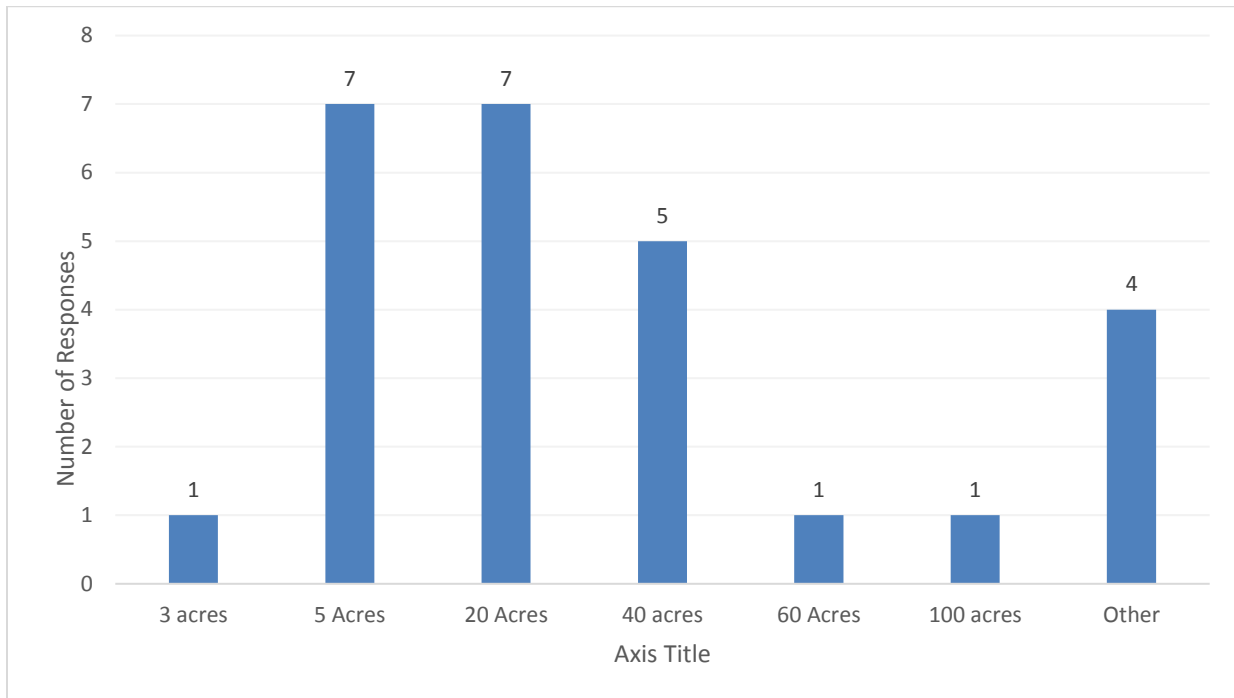
Note: 3 of the 21 responses that thought that the lot area should be changed did not list a size of what it should be changed to.

Question 14: In Blue Earth County, a lot area (property size) of 10 acres is required for all feedlots less than 1,000 animal units. Should the required lot area for feedlots that are under 1,000 animal units be changed?



Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Yes	26	37.7%
No	34	49.3%
I Don't Know	9	13.0%
Total	69	100.0%

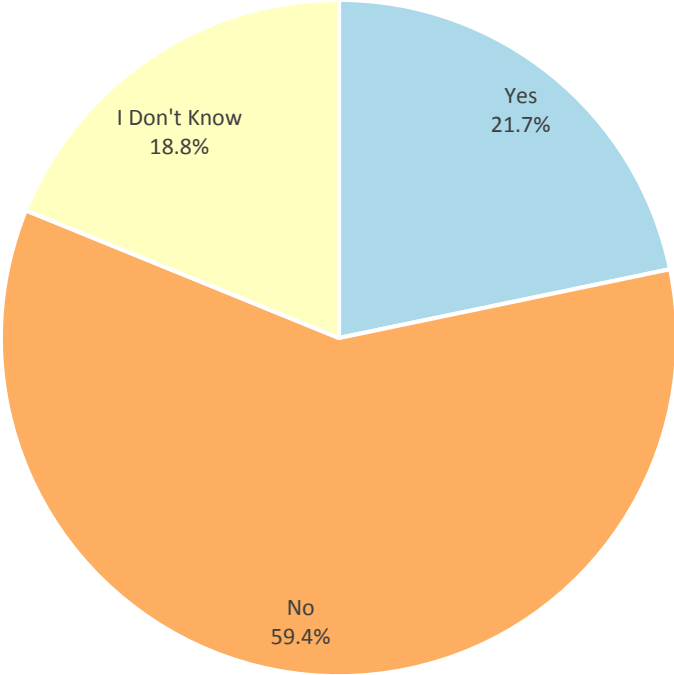
Question 15: If answering yes to question 14: What should the lot area requirement be for feedlots under 1,000 animal units be changed to?



Other Responses:

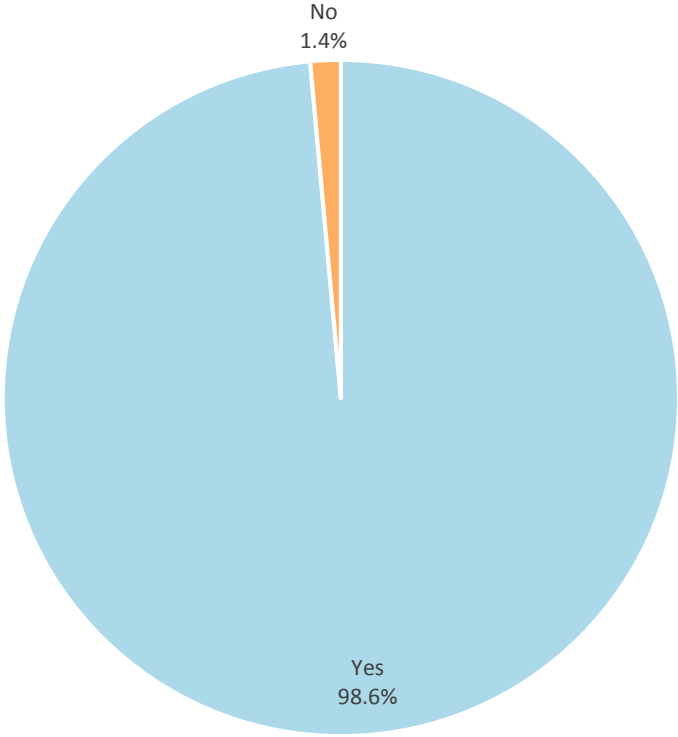
- 10 acres for every 250 animal units.
- Big enough for the site , it shouldn't be a financial hardship for a small farmer to get started that only the large can afford
- It should depend on animal head count. No reason to require 10 acres for a family looking to raise a few cattle or free range hogs.
- Needs to be more granular. 5 acres for up to 10 units, 10 acres for up to 100 units, etc.

Question 16: Should Blue Earth County consider a smaller minimum lot area for feedlots without liquid manure storage and are under 1,000 animal units?



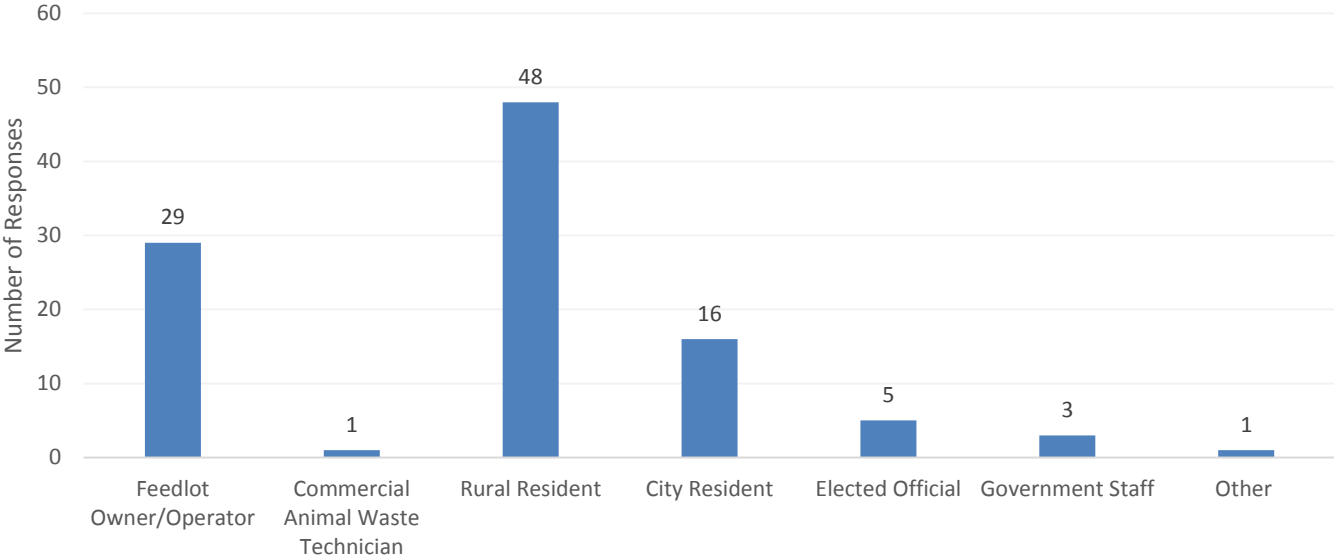
Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Yes	15	21.7%
No	41	59.4%
I Don't Know	13	18.8%
Total	69	100.0%

Question 17: Are you a resident of Blue Earth County?

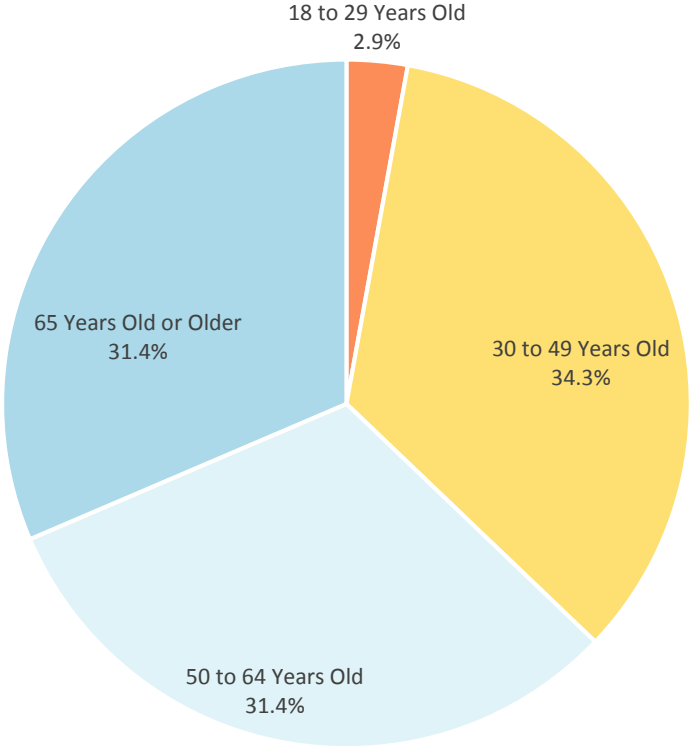


Response	Number of Responses	Percent
Yes	68	98.6%
No	1	1.4%
Total	69	100.0%

Question 18: Please select all of the items that best describe you:



Question 19: What is your age?



Response	Number of Responses	Percent
18 to 29 Years Old	2	2.9%
30 to 49 Years Old	24	34.3%
50 to 64 Years Old	22	31.4%
65 Years Old or Older	22	31.4%
Total	70	100.0%

Question 20: Please provide any comments or suggestions about ways to improve the Blue Earth County Livestock Manure Management Ordinance and/or County's Feedlot Program.

34 of the 71 Responses provided written comments. The full comments are listed below.

I think more emphasis should be placed on the spreading of manure as it relates to surface waters, tile intakes and road ditches. It seems like there are issues with encroachment.
I am concerned about hog confinement buildings not being leveled after they are no longer used. Cost of hauling building and concrete to recycling facilities is too great therefore it doesn't get done.
Age is not important. Not all feedlots are equal in terms of space/confinement needs and manure. Your survey fails to address these.
Have you ever suffered through the smell of hog manure? Bio solids from the City of Mankato 's treatment plant is much worse and lasts a lot longer-years after application especially when it is wet. I am not a hog farmer.
This is a ag county. County rules should help it grow.
Good survey. Thank you.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Increased manure application setbacks-Interactive map with all feedlots, types and their sizes. Areas where more feedlots may be built and areas where less feelots may be built-larger setbacks for feedlots from residential homes, cities, public areas, county land
While I support family farms, large feedlots are not the answer. Unfortunately, federal policy is lined up against family farms, whether they are animal livestock producers or not. Whatever the policy the county pursues, it needs to do so in the interest of small family farms that produce real food (NOT commodities) and promote soil health employing no- or limited-till, crop rotation and cover crops year round.
Reduce the number of feedlots in Blue Earth County. Air pollution inhibits outdoor recreation across the county already! Bikers, hikers, fisherman, plus individuals who garden or simply want to mow their lawns or entertain outdoors are prevented from doing so due to the stench of feedlots and rendering sites. Drive in any direction south, north, east or west of Good Thunder on even the calmest day. It's disgusting.
Feedlots are hazardous. MANKATO stinks when manure is applied to the fields.
B.E . County need to align more with other counties and be realistic in there approach to feedlot permits. The swine industry is vital to B.E. Counties economy. The residents of Mankato should not dictate how we produce hogs on the county.
Clean water should be the main focus of manure management, but oder/air pollution also needs to be controlled. The hog unit that extends into the city limits of Vernon Center is especially concerning! Neighbors should be informed when manure is going to be spread. Although the worst Oder occurs on beautiful summer nights when the wind drops and the smell comes in like a thick putrid smoke.

Manure application setback standards should be increased near all water features for both surface application and incorporation. We need to improve enforcement tools for staff to use to enact decommissioning or abandonment in a reasonable time frame. Perhaps a joint workshop with commissioners, staff, and planning commission for ideas.

Blue Earth County seems to be much more restrictive in requirements than most neighboring counties.

Blue Earth County should begin a program of phasing out the feedlots that do not meet the present setbacks. This should be especially for those that affect significant numbers of people (such as Vernon Center). These generally are older facilities with more odor issues and more open to failure. Perhaps a subsidy program to facilitate this action.

I am unhappy with the way local farmers spread liquid manure on fields. More care needs to be taken by farmers. This fall manure got spread on the field across from our home and the road was covered in mud and manure for weeks. No cleanup was done. When it rained our road was very muddy and slippery and vehicles got caked with manure.

There are a lot of rural residents who do not farm. We are not listened to when it comes to the doors of livestock or manure in fields. It would be wonderful to be able to have our windows opened and to be able to enjoy fresh air in our yards.

Don't let Minnesota Ag. turn out to be like California, just large corporations.

Quit allowing these residential areas to expand. These areas are zoned agriculture and these developments don't understand what happens out in the country and don't understand what it takes to feed America and the world.

your questions all referred to, in my opinion, large operations. Very small operations under 100, 50, or 10 animal units (I don't know what is the best number) should have less restrictive rules, while insuring they are protecting water quality and the quality of life of their neighbors. Thank you for the survey.

In light of the climate crisis, feedlots as a major source of greenhouse gas emissions should be done away with.

Country feedlot animal until should match with the State.

I believe the county needs to do a better job watching to see if manure is being applied at the correct setbacks from waterways and water intakes. I've seen first hand that manure is applied within the setbacks. I also believe they should have a rule on when manure can be applied (not on frozen ground, within so many hours before a rain event)

My biggest problem with feedlots is road damage and mud on the roads from manure hauling

We've got to get away from the notion that farming is a predominantly mom & pop operation whose family survives working 160 acres. What we have in S. MN is ag industry and it needs to be regulated like an industry. Additionally, there needs to be regulations/strict enforcement that protect smaller organic farmers from the harmful overspray of pesticides/insecticides. The days of the family farm with the red animal barn are long gone, so I'd like to see BEC step up and realize they're dealing with international corporations.

There are many days and for hours on end that the smell surrounding us makes me unable to be outside to walk, garden, have visitors, etc. It seems we are surrounded by pig barns. The way the wind blows does not matter, we are surrounded. This has increased over the past 25 years. I never minded the smell when the owner of the pigs lived on the site because they smelled it, too. Nowadays, the owners have left the farm and live on a lake/in the city so they don't have to live in the smell their actions have precipitated.

Current setback requirements from any residence (city or Rural) for feedlots - particularly those with manure storage pits - are completely inadequate. The odor and the run off exposure from most of these operations is much more related to industrial hazardous waste than it is to the neighbors traditional manure pile. It needs to be treated as and regulated as that. Seriously!

Feedlots degrade the quality of life for citizens, even those not necessarily close to the feedlots. They also endanger water quality and, due to the lack of crop rotation, soil quality.

Quality of life is reduced for many to favor the few.

The rules are likely generally adequate. More enforcement of manure setbacks is needed to protect water quality. There are many impaired waters for e-coli in the area. There are tools out there to analyze weather and best times to spread manure. They should be promoted and more education should be done on spreading manure and impacts to water quality.

No 10ft setback on roads No 1000\$ permit fee no other county's have one and were doses all the money go

Fees are too much. We pay a lot and only get inspections each three or four years. Where do our fees go?

We've had a lot of these rules for a long time. It doesn't seem fair to change them now. We've been living with the rules and other new producers could have advantages we didnt if they get loosed too much. They also shouldn't get increased much either. There are some out there that dont follow spreading rules now and its not fair to rest of us that di follow rules

The hog industry dominates southern mn and blue earth county is one of leading counties. Many would say the industry thrives. Ask yourselves if it is sustainable and if it should greatly intensify? The hog industry has done really well with the current rules. Hopefully you dont loosen them too much and further intensify the countryside with confinement barns. Despite your rules and other rules the rivers are polluted and there are impairments for bacteria. Have you considered the impact of hog manure on water quality from improper spreading. They spread it before rains and on top of tile lines and intakes. The tile goes to our rivers streams and lakes and likely is carrying bacteria and nutrients. Please consider the overall big picture and not just cater to industry wants or demands. Water is important to many and the hog industry should do more to prevent pollution from improper manure spreading.

Consider how you want the rural countryside to function and how it impacts cities lakes and rivers. Hog production is clearly important here but so are the many that live in the on edge of cities and recreate here. Should we be overwhelmed by the smell of manure at MSU's campus? The nearest field has to be a half mile away from there. Yes its only for a short time but it is not normal for the smell to be that strong and it has become more frequent and stronger. The practices of the industry do not seem to be keeping up. It is great to comment on ideas and I hope you allow citizens to comment on your actual rule changes. You should also consider a system for reporting violations of odor and manure spreading too close to streams ditches and lakes. People see these violations but have no way to report them. People are also afraid to call. Many communities use online reporting systems and you should consider this.