

May 15, 2024

Re: Application LA24002 Notification Letter

Dear Ms. Peddle:

A few weeks ago 72 letters were mailed out to landowners/residents in the Fort Macleod area. This letter was to inform us of an application (Application LA24002) which was submitted by Van Huighenbos Farms to expand their existing feedlot. Although 72 letters were mailed the location of the feedlot puts many more people at risk. The Town of Fort Macleod is not included in the area of concern but is only meters from the proposed expansion. Those of us signing this letter are not opposed to feedlots as they provide a necessary service to our food industry. What we are opposed to is the location of this feedlot and the resulting negative effects on the residents and the environment.

Being located near a CFO (Confined Feeding Operation) impacts those living and partaking in outdoor activities near such a facility in various ways:

Health Issues

Water Quality Issues

Social/Community Disruption

Decreased Land Values

Health Issues

Does manure smell? Well we all know it does but the smell of manure goes far beyond annoying. What we are breathing in is not only stinky air but air with gases such as ammonia as well as manure particulate matter. As far back as 1972 animal feeding operations have been identified as potential pollutants (Hribar 2010). The odor resulting from manure can be annoying at best. At worst poor air quality due to air born fecal dust can be devastating to our health. In 1998 Chinook Health reported one of the highest rates of gastrointestinal illnesses in the area known as Feedlot Alley compared to the rest of the province. The rates were 1.5 times the provincial average. Those located near the proposed facility have reason for concern.

Health issues of individuals living near CFO have been known for some time. In 2018 a study published in the North Carolina Medical Journal studied the impacts of swine CFO on residents. Duke University researchers concluded that those living near such facilities were more likely to have anemia, kidney disease, infectious disease and low birth weights than those living elsewhere (Graddy 2020). Poor air quality caused by high levels of ammonia

can cause lung damage. One study found neighbors of CFO reported far more respiratory issues than those not located near a CFO (Thu et al. (1997)).

Water Quality and Quantity

Large feedlots pose a potential threat to the water supply due to runoff. Over application of manure is another concern as it can overwhelm the absorptive capacity of the soil resulting in run off or leaching into the ground water (Hribar 2010). A study in Idaho showed elevated levels of nitrates and presence of veterinary antibiotics in water samples taken in areas close to CFO (Batt, Snow & Alga 2006). Contaminated ground water can affect surface water (Spellman & Whiting 2007). Contaminated ground water can move laterally, eventually entering rivers and streams.

The location of the proposed feedlot and the land being used for manure distribution could result in pollution to the directly adjacent, downhill already at risk Willow Creek and the large aquifer directly below it, which many of us depend on.

Water contaminated by manure is a public health concern. Consuming contaminated water can result in vomiting, diarrhea, birth defects and cancer (Schechinger 2024). Residents should not live with the daily stress of wondering if their water is safe. Also, run-off from feed lot manure can cause algae bloom detrimental to humans and wildlife.

With the huge amount of water required daily to keep 16,500 head of cattle hydrated, process feed and clean the facility, the strain on our water supply will be amplified. In a time when many are being asked to conserve water an additional strain of this magnitude on our water supply could be disastrous.

Social/Community Disruption

Many people live rurally to escape the noise of the city. With increased vehicular traffic, animal noise and odor many residents in close proximity may have to alter their lifestyle. Instead of spending time outside being active or just relaxing we may now have to stay inside to escape the noise and smell. Changing ones lifestyle due to outside air quality can result in adverse mental well being. This was documented by Schiffman et al (1995, 2000) when they concluded that neighbors of CFO experienced increased mood disorders including anxiety, depression and sleep disturbances as a result of odours. Being outside, in the sun and wind listening to the magpies and robins is a serious mood booster. Spending time outside has been documented to enhance vitality by as much as 40% while the opposite occurs when being held prisoner by four walls (Journal of Environmental Psychology 2010). Many who choose to live in the country do so to enjoy the outdoors but will become hermits to escape the smell.

Simple activities like spending time around a fire pit, enjoying the sunrise/sunset of hanging your cloths out to take advantage of free solar power will be taken away from those of us

close to the facility. Our Alberta winds will carry fecal dust to neighboring residents creating not only odor issues but health issues for residents, their livestock as well as wildlife. Young and old will spend more time at health care facilities to cope with respiratory and psychological problems resulting from living in these conditions.

Fecal material carried in the air or watering with manure contaminated water can contaminate nearby crops and gardens. Consuming contaminated produce could result in sickness and sometimes death.

And flies....the insect population will multiply exponentially with a feedlot of this size. Flies are not only annoying and affect outdoor activities but are disease transmitters. Large concentrations of a specie often result in disease outbreaks. Flies could potentially transmit diseases to surrounding humans, livestock and wildlife.

Land Values/Business Losses

For those of us located close to this proposed feedlot we will likely see our land values decrease. Most prospective buyers are not going to want to purchase a home that is in a noisy location, has strong odors, possible water and food contamination issues.

Local businesses may also be impacted by poor air quality. Will golfers return to the local golf course after a morning of breathing in ammonia? Will customers want to sip on a locally crafted beer outside on a patio while inhaling fecal dust? Will bus loads of tourists from Buffalo Jump want to walk down historic main street with the wafting scents of manure?

Conclusion

Those of us signing this letter have grown up and/or worked in some aspect of the agricultural industry. We are not city people opposed to animal production. I have personally worked in numerous swine CFO. Others have worked in kill plants while others produce feed for local animal producers.

An expansion of the proposed feedlot size would be detrimental to the surrounding community. Residents are sure to see decreased land values which will affect lifestyle and retirement plans. Local rural and town businesses may see a decline in revenue as tourists and locals alike choose to shop without inhaling gases emitted by the vast amount of manure produced by 16,500 cattle. Most importantly, the potential mental/physical health issues and water quality/security issues leads us to a conclusion that we must oppose this application.

Sincerely

Joanne Gilbertson
Gail Knapek
Austin Kristjanson

Mark Conner
Kenzy Devlin