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## American Public Health Association Urges Moratorium on New Factory Farms

Pollution, health and economic impacts cited as main reasons

New York (NY) January 9, 2004 – The American Public Health Association (APHA) has issued a resolution urging federal, state, and local government health agencies to impose a precautionary moratorium on all new Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) – also known as factory farms – and to initiate and support further research on the health impacts of air and water pollution from such operations.

Negative economic effects on rural communities; health problems associated with air pollution and contaminated drinking water from manure runoff; increasing antibiotics resistance caused by the routine use of antibiotics in farm animals; and serious respiratory problems found among CAFO workers and among neighboring residents are identified as the main reasons for calling for the moratorium.

“We welcome this critical call from physicians and public health officials to stop these devastating practices from inflicting further harm until any uncertainties can be resolved with further study,” says Alice Slater, president of GRACE. “Factory farms pose enormous health threats, not only within rural communities, but in the supermarket where the public is at risk of eating contaminated meat raised with unsustainable practices.”

“We urge our government officials to implement appropriate precautions by rapidly instituting the APHA recommended moratorium on further CAFO development,” continues Slater. “The public needs to be protected from further scandalous neglect of the sort that produced a mad cow in our poorly regulated system.”

According to APHA’s document, an estimated 54 percent of U.S. livestock are concentrated on 5 percent of livestock farms, an indication that factory farms have been growing in size, cramming thousands of animals in limited spaces with little or no access to sunlight, fresh air and movement.

CAFOs generate about 575 billion pounds of manure every year, which is stored in open-air pits called “lagoons” and later spread on the surrounding cropland. The run-off from manure applied to the fields, which exceeds the absorptive capacity of the land, can carry pathogens such as *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Salmonella* and *E.coli* into surface waters, often contaminating drinking water and producing excessive amounts of nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen in the soil. This also causes eutrophication of surface waters where an overgrowth of algae is produced, which depletes water of vital oxygen threatening the survival of marine life.

Manure stored in “lagoons” is also known to generate gases and volatile compounds, such as ammonia and hydrogen sulfide, which are creating severe respiratory problems among at least 25 percent of CAFO workers, including chronic bronchitis and non-allergic asthma. Two published studies of people residing near CAFOs report eye and respiratory symptoms associated with CAFO air emissions, similar to the symptoms experienced by factory farm workers, demonstrating that air pollution from CAFOs is becoming a public health problem.

In addition, antibiotics given routinely to factory farm animals not merely to treat disease but to promote growth and compensate for the stress of raising animals in confinement, contribute to the proliferation of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, diminishing the effectiveness of antibiotics in treating human disease. These routine and *non-therapeutic* uses of antibiotics “account for an estimated 13 million pounds of antibiotics annually, [...] as compared to 3 million pounds of antibiotics prescribed for humans,” states APHA’s document.

Finally, all these factors contribute to the decline in local economic and social indicators associated with increased numbers of CAFOs in certain rural areas, including decrease in property values, population, social cohesion, and infrastructure.

For over five years, **GRACE** (Global Resource Action Center for the Environment) has been working to eliminate factory farming in favor of a sustainable food production system that is healthful and humane, economically viable and ecologically sound.

GRACE works toward its mission mainly through the ground-breaking **GRACE Factory Farm Project**, which comprises the Factory Farm Campaign, a unique national team of consultants and experts working to help communities organize to oppose new or expanding factory farms; the Henry Spira/GRACE Project on Industrial Animal Production (IAP) in partnership with the Center for a Livable Future at Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, fostering interdisciplinary research addressing the impact of IAP on diet, the environment, and on human and animal health; and Sustainable Table, to educate consumers and increase demand for sustainable food through awareness campaigns, promotional events, and through offering viable solutions to the factory farm problem. For more information, visit: [www.gracelinks.org](http://www.gracelinks.org).

**The APHA’s document can be viewed at: <http://www.apha.org/legislative/policy/2003/2003-007.pdf>**

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