

Industrial hog operations pose health risks from the Iowa Environment Quarterly (Spring 2000)

People living near large animal feeding operations face real health hazards, according to two recent studies.

Extensive surveys of people living in three rural North Carolina areas indicate industrial hog operations both reduce the quality of life for people living near them and adversely affect their health, according to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "In particular, headache, runny nose, sore throat, excessive coughing, diarrhea, and burning eyes were reported more frequently in communities near hog confinements," said Dr. Steven Wing, a professor at the University's School of Public Health.

In the second study, the Minnesota Department of Health determined that toxic gases coming from the manure lagoon of one of the state's largest operations pose a health threat. The Health Department has monitored the operation, ValAdCo, for the past two years and found hydrogen sulfide levels far exceeding the state standard. Studies suggest that high levels of the gas can cause respiratory problems, nausea, sore throats, and headaches.

"It's about time state health departments show an interest in the pollution surrounding hog lots," said Roy W. Overton, M.D., a retired physician, Council member, and lobbyist for the Izaak Walton League. "People living near these lots are facing real health hazards."