What Should You Expect During an Inspection by the DNR?

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You (Mr. or Ms. Producer) are about to be visited/inspected by an environmental specialist from the Iowa DNR. What should you do?

1) Panic
2) Immediately leave, turn off my cell phone, and go into hiding
3) Tell them a close relative just died (again) and you are unavailable
4) Plead the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution and talk to your lawyer
5) None of the above

If you answered “none of the above” you are correct. Your inspection/visit may be the result of a “routine” inspection such as a manure management plan inspection, earthen basin inspection, NPDES inspection, or compliance visit/inspection. Or, it may be the result of a spill that you reported, or perhaps, a complaint registered with the DNR. In any event, stay calm and you will probably discover the visit/inspection was not nearly as bad as you may have thought.

Remember to always be truthful and forthcoming in your interaction with the DNR. Rest assured they are only interested in compliance with the rules and regulations. It is their goal to help you remain or come into compliance.

What is next? Following is a general scenario that will vary depending on the type of inspection or visit. Visits/inspections could take as little as 15 minutes for a basin inspection or as much as a full day for an NPDES inspection. However, there are some things in common for each type of visit/inspection that you may encounter:

- In most cases, you will receive a phone call a minimum of 1 to 3 working days prior to the visit/inspection. Exceptions to that may be spill investigations or complaints, depending on the circumstances.
- The environmental specialist will be driving a clearly marked DNR vehicle. He/she will introduce themselves, offer credentials, and tell you the scope of the visit/inspection, including the time that it will take. They will ask about any biosecurity protocols you have at your facility.
- Again, depending on the type of visit/inspection, the DNR environmental specialist will tour your facility and observe areas for environmental compliance. Generally speaking, they are most interested in manure storage areas and structures and any potential areas of runoff. They may ask for records during an MMP or NPDES inspection.
- You should answer questions honestly. Conversely, please feel free to ask the DNR inspector any questions that you may have. It is important to have a dialogue with them.
They may take pictures of your facility for documentation. Samples may be taken in the event of runoff.

- After the visit/inspection is completed, there will be an exit interview. The environmental specialist will tell you about any compliance issues discovered during the meeting. They may give recommendations to improve the environmental performance of your facility.

- Some inspections, such as MMP or earthen basins, have tear-off forms that are left with you immediately after the inspection. In others, you will likely receive a letter from the DNR outlining compliance issues with recordkeeping or facility environmental performance.

DNR visits or inspections need not be something to dread. You can look at this as an opportunity to interact with them and improve the environmental performance of your facility. Remember, both you and the DNR share a common goal of improving water quality and being a good neighbor. Visits or inspections from the DNR can be an important tool for you to use in the overall management of your farm.

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Additional information can be found on the Iowa DNR’s Animal Feeding Operations Web Page at: http://www.iowadnr.gov/Environment/LandStewardship/AnimalFeedingOperations.aspx