CENTRAL VALLEY REGIONAL WATER QUALITY CONTROL BOARD

CLOSURE INSPECTION

DATE: 8 May 2012

LOCATION & COUNTY: Reeve Road Heifer Ranch
21070 Reeve Road, Tracy
San Joaquin County

CONTACTS: Henry Tosta (209-814-0139) / Jim Avila

INSPECTION DATE: 1 May 2012

INSPECTED BY: Sean Walsh / Gilberto Corral (CVRWQCB)

OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS:

On 1 May 2012, Regional Water Quality Control Board staff (staff) conducted a closure inspection at the Reeve Road Heifer Ranch located at 21070 Reeve Road in Tracy. The Reeve Road Heifer Ranch is permitted for 127 mature cows; the facility is currently housing only support stock. According to the operator of the facility, Henry Tosta, there are approximately 800 heifers being housed at the facility. This facility is still covered under the General Order for Existing Milk Cow Dairies.

The milk barn and sprinkler pen have been dismantled.

General Order-required operational documents were not available for review at the time of the inspection.

Three wells were inspected. Holes were observed underneath the well-pad at Well #1 (Photo 1). A cracked well-pad was observed at Well #2 (Photo 3). Excessive vegetation and dirt were observed on and adjacent to the well-pad at Well #3 (Photo 2).

The wastewater storage lagoon is non-operational; there is a large notch cut into the north bank that would allow water to escape (Photo 4).

The corrals are contained, clean, and well-graded (Photo 5).

No silage is stored on the property.

No liquid wastewater or solid manure is applied to the facility's cropland. While inspecting the cropland associated with the Henry Tosta Dairy, Mr. Tosta stated that while dairying at the Reeve Road Heifer Ranch he buried his dead cows immediately south of the wastewater storage lagoon. Staff walked this area and observed a significant amount of bones and solid manure (Photos 6-7). Additional inspection of the cropland revealed an area of disturbed soil.

Further investigation revealed an excavation in which two mature cows were being buried; a very strong odor of decaying flesh was also noted in the area (Photos 8-12). The area in the cropland where the dead cows are being buried is immediately adjacent to the Main Drain Canal of Naglee-Burk Irrigation District. Mr. Tosta addressed the issue of burying the dead cows as follows:

1) The cows in the excavation died 5-6 days ago and are from the Henry Tosta Dairy at 20662 San Jose Road in Tracy.
2) The rendering facility would not receive the dead cows due to bloating and smell.
3) San Joaquin County Health Department (Mike Huggins) advised Mr. Tosta to bury the cows two feet below ground and two feet above the water table.
4) Dead cows have been buried like this for the last 5-6 years.
5) Four to six dead cows are buried every month.
6) If possible, sick cows are sold before they die.
7) According to Mr. Tosta, Modesto Tallow is the rendering company that picks up their dead animals.
8) Rendering records for the facility are on a computer which was not accessible at the time of the inspection.

REMEDIATION ITEMS NEEDED AT THE HEIFER RANCH:

1) Remove all carcasses, bones, and solid manure from the area south of the lagoon at the Reeve Road Heifer Ranch. All bones and manure must be exported off-site to a landfill. Provide receipts that the bones and manure were exported to a proper facility.

2) Excavate all the cows and bones that have been buried in the cropland. All cows and bones must be delivered to a landfill. Provide documentation regarding the number of carcasses removed and the destination of the carcasses and bones. Groundwater samples should be obtained after the animals are removed from the above mentioned area.

3) Repair the well-pads, patch the holes underneath the well-pads, and clear all dirt and vegetation from the well-pads and adjacent to the well-pads at Wells #1-3.

4) Remove all manure from the wastewater storage lagoon and export off property. Provide documentation regarding the amount of manure removed and the destination of the manure.

In order to remove this facility from coverage under the General Order all Remediation Items must be confirmed completed by Regional Water Board staff.

Photo 1: Well #1. The well-pad is in good condition. Holes were observed underneath well-pad.

Photo 3: Well #2. Cracked well-pad and holes underneath well-pad.

Photo 2: Well #3. Excessive vegetation and dirt on the well-pad.

Photo 4: A large notch cut into the north embankment of the wastewater storage lagoon.

Photo 5: Corrals are clean and well-graded.

Photo 7: The area of weeds is located immediately south of the wastewater storage lagoon. Staff observed a significant amount of bones and manure in this area. Later in the inspection, Mr. Tosta stated while he was dairying at this facility he would bury his dead cows in this area (south of lagoon).

Photo 6: This area is located south of the wastewater storage lagoon. Staff observed a significant amount of solid manure and bones.

Photo 8: Dead cows in an open pit. Note the pit is full of water, but the adjacent fields are dry.

Photo 9: Burying dead cows in the corner of the cropland.

Photo 11: Area where the dead cows are being buried; note the canal on the right is the Main Drain Canal Of Naglee-Burk Irrigation District – this drain discharges directly (via pump) to the Old River which is a major tributary of the San Joaquin River.

Photo 10: This entire area is being used to bury dead cows.

Photo 12: Staff observed several shallow pits like this one at the area of disturbed soil.