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## **NRCS Marshalling Resources for Dairies**

Albuquerque, NM – USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is marshalling resources to assist New Mexico’s dairy industry in being proactive and avoiding regulatory actions, fines, and permitting by voluntarily addressing water quality problems.

NRCS New Mexico is responding to dairies and feedlots that are increasing in numbers in eastern and southeastern New Mexico. Leaching and runoff from manure and effluent can contaminate ground and surface water, and Nutrient Management Plans are required by EPA and the New Mexico Environment Department. These plans are required to be written and implemented by December 31, 2006.

“We do not have the resources to meet all of the large New Mexico dairy industry’s needs, and have to rely on as much self-initiative as possible,” said John Gleim, NRCS New Mexico assistant state conservationist for programs. “That said, we are operating at every level possible including providing planning information, technical support, and facility design and cost-sharing under the 2002 Farm Bill Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).”

In 2002, New Mexico ranked seventh in the nation for milk production. At the same time its dairies led the nation in average herd size.

The manure from these large facilities can contaminate ground and surface water with nitrogen, phosphorous, bacteria, and sediment. It is essential that there be proper storage, handling, and use of effluent, manure, and inorganic fertilizers to maintain the quality of New Mexico’s waters for human consumption, recreation, fisheries, and irrigation.

NRCS most recently published an 11-Step Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning brochure that outlines the process animal feeding operations can follow.

“Various state and federal agencies, as well as private consultants and industry groups are available to help producers address water quality problems and develop Nutrient Management Plans,” said Gleim.

The Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan Fact sheet and other information is available at [www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/water/nmafo.html](http://www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/water/nmafo.html)

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