environmental farm plan
sustainably farmed

INFOSHEET #12

NUISANCES AND NORMAL FARM PRACTICES

How to address concerns identified in Environmental Farm Plan Worksheet #12

Based on Environmental Farm Plan Workbook, 5th ed. 2025

To understand the Farming and Food Production Protection Act and its application to your farm, please review the resources listed at the end of this infosheet.

In some cases an activity or emission that causes a potential nuisance from the farm may be subject to a regulation or an environmental approval (e.g. an Environmental Compliance Approval (ECA) for noise). In such cases, the regulation or approval specifies the minimum regulatory requirement that must be met. A farm must always follow the minimum requirements they are subject to under a regulation or through an approval. In addition to that, there may be opportunity to do more, to improve their management practices, including through the actions or approaches outlined in this infosheet.

All options in this infosheet are classed as **Actions, Compensating Factors,** or **Monitoring**.

- **Actions** address the identified concern, and will change the EFP rating to (3) or (4) Best.
- **Compensating Factors** are alternatives that will adequately address the concern, but will not change the rating in the EFP worksheet.
- **Monitoring** is an alternative in special circumstances only. When and how monitoring can be used is explained in the infosheet.

In most cases, you'll need more information before choosing and implementing options. Sources for more information are noted at the end of this infosheet.

For help with technical terms, please see the full glossary in your EFP Workbook.

Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership
OSCIA
Ontario
Canada

NUMBER OF POTENTIAL FIXED OR NON-FIXED SOURCE NUISANCES

12-1. Noise (or vibration) point sources

BACKGROUND

Noise and vibrations can result from farm practices. The risk of receiving complaints from neighbours is lower if there are fewer point sources for noise and vibration.

Review the list of noise sources and note the ones you may need to be concerned about.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

OPTION 1 – ACTION

Reduce the number of noise and vibration point sources located within 250 m (820 ft.) of neighbour's dwelling.

OPTION 2 – COMPENSATING FACTOR

Implement sound dampening methods to minimize point source noise or vibration that cannot be eliminated:

- plant a tree windbreak or construct a board fence or earthen berm between noise source and neighbour
- install noise/vibration dampening devices such as mufflers or casings on stationary equipment like irrigation pumps, generator motors, grain dryers, grain bin aeration fans, compressors, etc.
- create a temporary barrier such as a wall of stacked hay bales or harvest bins or park a large vehicle such as a trailer between the noise source and neighbour (caution as these types of barriers can sometimes provide a home for vermin)

Some noise or vibration from farm practices is to be expected. Minimizing these where practical will help reduce conflict with nearby neighbours.

12–2. Dust sources

BACKGROUND

Dust can result from farm practices. The risk of receiving complaints from neighbours is lower if there are fewer point sources of dust on the farm.

Review the list of dust sources and note the ones you may need to be concerned about and manage the remaining dust sources to reduce the impact on your neighbours.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

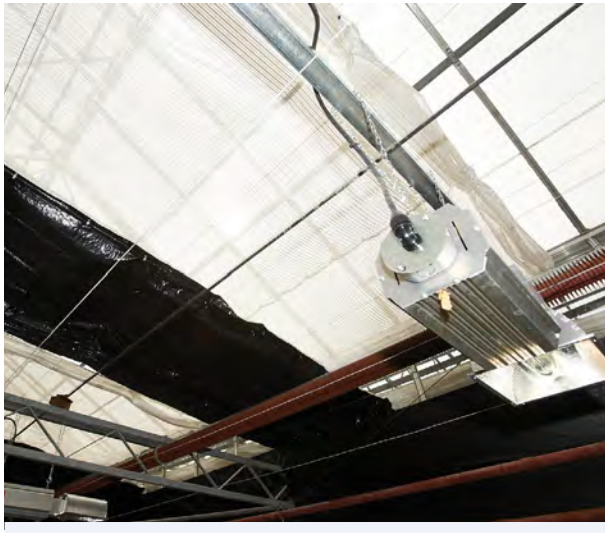
OPTION 1 – ACTION

Reduce the number of dust point sources located within 250 m (820 ft.) of neighbour's dwelling.

Minimize dust from point sources that cannot be eliminated:

- apply dust suppression products to gravel farm laneways and other high traffic areas plant windbreaks/dispersion fences between barn exhaust fans and neighbouring houses
- minimize amount of accumulated red dog around grain dryers

Start by making a list of on-farm dust sources and note those of concern.



The use of blackout curtains on this greenhouse helps to reduce the offsite impact of grow lights.

12–3 Light point sources (between 30 minutes after sunset and 30 minutes before sunrise)

BACKGROUND

Light problems can result from farm practices. The risk of receiving complaints from neighbours is lower if there are fewer point sources of light on the farm.

Review the list of light sources and note the ones you may need to be concerned about and manage the light sources to reduce the impact on your neighbours.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

OPTION 1 – ACTION

Reduce the number of night-time light point sources located within 250 m (820 ft.) of a neighbour's dwelling.

OPTION 2- ACTION

Add berms or tree plantings to block light.

Add blackout curtains inside greenhouses to contain light.

OPTION 3 – COMPENSATING FACTOR

Replace current lighting system with directional lighting (e.g., LED) to minimize offsite impacts.

12–4. Fly sources

BACKGROUND

Fly problems can result from farm practices. The risk of receiving complaints from neighbours is lower if there are fewer point sources of flies on the farm.

Review the list of fly sources and note the ones you may need to be concerned about and manage the fly sources to reduce the impact on your neighbours.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

OPTION 1 – ACTION

Reduce the number of fly point sources located within 250 m (820 ft.) of neighbour's dwelling.

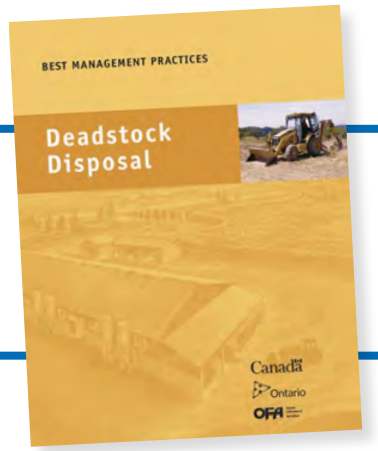
OPTION 2 – COMPENSATING FACTOR

Find ways to minimize fly point sources that cannot be eliminated:

- repair water leaks inside livestock and poultry barns – drier barns are less desirable for flies to lay their eggs
- verify/calibrate ventilation equipment in livestock and poultry barns to ensure sufficient air exchange – drier barns are less desirable for flies to lay their eggs
- start an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategy for fly control, (e.g., fly monitoring cards) to determine when to apply parasitic wasps, Hister beetles, fly bait stations, etc.
- incorporate any vegetable culls applied to crop land
- keep vegetation mowed around buildings

Spread vegetable culls can be a fly source. Incorporation will help to minimize this nuisance.

For more information on fly management in poultry barns see publication House fly control in poultry barns.



For much more information about deadstock management options, including composting, refer to the Deadstock Disposal BMP book.

12-5. Smoke point sources

BACKGROUND

Smoke problems can result from farm practices. The risk of receiving complaints from neighbours is lower if there are fewer point sources of smoke on the farm.

Review the list of smoke sources and note the ones you may need to be concerned about and manage the smoke sources to reduce the impact on your neighbours.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

OPTION 1 – ACTION

Reduce the number of smoke point sources located within 250 m (820 ft.) of neighbour's dwelling.

Find ways to minimize those that cannot be eliminated:

- plan to reduce the impact from all smoke sources that are within 250 m (820 ft.) of neighbouring homes

OPTION 2 – ACTION

Select location on farm to conduct burn to minimize smoke effect on neighbour and only burn when wind conditions are appropriate.

OPTION 3 – COMPENSATING FACTOR

Ensure all combustion appliances display a certification mark (CSA, ULC, etc.) indicating they have undergone testing. Unit is installed and maintained according to manufacturer guidelines.

Most municipalities require permits for on-farm burning.

The **Establishing Tree Cover BMP book** includes a chapter on designing, planting and maintaining windbreaks, shelterbelts and treed fencerows. Properly sited, these plantings provide a visually appealing screen, and reduce dust, noise and odour levels.

12-6. Odour sources

BACKGROUND

Odour problems can result from farm practices. The risk of receiving complaints from neighbours is lower if there are fewer point sources of odour on the farm.

Review the list of odour sources and note the ones you may need to be concerned about and manage the odour sources to reduce the impact on your neighbours.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

OPTION 1 – ACTION

Reduce or relocate the number of point source odours within 250 m (820 ft.) of neighbour's dwelling.

OPTION 2 – COMPENSATING FACTOR

Establish visual screening such as tree planting or earthen berm between odour point source and neighbouring land use.

Proper compost management and separation distance from a neighbour's dwelling will help to minimize odour complaints.

Review these OMAFA resources:

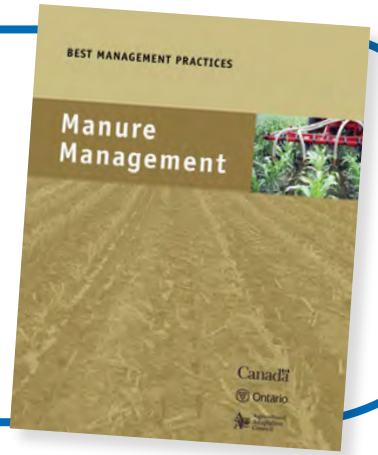
The Farming and Food Production Protection Act, 1998 and Nuisance Complaints

12–7. Minimum Distance Separation II (MDS II) setback of existing livestock housing from nearby land uses

BACKGROUND

Minimum Distance Separation (MDS II) is a provincial tool used by municipalities to calculate the recommended setback between livestock housing and neighbouring land uses to minimize odour nuisance. MDS II is applied at the time of a builidng permit application to construct a new livestock barn or to expand an existing livestock operation. MDS II setbacks can vary based on a number of factors, including, the type and number of livestock housed, the manure handling system, and the neighbouring land uses.

The Manure Management BMP book has in-depth information and options for siting manure storages, managing odours, treating, storing and handling manure, managing runoff from yards and stored feeds, as well as application planning and technology.



Review these OMAFA resources:

Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas, Publication 851

Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Formulae, Publication 853

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WHAT CAN YOU DO?

OPTION 1 – ACTION

Evaluate current buildings and plan to locate any new and expanded facilities to meet the required setback distance.

OPTION 2 – COMPENSATING FACTOR

Although existing facilities might not meet MDS II setbacks from neighbouring houses or other land use:

- establish visual screening such as tree planting between barn and neighbouring land use
- avoid placing ventilation exhaust fans on the side of building closest to neighbours

Minimum Distance Separation II setbacks are designed to avoid nuisance odour conflict between livestock production and other incompatible land uses and activities.

12-8. Minimum Distance Separation II setback of existing manure storages from nearby land use

BACKGROUND

Manure and other organic material storage odours are the single largest source of odours from a farm. The type of material stored, the storage type and the size of exposed surface area all contribute to the degree of offensive odours generated.

The number of neighbours and their proximity to the storage site, as well as the types of neighbouring land use, are all factors that influence the potential for odour complaints. In most cases, the greater the distance from the manure storage to neighbours, the less likely that conflicts will develop.

MDS II establishes the required distance that new manure storages must be from neighbouring dwellings, low-density human occupancy uses such as industrial areas, and high-density human occupation such as schools, churches or settlement areas.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

OPTION 1 – ACTION

Move or replace livestock manure storage to meet (or exceed) MDS II distance.

OPTION 2 – ACTION

Place a cover on all existing manure and organic material storages that do not meet MDS II distances:

- choose a permanent roof structure or temporary tarp – a cover will reduce regular odours that are carried by the wind. Required MDS setback distance for covered liquid manure storage is lower than same size uncovered liquid storage.

OPTION 3 – COMPENSATING FACTOR

Install a board fence around the storage to reduce air movement.

OPTION 4 – COMPENSATING FACTOR

For under-barn storages, relocate any manure pit fan exhaust away from neighbouring properties if possible.

OPTION 5 – COMPENSATING FACTOR

Place and maintain a 15-30 cm (6-12 inch) layer of straw mulch on the surface of manure storage to reduce air movement.

12-9. Temporary field storage of manure and other agricultural source materials

BACKGROUND

Under the Nutrient Management Act, temporary field storages are allowed for short-term stockpiling (less than six months) of solid manure and other Agricultural Source Materials (ASM) such as compost and horticultural culls produced on the farm.

These temporary storages are used for various reasons. For example, field conditions may not be suitable for spreading (too wet, snow cover, etc.); standing crops in the field do not allow for immediate spreading; material is being imported by truck from generating site (longer distance) and must be transferred to spreading equipment in field, etc.

The saying "people smell with their eyes" is particularly appropriate regarding temporary field storage of ASM. For this reason, the field storage should not be visible from neighbouring homes if possible.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

OPTION 1 – ACTION

Locate the temporary field storage to meet the required setback distances:

- 125 m (410 ft.) from a neighbour's home
- 250 m (820 ft.) from a residential area
- out of line of sight of neighbouring homes if possible

OPTION 2 – ACTION

Remove and spread the temporary field storage pile as soon as weather and field conditions permit.

Temporary field storage of agricultural source materials are not a management-free option. Consider distances, wind direction, site conditions and visibility when selecting a location.

12–10. Application method for liquid manure and other liquid agricultural source materials

BACKGROUND

When land-applied, liquid manure and other liquid organic materials can give off strong odours. Several strategies can help prevent nuisance odour complaints.

Minimize the number of spreading events per year. The less frequently that liquid manure and other liquid organic materials are spread, the fewer times that neighbours will experience odours.

Reduce the duration of the odour event that neighbours may experience. Spreading should be done in as short a time as is reasonably possible.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

OPTION 1 – ACTION

Inject all liquid manure or liquid agricultural source materials below soil surface:

- retrofit existing equipment, purchase new equipment, or make use of custom applicator

OPTION 2 – ACTION

Surface-apply liquid materials as low to the ground as possible, using splash plates on tanker or dragline applicator:

- incorporate all surface-applied liquid agricultural source materials within 24 hours if weather permits

OPTION 3 – COMPENSATING FACTOR

If applying liquid manure to a forage crop where incorporation is not possible, use drop tubes or dribble bar on tanker or dragline applicator to distribute the liquid materials directly onto the crop to minimize odours.

Injection of liquid manure will help to reduce odours and the loss of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus.

12–11. Application method for solid manure and other solid agricultural source materials

BACKGROUND

When land-applied, solid manure and other solid organic materials can give off strong odours. Several strategies can help prevent nuisance odour complaints.

Minimize the number of spreading events per year. The less frequently that liquid manure and other solid organic materials are spread, the fewer times that neighbours will experience odours.

Reduce the duration of the odour event that neighbours may experience. Spreading should be done in as short a time as is reasonably possible.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

OPTION 1 – ACTION

Incorporate all solid manure and other solid organic materials as soon as possible after spreading (within 24 hours).

OPTION 2 – ACTION

For materials applied within 125 m (410 ft.) of neighbour's dwelling:

- incorporate within 24 hours
- complete spreading in as short a time as possible

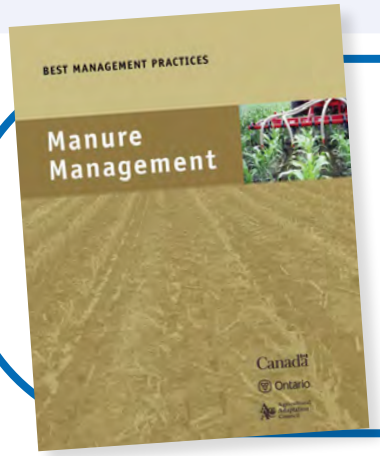
OPTION 3 – COMPENSATING FACTOR

If solid manure and other materials cannot be incorporated because of a standing crop (e.g., forages), properly compost manure and other organic materials prior to land application.

Read the OMAFA factsheet:

Incorporation of liquid and solid prescribed materials

When application near neighbours is necessary, incorporating in a timely manner will reduce conflicts and complaints. Incorporation also helps reduce nutrient loss.



Review the chapter on application in the **Manure Management BMP book**.

12–12. Number of application periods per year of manure and other agricultural source materials

BACKGROUND

For farms located in populated areas, aim for the fewest number of application periods per year.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

OPTION 1 – ACTION

Limit the number of application periods per year.

OPTION 2 – COMPENSATING FACTOR

Notify neighbours a few days prior to application.

Avoid spreading on the fields with close neighbours on or just before weekends, especially long weekends.

Avoid spreading on the fields with close neighbours on hot humid days where possible.

Ideally, one time per year would be required for the application of manure or other organic materials.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

ONTARIO MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND AGRIBUSINESS (OMAFA)

- Agricultural Information Contact Centre (AICC)
  Toll free: 1-877-424-1300 | e-mail: ag.info.omafa@ontario.ca

  Find most of the resources listed below at www.ontario.ca

Factsheets

- Noise nuisance from stationary farm equipment
- Responding to agricultural nuisance complaints
- Using propane-fired cannons to keep birds away from vineyards
- Temporary field storage of solid manure or other agricultural source materials
- The Farming and Food Production Protection Act, 1998 and nuisance complaints
- Incorporation of liquid and solid prescribed materials

Best management Practices Series

- Deadstock Disposal
- Establishing Tree Cover
- Manure Management
- Controlling Soil Erosion on the Farm
- Pesticide Storage, Handling and Application
- Streamside Grazing
- Buffer Strips
- Cropland Drainage
- Managing Nighttime Greenhouse Light Emissions

ONTARIO MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND AGRIBUSINESS (OMAFA), *continued*

Publications

- The Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Document, Publication 853
- House Fly Control in Poultry Barns, Publication 849
- Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas, Publication 851

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ONTARIO MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT, CONSERVATION AND PARKS

- Report pollution: 1-866-663-8477
- Report an incident online

NORMAL FARM PRACTICES PROTECTION BOARD

- Citizen's Guide to the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board

LEGISLATION/ACTS

- Farming and Food Production Protection Act, 1998
- Environmental Protection Act, 1990
- Nutrient Management Act, 2002