



CDQAP Quality Assurance Update - January 2023

Managing Dairies During Heavy Rainfall

Actions producers can take in-between rain storms.

By Dr. Michael Payne and Denise Mullinax, CDQAP

Any producer who's wrestled with local flooding, corral ponding and mud knows it's easier to take preventative measures before the storms than it is to address them once they've begun. Every year CDQAP provides [Tips for Water Board Inspections](#) and every fall highlights [Dairy Winterizing Checklists](#). But what can be done after the rains have already started? Here are some things to think about while it is calm between storms.



Property Perimeter – Water Board staff advise that during and after storm events all dischargers (including non-dairy facilities) should check for threatened off-site discharge. Visually surveying the property perimeter provides final confirmation that manure infrastructure is working. This includes that tailwater berms are intact, pumps in settling basins and storage ponds are functioning, transfer pipes are not clogged and pathways for clean-water runoff have not been obstructed with debris.

Lagoons – Softened by prolonged rain and stressed by increased hydrostatic pressure, full earthen dams, levees and ponds can experience catastrophic failure. This is why dry-season prevention of weed roots and rodent holes is so important. During storm season producers should carefully monitor the integrity of lagoon and berm walls.

Lagoon are required to have adequate freeboard (2' for above ground ponds and 1' for in ground ponds) to maintain structural integrity. Lagoon water spilling over the top of containment walls can create erosion gullies, weakening wall structure. This "overtopping" phenomenon is also one of the most common cause of dam and levee failure and can progress rapidly to a crisis. Under no circumstances should a lagoon be allowed to spill over. If evidence of threatened overtopping, seepage or boils is present, producers should seek professional assistance immediately.

Levees –Producers whose property contains or is adjacent to a public or private levee may have obligations to maintain or at least not harm levee integrity. For both farm safety and legal reasons producers should monitor nearby levees and report threatened structures to county emergency management immediately.

Corrals –One way to minimize corral ponding is to prevent intrusion of clean rainwater into the lots. Some maintenance can be completed in between storms, such as unclogging and repairing gutters and ensuring their flow is directed away from

Animal Activists During Natural Disasters

Recent flooding saw a rash of incidents involving animal activists.

By Dr. Michael Payne, UC Davis, School of Vet. Medicine; Director, CDQAP

While anti-livestock activists commonly misrepresent animal care practices, to exploit farmers wrestling with natural disasters seems particularly manipulative.

Following a levee breach a Merced calf-raising area was inundated with flood waters. While producers were organizing evacuation of the calves, activists posted video stating that the calves had been abandoned to the floodwaters.

All the calves were successfully relocated, thanks to the efforts of dozens of farmers, neighbors and other volunteers in the industry. In apparently unrelated incidents other activists in Merced, Lodi and Petaluma were also out in flooded areas collecting video.

With the relaxation of COVID travel restrictions, livestock and poultry operations have seen an uptick in activist activity. Previously activists have [impersonated government employees, allied industry and job applicants](#). More recently producers have received requests for educational farm tours.



What Can You Do About Trespass?

While options for activists who remain on public right-of-way are limited, there are still a number of actions producers can take to protect themselves and their property.

Post Your Property – No Trespassing signs, posted at least 3 per mile and at all entrances allow D.A.s to prosecute trespass as a misdemeanor punishable by fines of up \$1,000 and/or 6 months in jail.

Immediately Call the Sheriff – When alerted to the presence of trespassers, employees should immediately contact the local sheriff or police department. If employees are uncomfortable contacting law enforcement themselves, they should be empowered to contact the farm owner and manager.

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corrals. Sloping, berms and drainage ditches can also help direct clean stormwater from un-manured areas from running into corrals.

Stormwater drainage from manured corrals to lagoon storage is essential. The Water Board requires standing water to be removed from corrals within 72 hours after a rain event. Furthermore, minimizing standing water and [mud within corrals](#) improves both animal health and milk production. Maintenance and repair of corral slopes can be difficult if not impossible during heavy storm periods. A period of dry weather, sun and wind might create a window of opportunity allowing for some re-filling, re-grading and compacting of corral surface.

Manure & Feed Storage Areas – Both solid manure piles and feed storage areas should be protected from direct rainfall and run-on storm water. The methods described above for diversion of clean storm water away from corrals can also be used for solid manure storage and the feed area.

Covering solid manure prevents rainwater from coming in contact with manure nutrients. This prevents manure run-off and Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emissions.

Emergency Manure Management Plan – Accidents do happen and responding quickly can minimize recovery costs and legal problems. CDQAP has a template: [Emergency Manure Management Plan](#). The Dairy General Order requires sampling any off-property discharge water, from crop fields, pasture, or the production area. Producers are referred to the CDQAP article: [Storm Water Sampling: A Quick Review Just in Case!](#).



Animal Activists During Disasters *continued*

Don't Engage – Activists cherish video footage of angry farmers to use for publicity and fund raising, so resist the urge to confront or debate trespassers. Photos of trespassers, vehicles and license plates however can be useful later in court or to alert the dairy community.

Share with Trade Groups – It's also useful to report incidents to your processor and/or trade organization. This information is widely distributed in the industry as well as with county Sheriff's offices. This alerts producers and law enforcement throughout the state of developing threats.

Check Credentials – Almost all legitimate government agencies will arrange farm visits in advance. The identification credentials of any unfamiliar or unexpected government employee should be scrutinized, photographed, and confirmed by phone call to the agency's main office.

Employ Vigilance in Hiring – Activists making false inquiries about employment is a growing problem. A CDQAP newsletter article, [Vigilance in Your Hiring Process](#), highlights important precautions to identify an activist intent on collecting undercover video recordings.

CDQAP's webpage, [Dealing with Trespass and Drones on California Dairies](#) provides comprehensive information on how to most effectively assist law enforcement.

California Dairy Water Update



It's not too late to attend this **free** educational event highlighting water scarcity issues and opportunities.

Thursday, February 2 | 1:30 - 3:30 PM

Tulare Veteran's Memorial District Auditorium
(1771 E Tulare Ave, Tulare, CA 93274)

Register: <https://CADairyWater.eventbrite.com>

Attendees will:

- Find out how the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) is being implemented in dairy communities.
- Hear findings from the recent economic assessment of SGMA's impacts on the state's dairy and cattle sectors.
- Learn the latest from the Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley, a coalition working to advance commonsense water solutions.

A recording of the presentations will be made available following the event. The event is co-hosted by Dairy Cares, California Cattle Council, and California Creamery Operators Association.