

NEWS RELEASE

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NRCB Issues Decision on AAA Cattle's Expansion Proposal

CALGARY (March 26, 2003) - The Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) is allowing, with conditions, AAA Cattle Company Ltd. (AAA) to proceed with its proposal for expanding its existing beef feeder operation in Mountain View County into a combined 2,000 beef finisher and 16, 200 head beef feeder facility. The Board's decision follows a public hearing into AAA Cattle's proposal, held February 5 - 7, 2003, in Didsbury, Alberta.

At the hearing, a three-member panel heard presentations and evidence from AAA, local residents, the Committee for Lone Pine, the Regional Health Authority, Alberta Environment, as well as the NRCB's own experts.

Issues considered at the hearing included liner thickness for manure storage and runoff control catch basin, groundwater protection and water supply, separation distances and location of facilities and engineering certifications.

The Panel carefully regarded the concerns raised by the various parties, and the Board believes that by adding and requiring certain conditions to be met for approval, along with the commitments made by AAA at the hearing, the concerns raised can be adequately addressed and the proposed operation and facilities will meet or exceed the required standards.

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The attached backgrounder provides an overview and the Panel's findings from the decision report. The full text of the decision is available on the NRCB website at <http://www.nrcb.gov.ab.ca>.

For more information, please contact:

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The NRCB is an independent, quasi-judicial agency, acting to ensure that development of Alberta's natural resources and confined feeding industry occurs in an economically, socially and environmentally responsible manner.

Backgrounder

Background

AAA Cattle applied on January 4, 2002, for an approval to construct and operate a combined 2,000 beef finisher and 16,200 head beef feeder facility located in Mountain View County. Through a development permit issued by the County on December 19, 2000, AAA Cattle was already authorized to operate a 2,500 head beef feedlot.

On November 1, 2002 the NRCB denied AAA's application as the NRCB did not have sufficient information to determine whether the proposed liner for the feedlot and the catch basin would meet the regulated requirements.

The Board received requests for review of that decision and subsequently determined that the hearing (held February 5, 2003, in Didsbury, Alberta) was warranted.

AAA provided additional information to address the information deficiencies with its original application, which the Panel and participants considered at the hearing.

At the hearing the Panel also heard from its own experts as well as a coalition of neighbours that opposed the expansion (the Committee for Lone Pine) and the regional health authority, who did not oppose the expansion but did raise a number of concerns. Alberta Environment also provided expert testimony with respect to how they addressed the issues around water supply in the region, as part of their decision to issue AAA a new water licence.

Panel Findings

In reaching its Decision, the Panel has had careful regard for the concerns raised by the various interested parties. The Panel believes that through the use of conditions to the Approval, in combination with the commitments of the Applicant, concerns raised by the interested and affected parties can be adequately addressed.

In its decision the Panel determined that the new liner design provides an equivalent level of protection to that required by the regulations, provided that AAA meets the various commitments and conditions that it agreed to at the hearing. It also noted that, from the NRCB's perspective, the issues around water supply have been addressed appropriately by AENV.

The Panel finds that the proposed operation and facilities, in association with the additional commitments of AAA, meet or exceed the technical requirements of *AOPA*. Further, the Panel is satisfied that the proposed development, with a conscientiously applied monitoring program, and in combination with the conditions imposed by AENV and the NRCB, will ensure groundwater protection.

In its decision, the Panel notes that there appears to be a substantive commitment from AAA to work closely with its neighbours and to ensure that they are kept informed of its activities. The Board expects AAA to meet this commitment, and to take all reasonable steps available to avoid further damaging that relationship.

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