

Bill: Senate Bill 80
Committee: Senate Natural Resources Committee
Position: Favor
Date: March 26, 2025

Support for SB 80: Factory Farm Moratorium in Groundwater Management Areas

Dear Chair Golden and Members of the Senate Natural Resources Committee,

On behalf of Farm Sanctuary, a nonprofit committed to building food systems that work better for everyone—animals, people, and the planet—and our over 1.8 million members and supporters, we are proud to submit the following testimony in favor of SB 80. This bill, which would enact a moratorium on new and expanding factory farms in Groundwater Management Areas (GWMA), is a critical step toward protecting the health of Oregon’s communities, environment, and farm animals.

Nitrate Contamination Threatens Public Health

Oregon's groundwater, particularly in GWMA like the Lower Umatilla Basin, suffers from a severe nitrate contamination crisis. Nitrate levels in these areas test up to 11 times higher than the EPA’s safe drinking water standards.¹ Nitrate contamination can cause health problems including thyroid disease, blue baby syndrome (congenital heart disease in infants), and certain cancers.² Factory farms, which generate large quantities of manure and fertilizer, are a major source of this contamination.³ By preventing new and expanding factory farms in GWMA, SB 80 would protect our water quality and public health from further degradation.

Factory Farms Harm Rural Communities & the Environment

Factory farms are not just a threat to water quality—they also harm rural communities and the environment. These large-scale operations contribute significantly to air pollution, releasing methane, ammonia, and other harmful emissions that exacerbate respiratory issues like asthma

¹ Obtained from Oregon Department of Agriculture FOIA request.

² Ward, M., Jones, R., Brender, J., De Kok, T., Weyer, P., Nolan, B., Villanueva, C., & Van Breda, S. (2018). Drinking water nitrate and human health: An updated review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 15(7), 1557. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15071557>

³ Breon, J., Ruane, K., & Mankel, M. (2025). *The devastating toll of factory farm water pollution in Iowa*. Food & Water Watch. <https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/2025/01/29/iowa-factory-farm-water-pollution/>

and bronchitis.⁴ Factory farms also consolidate land into the hands of large corporate agribusinesses, diminishing rural economic opportunities and driving down property values for local communities.⁵ Passing SB 80 would help protect rural communities from the negative effects of factory farms while taking a meaningful step toward preserving Oregon's environment and public health.

Factory Farm Practices Clash With Oregon's Commitment to Compassion

Oregon is recognized for its commitment to animal welfare across various industries. Unfortunately, this priority is often not extended to farm animals within our food system.⁶ Animals in factory farms are confined to overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, and are deprived of basic freedoms such as movement, social interaction, and access to appropriate care. These conditions cause immense physical and psychological harm to the animals, undermining Oregon's commitment to animal welfare.⁷ SB 80 would prevent the expansion of factory farms that exploit animals and help align our agricultural practices with the state's values of compassion and respect for all living beings.

Regulatory Failures Demand Immediate Action

Despite this growing crisis, state agencies have allowed some of Oregon's largest factory farms to expand, including operations that house over 160,000 cows in regions already struggling with polluted air and water.⁸ The state has failed to hold these operations accountable, and the existing regulations have proven insufficient to tackle the ongoing pollution. SB 80 would buy critical time for regulatory agencies to address the pollution that has already been allowed to proliferate.

⁴ Schechinger, A. (2024). *Animal feeding operations harm the environment, climate and public health*. Environmental Working Group.

<https://www.ewg.org/research/animal-feeding-operations-harm-environment-climate-and-public-health>

⁵ Andrews, D., & Kautza, T. J. (2022). *Impact of industrial farm animal production on rural communities*. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

<https://clf.jhsph.edu/sites/default/files/2022-03/impact-of-industrial-farm-animal-production-on-rural-communities.pdf>

⁶ Oregon ranked best state for animal protection laws. (2025). *Animal Legal Defense Fund*.

<https://aldf.org/article/oregon-ranked-best-state-for-animal-protection-laws/>; Oregon governor signs animal protection bills into law. (2023). *Animal Legal Defense Fund*.

<https://aldf.org/article/oregon-governor-signs-animal-protection-bills-into-law/>

⁷ Nuñez del Prado, M. (2022). *What is factory farming and why is it bad?* Sentient.

<https://sentientmedia.org/factory-farms/>

⁸ Obtained from Oregon Department of Agriculture FOIA request.



Conclusion

SB 80 represents a crucial opportunity to protect our water, health, rural communities, and farm animals from the harmful effects of factory farming. By placing a moratorium on the creation and expansion of factory farms in GWMA's, we can prevent further contamination, safeguard public health, protect our rural neighbors, and uphold Oregon's commitment to compassion and environmental stewardship.

As an Oregonian who cares deeply about animals, people, and the planet, I urge you to support SB 80.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Miranda Eisen
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