



**Title:** Environmental Management Systems for the Iowa Beef Feedlot Industry

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**Organization:** Iowa Beef Center / Iowa State University

**State:** IA      **Region:** Heartland

**Year of Funding:**

**Theme:** Animal Waste Management

**Situation:** The beef industry is of great importance to the state of Iowa with over a million cattle on feed and nearly one million beef cows within the borders of the state. There are over 12,000 beef feedlots, the most of any state, and cattle are on 37,000 farms. Because of the high concentration of livestock in the state, particularly in the western one third, nutrient management issues and ground and surface water quality are of great importance to both the public as well as agricultural operations.

**Objectives:** Livestock Environmental Management Systems (LEMS) constitute a management based approach for improving the environmental performance of your livestock operation. The sequence of plan, implement, check and improve, offers a common sense approach to improved farm management and good environmental stewardship.

**Methods:** Initially, several statewide meetings with stakeholders were held for the purpose of introducing industry leaders to the concepts and benefits of proactive, voluntary, producer driven Environmental Management Systems.

**Partnerships:** Partners include Iowa State University, Iowa Beef Center, Stakeholders such as environmental groups, livestock producer groups and environmental regulatory groups.

**Research:** With the help of Iowa State University beef cattle specialists, approximately 40 beef feedlot operators in western Iowa were identified to participate in this pilot project and initial meetings were held in March 2003. At these meetings, producers worked through a curriculum leading them to the development of their own EMS. They developed an environmental policy statement for their farms incorporating their environmental stewardship principles and assessed their operations with the help of extension personnel. They then identified priorities to address, and developed plans to promote and sustain sound environmental practices. The LEMS Plan defines priorities, sets measurable objectives for performance, and assists producers in developing procedures to minimize negative environmental impact. With the project manager and ISU Extension specialists providing expertise and necessary tools, feedlots have progressed towards better environmental practices utilizing daily management skills and in several cases, new or remodeled physical plants.

**Resources:** The project was funded in part through Partnerships for Livestock Environmental Management Systems, a 4-year project to explore whether an EMS can be successfully used in the livestock industry.

**Results:** At its conclusion, the program will be evaluated on environmental impact, ease of implementation, producer and stakeholder acceptance and acceptability by regulatory agencies.



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