Effluent ponds

What is the issue?

The safe design and management of waste and effluent pond systems.

Why is it an issue?

Effluent ponds and solids traps can be drowning hazards. Poorly managed waste and effluent management systems can also have an adverse affect on the health and safety of everyone in the dairy.

What are the consequences of ignoring it?

Effluent ponds and solids traps expose young children to the risk of drowning. The build-up of a crust and subsequent weed growth on the surface may lead people, particularly children, to think they are walking on solid ground, when, instead, they will fall through into the pond.

Poorly managed effluent ponds, dairy sheds and yards can spread disease if they become a breeding ground for flies, mosquitoes and bacteria. There is also the risk of effluent contaminating nearby waterways.

Boggy areas around the effluent pond can have a negative effect on cattle health, as they contribute to dirty udders and mastitis.

Other hazards associated with the effluent system include unguarded effluent pumps, high-pressure hoses and hydrants, and high-volume flood washing.

How safe is your dairy now?

What is the crust like on your effluent pond? Is the pond securely fenced so that small children cannot get near? Are there clear signs near the pond warning about the risk of drowning? Is the solids trap securely covered or fenced off?

The spray generated by using recycled water to wash down yards should also be considered a potential source of respiratory infections, such as Legionella.

What can be done right now?

Effluent ponds should be emptied regularly.

The pond, along with its solids traps and pumps, should be securely fenced to keep out children. Children should also be kept out of the way when flood or hydrant washing.

Warning signs should be erected outside the effluent pond’s fence warning everyone of the risk of drowning.

High-pressure hoses should be secured when they are turned on and stored out of the way when not in use. The sharp edges of the clamps on hand-held hoses should also be removed or covered.

The moving parts of effluent pumps should be guarded, to stop limbs and clothing becoming caught .

Employees should wear protective clothing, such as gloves, aprons, rubber boots, goggles and overalls, when working near the effluent pond. This equipment should be maintained or replaced regularly.

Drainage holes should be covered to avoid tripping, especially in herringbone pits.

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What are the next steps?

When installing a new pond, plan to locate it as far away from the dairy as practical and away from tracks used to move cattle into the dairy.

Avoid steep, unstable batters. The external batters should be 1:3, while internal batters should be 1:2.

Design the dairy shed's yards so that there is natural run-off and the herd traffic areas are well drained to a collection pit. Aim to minimise the amount of water used to wash down areas.

What you should consider in your longer term plans?

Consider the location and capacity of your effluent system when contemplating any large increase in the size of your herd, as that will have a direct effect on the amount of effluent produced.

What actions are not optional?

Effluent ponds must be designed and operated in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements, such as those of the Environmental Protection Authority.

Where you can go for more information

Victorian Department of Primary Industries	
Dairy effluent: infectious diseases and animal health	www.dpi.vic.gov.au
Dairy effluent management: contains a number of fact sheets about design, construction and management	www.dpi.vic.gov.au
Target 10	
Managing Dairy Effluent	www.dpi.vic.gov.au
Victorian Environment Protection Authority	
Contacts for EPA advice about farm management nutrients, water, effluent	www.epa.vic.gov.au