

Assessment of saleyards

Updated September 2017

EPA 679/17: This guideline will assist a relevant authority (as defined by the Development Act 1993) to undertake an environmental assessment of proposals for saleyards.

Introduction

The information contained in this guideline is in lieu of the advice given by the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) in responses to referred development applications prior to removal of the activity from Schedule 21 of the *Development Regulations 2008*.

For the purposes of this guide, a saleyard is defined as the commercial conduct of yards where cattle, sheep or other animals are gathered or confined for sale, auction or exchange, including associated transport loading facilities, with a throughput not exceeding 50,000 sheep equivalent units per year¹. When a saleyard proposal exceeds this scale it must be referred to the EPA under Schedule 8 Item 11 Schedule 22 (5)(3) of the *Development Regulations 2008*.

Assessing environmental issues

Air quality and noise

Odour may be produced by the biological decomposition of manure, spilt feed and other organic matter. There are a number of odour sources including selling pens, holding paddocks and yards, laneways and races, effluent treatment systems, and composting or manure stockpile pads. Dust sources include the movement of cattle or vehicles (light and heavy vehicles), and dust from stockpiled material or on pen/yard surfaces which gets blown around by the wind particularly during the drier months. Odour and dust from a saleyard can be minimised by good design, construction and management.

While much of the work associated with this type of activity is not noisy, there may be some noise from vehicles, stock and loudspeaker systems, which can be a nuisance. However, as any proposed saleyard is normally located on the edge of a town or in a rural area, noise may not be a significant issue. However, there is still the potential for noise and it should be assessed.

The EPA guideline [Evaluation distances for effective air quality and noise management](#) recommends evaluation distances between sensitive land uses² and activities that may result in noise, odour, or polluting air emissions.

¹ Sheep equivalent units: 1 sheep or goat = 1 unit, 1 pig (<40 kg) = 1 unit, 1 pig (>40 kg) = 4 units, 1 cattle (<40 kg) = 3 units, 1 cattle (40–400 kg) = 6 units, 1 cattle (>400 kg) = 8 units according to *Development Regulations 2008*.

² Sensitive land uses include, but are not limited to, residential housing, child care centres, educational establishments, hospitals, nursing homes, parklands and recreation areas. Industrial and commercial premises can also be affected by noise and air emissions.

The recommended evaluation distance is 200 m for throughput >25,000 and <50,000 sheep equivalent units per year.

There is no recommended evaluation distance for throughput <25,000 sheep equivalents units per year, but the evaluation distance of 200 m can act as a guide for such proposals. For all proposals the proponent is required to take all reasonable and practicable measures to prevent or minimise any resulting environmental harm.

If the proposed development is within the recommended evaluation distance the applicant should demonstrate that a lesser distance would be appropriate. The Evaluation distances guideline explains the type of information to facilitate smooth processing and assessment of applications/submissions, avoiding unnecessary delays and costs to proponents.

To reduce the odour potential it is recommended that the saleyard pen surface be kept as dry as possible. To facilitate this, compacted pen surface that has a consistent uniform slope between 2% and 6% and a similar surface to council-made roads.

To minimise dust from the saleyard and vehicle movement, water carts can be used to suppress dust. Stockpiled solids should be maintained at a height of less than 2 m.

Landfill sites

When considering a site for a saleyard, consideration needs to be given to the presence of any closed or operational landfills.

There are a range of inherent risks associated with landfills including adverse impact on the environment and human health due to landfill gas, odour, litter, vermin, dust and leachate.

The EPA guideline, [Environmental management of landfill facilities \(municipal solid waste and commercial and industrial general waste\)](#), recommends a minimum separation distance of 500 m between development and a landfill boundary, historic, currently operational and future designated landfill areas and active tipping face. The buffer should be maintained for the life of the landfill³. Maintaining a 500-m separation distance will reduce the likelihood of impacts from the landfill, including the accumulation of landfill gas in structures.

A proposed saleyard in which landfill gas could accumulate and that is within 500 m of a landfill should proceed only on the basis of a landfill risk assessment undertaken by a site contamination consultant or a site contamination auditor. Any development within the buffer should be assessed and determined as suitable and compatible. The [Landfill gas and development near landfills – advice for planning authorities and developers](#) contains further information.

Waste and wastewater management

Waste from saleyards may include solid and liquid waste generated by animals, spilt feed and water leakage from troughs, dead animals, wastewater from truckwashing facilities and general litter.

The proponent should demonstrate that the waste management hierarchy⁴ as identified in the Environment Protection (Waste to Resources) Policy 2010 is applied and that any waste produced during the undertaking of an activity is properly managed. The waste management hierarchy should be used to guide decisions on proposed development to avoid waste generation and ultimately prevent or minimise environmental harm.

³ The life of the landfill includes the period after closure and capping, and continues for as long as the landfill has the potential to create offsite impacts to the environment (particularly due to landfill gas emissions or leaching to groundwater), which may be decades after the landfill has closed.

⁴ Waste management hierarchy, as described in the *Zero Waste SA Act 2004*, refers to an order of priority for the management of waste, being: avoidance of the production of waste, minimisation of the production of waste, reuse of waste, recycling of waste, recovery of energy and other resources from waste, treatment of waste to reduce potentially degrading impacts, and disposal of waste in an environmentally sound manner.

The saleyard needs to be designed so that all effluent and polluted yard runoff drains efficiently to an effluent management system, consisting of a sedimentation lagoon and a storage lagoon. The wastewater lagoon should be constructed in accordance with the [Wastewater lagoon construction](#) guideline. To assist drainage, water troughs can be sited at the low side of the pens.

The feedlot needs to be designed and constructed so that all clean rainfall runoff is directed away from the feedlot and effluent management system.

All solid waste (manure) should be collected and stockpiled so that any runoff from the stockpile is directed to the effluent management system. Land disposal of effluent and manure waste needs to ensure that all nutrients are effectively taken up by crops or other vegetation.

The disposal of dead animals on site should be in accordance with best practice methods (refer to [Guidelines for the establishment and operation of cattle feedlots in South Australia](#) to reduce the risk of contamination. Onsite burial of mortalities is not recommended, and onsite composting, or removal from the site is preferred. Composting should be undertaken in accordance with the [Compost guideline](#). If onsite burial of dead animals is proposed, it should be in accordance with best practice methods to reduce the risk of contamination.

Applicants should consider drawing up an emergency management plan to deal with disposal of mortalities over and above normal mortality rates (e.g. in the event of a major disease outbreak or natural disaster).

Developments proposing the use of land-based irrigation to dispose of wastewater will need to demonstrate that the site is suitable for ongoing irrigation and the practice is sustainable. A wastewater irrigation management plan should be prepared in accordance with the EPA guideline, [Wastewater Irrigation Management Plan \(WIMP\) — a drafting guide for wastewater irrigators](#).

Stormwater – Water sensitive urban design

Water sensitive urban design is an approach to urban planning and design that seeks to integrate the management of the total water cycle to minimise the impacts of development, protect water quality, make more efficient use of water, reduce the cost of water infrastructure, and address flooding.

Further information on water sensitive urban design can be found at:

- [Planning professionals and developers](#)
- [Water Sensitive SA](#)
- [Creating more liveable and water sensitive cities in South Australia.](#)

Construction management

Construction activities undertaken as part of a development can detrimentally affect the environment and community health. Air emissions, noise, site contamination, stormwater and waste need to be managed to prevent impacts on nearby land uses and the natural environment.

The relevant authority may require a construction environmental management plan (CEMP) from the proponent. The plan describes how activities undertaken during the construction phase of development will be managed to avoid or mitigate negative environmental impacts on site and how the environmental management requirements will be implemented.

For further information on the impacts of construction activities and preparing a CEMP refer to the EPA guideline, [Construction environmental management plans](#).

Disclaimer

This publication is a guide only and does not necessarily provide adequate information in relation to every situation. This publication seeks to explain your possible obligations in a helpful and accessible way. In doing so, however, some detail

may not be captured. It is important, therefore, that you seek information from the EPA itself regarding your possible obligations and, where appropriate, that you seek your own legal advice.

Further information

Legislation

[Online legislation](#) is freely available. Copies of legislation are available for purchase from:

Service SA Government Legislation Outlet
Adelaide Service SA Centre
108 North Terrace
Adelaide SA 5000

Telephone: 13 23 24
Facsimile: (08) 8204 1909
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General information

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