

## **Odour complaints – Rimrock Feeders**

*Updated May 17, 2023*

The NRCB continues to work closely with Rimrock Feeders and the people of High River to monitor odour levels related to the feedlot. NRCB inspectors have been onsite at the Rimrock feedlot and in the town of High River many times over the past year, at all times of the day and night, to monitor odours, speak to residents, and consult with the Rimrock operators on management options. As directed by the NRCB, the catch basins at Rimrock Feeders were emptied and the contents were land applied before freeze up last fall.

The NRCB is also exploring methods of measuring and monitoring odour, including the purchase and installation of a new air quality monitoring unit (a Scentroid CTair) in High River. In addition, the NRCB has been working with the Calgary Region Airshed Zone (CRAZ) which installed a separate portable air monitoring laboratory in the Town of High River in December of last year. The NRCB's CTair unit will measure additional air quality parameters to those being measured by the CRAZ station and will provide the NRCB with another tool to help monitor and address odours related to the Rimrock Feeders feedlot.

Below are answers to the most common questions NRCB inspectors have heard from High River residents.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. When I file a complaint using the NRCB 24-hour reporting line why does no one call me back?**

If you would like a follow-up call from an NRCB inspector, you need to request this when you file your complaint with the 24-hour reporting centre. You also need to ensure you provide a contact number when submitting your complaint. If the NRCB receives a large volume of complaints it will take longer to call complainants back.

**2. How many complaints have to be received before the NRCB takes odour concerns seriously?**

The NRCB has no threshold number of complaints that guide or initiate responses, but treats all complaints the same regardless, of whether there have been 1 or 200 complaints. Given the complexity of odour issues, management responses typically begin with investigation and monitoring actions to better understand the source and nature of the odours before management actions are taken.

**3. Who is responsible for permitting the proposed biodigester at the Rimrock feedlot?**

The NRCB is not responsible for permitting the proposed biodigester facilities.

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas is responsible for permitting the biodigester facility and any questions should be directed to them. Contact information for Environment and Protected Areas can be found [here](#).

More information on the proposed digester can be found online by searching Rimrock Renewables.

**4. Who should I contact if I have concerns about the proposed biodigester?**

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas will be responsible for permitting the biodigester facility and any questions should be directed to them. Contact information for Environment and Protected Areas can be found [here](#).

More information on the proposed digester can be found online by searching Rimrock Renewables.

**5. Will the odours decrease when Rimrock starts operating its biodigester?**

The NRCB has no regulatory authority over the proposed biodigester and is not responsible for reviewing the impact assessments on air quality and odour for the proposed biodigester facility.

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas will be responsible for permitting the biodigester facility and any questions should be directed to them.

More information on the proposed digester can be found online by searching Rimrock Renewables.

**6. Why is this odour from Rimrock so much worse than when Western Feedlots owned the operation? What is Rimrock doing differently?**

The NRCB believes the feedlot catch basins were the main source of the odour during the summer months last year. This could be the result of the rainfall in June/July combined with increased solids in the catch basins.

Rimrock does not appear to be operating any differently than the previous feedlot owner and operates similarly to other feedlots in southern Alberta.

**7. What is the NRCB doing about the odour?**

NRCB staff conduct frequent site inspections to follow up on complaints, including during evening hours, overnight and in the early morning when complainants report the odour is stronger. Some of these inspections are not announced ahead of time to the operator

The NRCB had the operator install bale wind breaks on the upwind side of the catch basins to reduce the prevailing winds from carrying the odour towards High River. The NRCB also instructed the operator to have the catch basins emptied and the contents land applied to remove sludge build up from the bottom of the basins. This took place during the fall before freeze up.

The NRCB is also exploring methods of measuring and monitoring odour, including the purchase and installation of a new air quality monitoring unit (a Scentroid CTair) in High River. In addition, the NRCB has been working with the Calgary Region Airshed Zone (CRAZ) which has installed a separate portable air monitoring laboratory at the same location. The NRCB's CTair unit will measure additional air quality parameters to those measured by the CRAZ station and will provide the NRCB with another tool to help monitor and address odours related to the Rimrock Feeders feedlot.

The NRCB is comparing the monitoring data from CRAZ and the CTair monitoring equipment to complaints received and then to activities at the feedlot in an effort to determine the source or cause of the strong odours residences are experiencing.

The NRCB will continue to investigate possible pen and manure management practices that could be causing the stronger odours

**8. Why is it taking so long to reduce the odours?**

The NRCB is working with Rimrock Feeders to determine the exact sources of the odour and is then recommending the most feasible and effective method to reduce those odours. This process all takes time as different practices are changed or new ones put into place.

**9. What is a catch basin and what is its purpose?**

Rimrock's feedlot pens are all sloped so that any manure runoff from the pens flows into containment ponds (catch basins) to prevent it from leaving the property and impacting any surface water bodies (rivers, streams, etc.) or neighbouring property. This stored runoff is then applied to the land where the nutrients are used by crops. The design of Rimrock's catch basins reflect industry standards.

**10. Will the NRCB shut down the feedlot if the odour issue is not resolved?**

Right now the NRCB is focusing on working with the operator to return to a more acceptable level of odour, such as when Western operated the feedlot. This includes trying to reduce the odour frequency and offensiveness that residents of High River have stated are worse in the late evening and early morning.

**11. Is Rimrock feeding more cattle than Western did? Did the NRCB allow the feedlot to expand?**

No. The feedlot has not expanded.

The NRCB issued a grandfathering decision on October 8, 2020 determining that the feedlot had a deemed approval for 35,000 beef finishers. Records provided for the grandfathering determination were from Western's historical inventory records.

**12. Why was Rimrock allowed to restart the feedlot after Western shut down?**

Western Feedlots never intended to shut the facility down, it was only depopulated temporarily until a new owner was found. The facility was never considered to be decommissioned or abandoned.

**13. Are there chemicals that can be sprayed on or added to the manure to reduce the odours?**

The NRCB is not aware of any chemicals that have been found to successfully reduce the odours of solid manure.

**14. Who is the regulating body for feedlots in Alberta?**

The NRCB is responsible for administering the *Agricultural Operation Practices Act* (AOPA), which is the legislation that regulates all confined feeding operations (CFOs) in the province.