

## ANIMAL WASTE

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As of 1998, Washington County was home to 35,000 cattle and 3,500 hogs. These animals produce as much waste as a city of over 650,000 people. This manure can be a valuable and economical source of fertilizer. Improperly managed however, it can adversely impact water quality and aquatic life.

Significantly lowered oxygen levels occur as a direct result of the decomposition of animal wastes in streams and lakes. Furthermore, animal waste contains high concentrations of phosphorus and nitrogen. When added to the ecosystem, they create conditions favorable for the occurrence of eutrophication, thereby inducing similar problems as caused by commercial fertilizer runoff. Bacteria (e.g. fecal coliform) and ammonia – a toxic form of nitrogen – are also associated with in raw waste. Both are harmful, and in extreme cases fatal, to animals and humans.

The major sources of manure runoff in the county are from concentrated feeding lots, improper storage and field spreading practices and stream pasturing. The Wisconsin Priority Watershed Program has been highly successful in certain areas of the county, but manure management practices need to be implemented on more livestock farms in the county.

**Goal:** *Reduce the human and environmental risks posed by animal waste*