

DBA and Edge: Two dairy groups request state review of 'outlandish' farm regulations

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GREEN BAY, Wis. — The Dairy Business Association (DBA) and Edge Dairy Farmer Cooperative say several townships in northwestern Wisconsin are imposing “outlandish” regulations on large livestock farms, and the dairy groups asked the state to step in to review the matter.

“These towns have clearly ignored current laws, regulations and related review and approval processes prescribed by our state Legislature and the department that provide methods local governments may use to regulate farms,” the groups wrote today [in a request](#) for a so-called material review to the chief legal counsel and livestock facility siting staff at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP).

Six townships in Burnett and Polk counties have created a model ordinance for the new, far-reaching rules, which would severely impede new or expanding large livestock farms, from added fees and additional reporting to lower caps on animal numbers and limited hours of operation, the groups said. Three of the towns — Eureka, Laketown and Trade Lake — already have enacted ordinances. The other three — Bone Lake, Luck and Sterling — have proposed similar rules.

“Time is of the essence for the department to aid in curbing these efforts before

more farmers face uncertain and outlandish regulatory measures,” the letter states.

A material review is a process through which DATCP assesses whether an ordinance is consistent with the state law that regulates local government approval of large livestock farms designated as concentrated animal feeding operations, or CAFOs. The findings carry no binding authority.

It is abundantly clear “the towns have altogether evaded Wisconsin’s Livestock Facility Siting Law,” DBA and Edge wrote.

The letter also was signed by two farmers in Burnett and Polk counties and was sent to the towns.

This is not the first time the dairy groups have pushed back on attempts at regulatory overreach by county and town governments in that area. In 2020, for example, the groups helped convince Polk County officials to pull from consideration a proposed ordinance that potentially could have imposed a moratorium on CAFOs. These farms, generally defined as those with 700 or more mature cows and required to have a permit, already are heavily regulated by the state and federal governments.

About Wisconsin’s Livestock Facility Siting Law:

Wisconsin Statute 93.90 regulates local government approval of new or expanding livestock facilities. ATCP 51 is the rule the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection uses to administer the law, which is meant to streamline local government approvals and standards for farm permits. Local governments do not have to require conditional use or other permits for the farms. If they choose to require permits, however, they must adopt all the law’s standards and procedures. [Read more here.](#)