What is an AFO? CAFO? MAFO?

What You Need to Know

An "Animal Feeding Operation (AFO)" means a feedlot or facility where:

- Non-aquatic animals are confined, fed, and maintained for at least 45 days in any 12-month period; and
- Crops, vegetation, forage growth, or post-harvest residues are not sustained in the normal growing season over any portion of the lot or facility.

Use the AFO size chart to determine if your animal feeding operation is small, medium, or large.

A “Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO)” is a medium or large AFO that:

- Discharges or "proposes to discharge" manure, litter, or process wastewater. "Proposes to discharge" means that your facility is designed, constructed, operated, or maintained, such that a discharge to surface waters of the State WILL occur.

- Large AFOs do not have to have a man-made ditch, flushing system, or other similar man-made device (such as a swale or pipe) to carry storm water runoff containing manure, litter, or process wastewater from the production areas to surface waters of the State to be a CAFO. This is because EPA CAFO REGULATIONS define a large CAFO as a point source.

- Medium AFOs are considered CAFOs if they have a man-made ditch, flushing system, or other similar man-made device (such as a swale or pipe) to carry storm water runoff containing manure, litter, or process wastewater from the production areas to surface waters of the State.

- Large or medium CAFOs, as defined above, are required to apply for the General Discharge Permit for AFOs. A small AFO is not a CAFO unless MDE or the EPA specifically designates the operation as a CAFO. Reasons for this designation include the operation’s potential for one or more pollutants in the discharge to contribute to stream impairment. If designated by MDE or the EPA as a CAFO, that small operation would also be required to apply for the General Discharge Permit for Animal Feeding Operations.
A “Maryland Animal Feeding Operation (MAFO)” is a large animal feeding operation that:

does NOT discharge or “propose to discharge” manure, litter, or process wastewater. If your operation is a medium or small AFO that does not discharge or “propose to discharge,” you are not a MAFO unless MDE designates you as one. Reasons for designating a MAFO include the type or location of animal waste storage or animal access to surface water is likely to cause a discharge of pollutants to ground or surface waters of the State. MDE will send inspectors to verify whether or not the AFO qualifies as a MAFO. Contact MDE if you have any questions.