



Milking Shed Effluent

and the *Environment Protection (Water Quality) Policy 2003*

June 2003

This information sheet summarises the requirements of the Code of Practice for Milking Shed Effluent for the operators of milking sheds in South Australia, and gives a brief overview of their obligations under the new Water Quality Policy.

Introduction

The *Environment Protection (Water Quality) Policy* (Water Quality Policy), which aims to protect South Australia's rivers, marine waters and ground waters from pollutants, brings South Australia in line with the National Water Quality Management Strategy. Wastewater, sludges and solid wastes from milking sheds have a very high nutrient and microbiological concentration and can have a major adverse impact on water resources if poorly managed. The Water Quality Policy states that the operators of a milking shed must comply with the Environment Protection Authority's *Code of Practice for Milking Shed Effluent*.

A milking shed is defined as any structure, whether roofed or not, at which operations for the milking of animals are carried out, including any associated yard areas in which animals are confined prior to or following milking.

Implications for all

Every person, business and industry has obligations under the Water Quality Policy:

- to avoid discharging or depositing waste or listed pollutants into any waters, bores, and mine shafts or onto land where it might enter the water
- not to cause environmental harm
- not to contravene the water quality criteria in the policy, unless the EPA is satisfied that a mixing or attenuation zone can be established
- not to exceed discharge limits.

In addition, milking shed operators, along with other industries and businesses, have specific obligations relating to their activities.

Implications for milking sheds

The Water Quality Policy states that an operator of a milking shed must ensure that:

- the premises incorporate a wastewater management system
- the system is effectively operating in respect to any wastewater generated at the premises while the premises are being used as a milking shed
- waste generated at the premises is not discharged:
 - into any waters, or
 - onto land in a place from which it is reasonably likely to enter any waters (including by processes such as seepage or infiltration or carriage by wind, rain, sea spray or stormwater or by the rising of the water table).

Code of Practice

By adopting the *Code of Practice for Milking Shed Effluent*, operators of milking sheds should be confident of complying with the mandatory provisions of the Water Quality Policy. They may also avoid receiving a fine and/or an Environment Protection Order.

The code applies to the management of liquid, semi-solid and solid wastes from the milking of cows, sheep or goats. Topics covered include:

- **Milking sheds and associated yards** – all areas where milking animals are confined prior to, during and following milking should be concreted and drained to a wastewater management system.
- **Solids separation pits** – these should follow the recommended criteria outlined in the code.
- **Wastewater management systems** – any wastewater management system must be able to handle the volume of wastewater generated from the milking shed and associated yards at all times of the year, including during storm events. The wastewater management system must be operational at all times, or there must be a backup system in place.
- **Wastewater discharges into waters** – dairy farmers should at all times avoid the discharge of milking shed wastewater into any river, creek, wetland, dam capturing general catchment runoff, irrigation drainage channel or sinkhole.
- **Wastewater lagoons** – dairy farmers must monitor the levels in wastewater lagoons to ensure that there is at least 600 mm freeboard from the maximum carrying capacity of the lagoon.
- **Solids storage and disposal/utilisation** – the temporary stockpiling and/or drying of manure and other sludge material from lagoons or solids separation pits should be done in a manner which avoids environmental harm.
- **Waste disposal** – dairy farmers should follow the minimum acceptable criteria for milking shed waste application onto land as outlined in the code.

Dairy farmers should obtain a complete copy of the code of practice by using the contacts listed at the end of this information sheet.

This code of practice replaces the *Environment Protection (Milking Shed Effluent Management) Policy 1997*.

Enforcement

The Water Quality Policy sets out specific obligations and requirements; these are mandatory provisions and may be enforced on people and businesses by authorised officers in several ways:

1. by issuing an Environment Protection Order (EPO) to gain compliance with the policy
2. by issuing an expiation notice (on-the-spot fine) of \$300 for a breach of a mandatory provision
3. by issuing an EPO and also issuing an on-the-spot fine for a breach of a mandatory provision
4. by issuing an on-the-spot fine for failing to comply with an EPO
5. by prosecuting through the Court (maximum penalty \$30,000).

Fines may apply if the action has been shown to be negligent, even if the offence was accidental.

Failure to comply with specific requirements in a code of practice or guideline linked to the Water Quality Policy may result in the issuing of an EPO. An EPO may require that a person or agency take specified action within a defined period.

Authorised officers from the Environment Protection Authority, local councils, and other government authorities may enforce the Water Quality Policy.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Legislation

Legislation may be viewed on the Internet at: www.parliament.sa.gov.au/dbsearch/legsearch.htm

Copies of legislation are available for purchase from:

Information SA	Telephone:	(08) 8204 1900
Ground Floor, SA Water House	Facsimile:	(08) 8204 1909
77 Grenfell Street	Freecall (country):	1800 182 234
Adelaide SA 5000		

For general information please contact:

Information Officer	Telephone:	(08) 8204 2004
Environment Protection Authority	Facsimile:	(08) 8204 9393
GPO Box 2607	Freecall (country):	1800 623 445
Adelaide SA 5001	Internet:	www.epa.sa.gov.au

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