

Sheltered Livestock Care Facilities Lower Homeowner Taxes

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On June 18, a Purdue University team of extension specialists presented its preliminary findings on the impacts of livestock farms on local communities. They discovered what most of us in agriculture already know: regulated farming operations are environmentally responsible, and like any other business, the taxes they pay support county budgets and lower property taxes for local homeowners.

The Purdue study's snapshot of 50 swine and dairy farms in eight Indiana counties includes four sections: owner/operator characteristics, a review of environmental incidents, tax and budget implications for local governments and suggestions for local planners when working with new or existing sheltered animal farms.

According to the study, the farmers interviewed are a young and well-educated group compared to the general farming population. Most reported they had no problems with neighbors or local planners when establishing their livestock farms. In fact, 80 percent of those surveyed rated community response as mostly or all positive.

Data also indicated that sheltered livestock care facilities purchase most of their feed and supplies both locally and within Indiana, and hire more local labor than a typical farm. Wages on larger livestock farms average \$12.38 per hour, compared to an average farm wage of \$8.50 an hour.

The Purdue study also found that environmental violations by sheltered livestock operations were uncommon. >From 1995 to 2008, only 15 of the 325 environmental violations cited in the eight county study area were attributed to large livestock operations. The rest were issued to a variety of sources including cities, businesses, churches and parks.

The impact of larger sheltered livestock farms on local government budgets and taxes was mixed according to the Purdue study. Analysis showed that many operations generate enough added tax revenue to cover any costs they create. But in all cases, part of the tax burden born by livestock farms provides property tax relief for existing homeowners.

Any Indiana livestock farmer who has been in business for any length of time can tell you sad stories of how things used to be. Unsheltered animals were subject to extremes of summer heat and winter cold; mortality rates were high because animals couldn't be closely monitored and treated; fighting for territory, to the point of injury or death, was common; newborns and younger animals routinely suffered attacks by foxes, coyotes or their mothers.

Research, applied animal science and new technologies now provide a safe, secure and sheltered environment for Indiana livestock. The men and women who manage these modern farms care for their animals every hour of every day to ensure we have safe and affordable meat, eggs and milk. Indiana Farm Bureau thanks them for their hard work and dedication. All Hoosiers should do the same.

PowerPoint that was presented, please visit <http://www.agecon.purdue.edu/extension/programs/cafo.asp>