

# Large Dairy/Livestock Farm Survey Results

## September 2002

### A LITTLE ABOUT THE PROCESS...

The data for the survey were gathered by mailing out 600 surveys to selected property owners in Marathon County.

The overall response rate to the survey was 30 percent. The practical consequence of this is that the results should not be extrapolated to the entire group that was surveyed but only to those who returned the survey.

Although the focus of this survey is solely on what respondents had to say, it should still be useful when combined with other data on this subject.

200 addresses were randomly selected within three targeted groups:

- 1) addresses within two miles of the eight largest dairy/livestock farms,
- 2) addresses within two miles of eight other rural/agricultural areas, and
- 3) addresses within 2000 feet of eight addresses in the Wausau metro area.

(see page 4 for map showing selected areas)

For more than 50 years, dairy and other livestock farms in Wisconsin have grown in size and decreased in number. During this time, many people who used to live in cities have moved to the countryside. This brings farmers and non-farmers into more frequent contact, increasing the chance that conflict might arise over issues of agricultural production and land use.

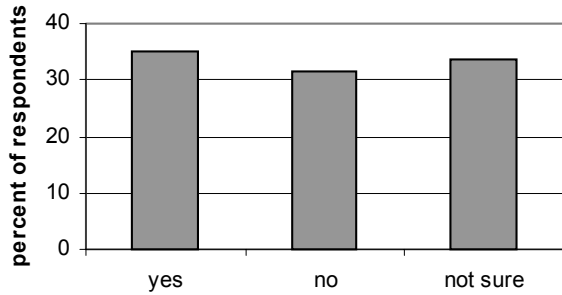
During the spring of 2002, the Marathon County UW-Extension office developed a survey of opinions concerning large-scale dairy/livestock operations. The survey results provide recent and specific information from a sampling of Marathon County residents which should be useful in considering what additional regulations, if any, are necessary. This survey is only one piece of information to be considered in this process. The Technical Advisory Committee of the Marathon County Environmental Resources Committee (ERC) requested that survey results be presented to ERC. The ERC is comprised of County Board Supervisors and other local elected officials, and representatives from the Marathon County Land Conservation, Zoning, Planning and UW-Extension Departments.

### What did the respondents have to say?

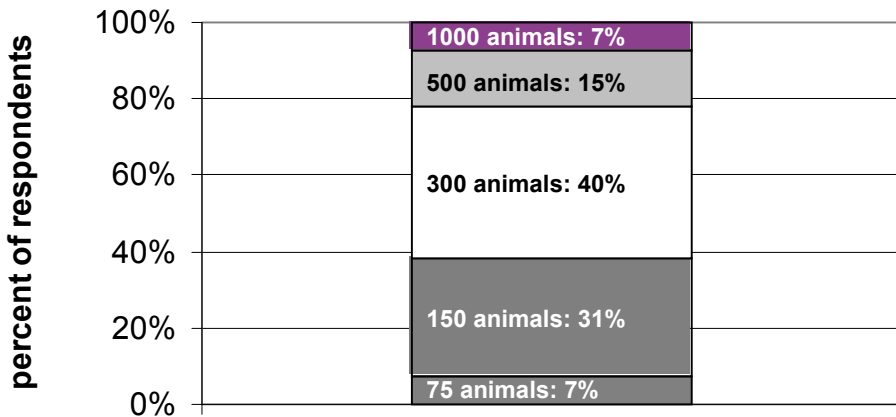
**96% of respondents replied that they very strongly or somewhat strongly support Marathon County farmers.**



**THERE IS ENOUGH REGULATION  
OF LARGE DAIRY/LIVESTOCK FARMS.**

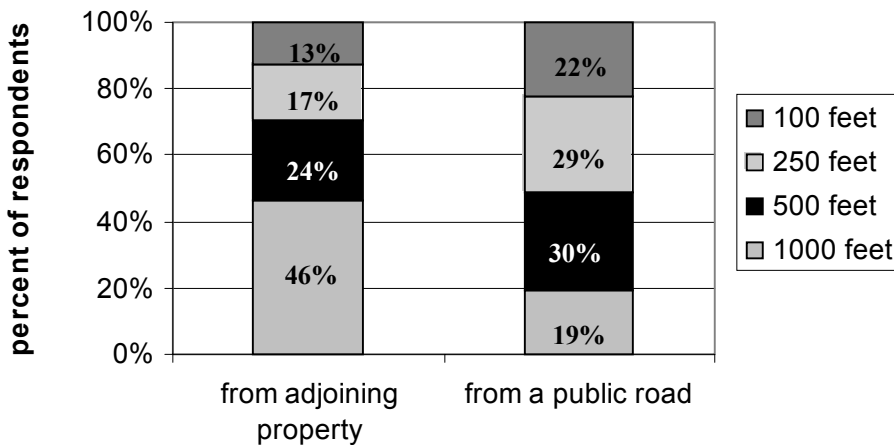


**IN MY OPINION, A LARGE DAIRY FARM CONTAINS MORE THAN \_\_\_\_\_  
MILKING COWS AND REPLACEMENT HEIFERS.**



Responses about the size of a large farm (left) might be best understood when the data are viewed in an additive fashion from the bottom up. For example, **38% of respondents feel that 150 animals is a large herd**, (31% + 7%) because if respondents think 75 animals make up a large herd, they would certainly think 150 animals is large. Similarly, **78% of respondents feel that 300 animals is a large herd.**

**LARGE FARMS SHOULD HAVE A DISTANCE OF AT LEAST...**



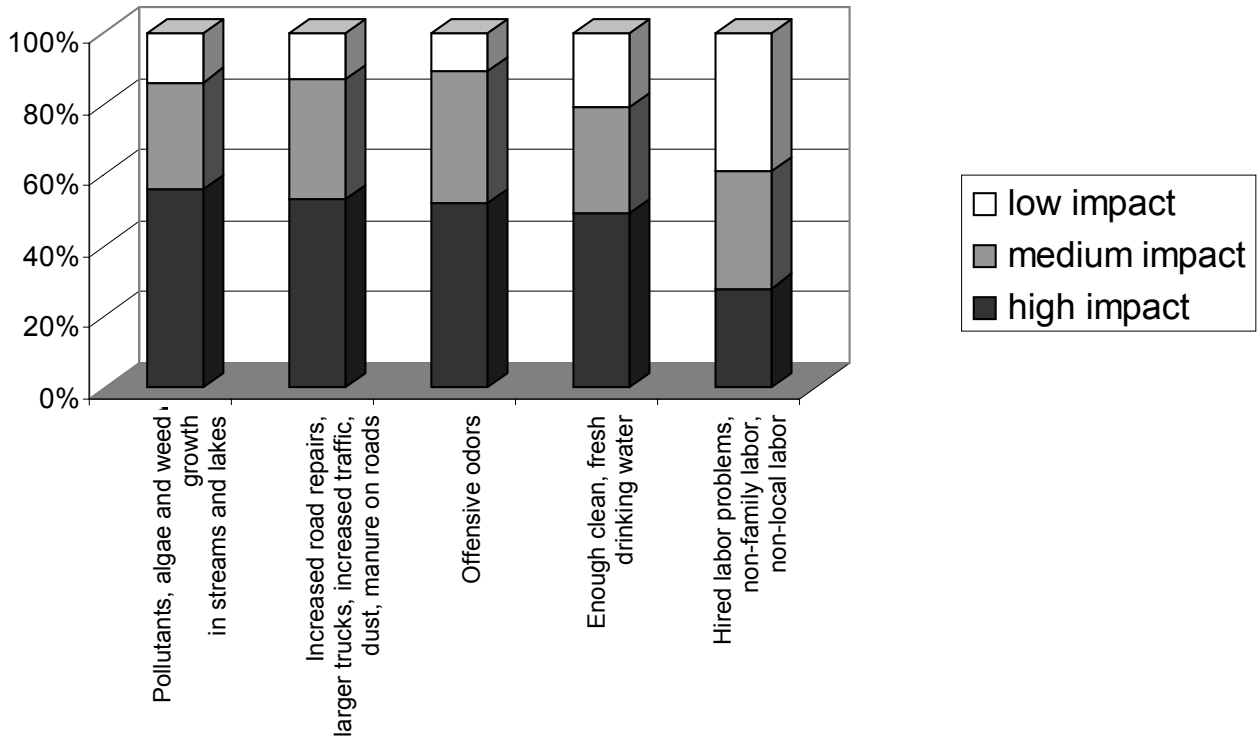
Responses about distance from a large farm to adjoining property or a public road (left) might be best understood when the data are viewed in an additive fashion from the bottom up. For example, **70% of respondents feel that large farms should have a distance of at least 500 feet from adjoining property** (46%+ 24%) because if respondents think that 1000 feet is necessary, they would certainly think 500 feet is needed.

**Written comments included:**

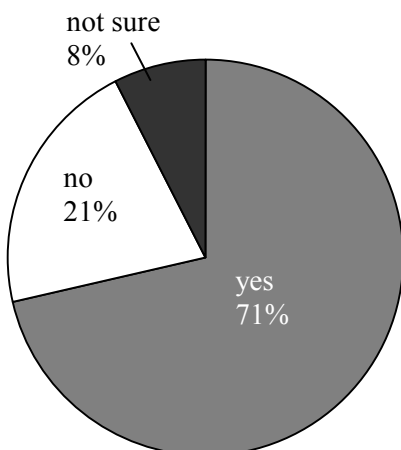
- The problem is more with spreading manure than distance from buildings.
- Agreements should be made with adjoining landowners.

Those receiving surveys were given a list of several items that can be impacted by the presence of a large dairy/livestock farm. Non-urban respondents were asked to indicate how much of an impact each item would make if a large dairy/livestock operation were built in his/her area.

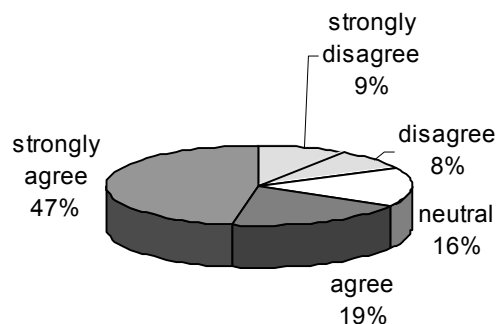
There were 148 responses to this series of questions.



**A DAIRY/LIVESTOCK PRODUCER PLANNING A LARGE EXPANSION OR START-UP SHOULD BE REQUIRED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO MAKE THEIR PLANS KNOWN TO THE PUBLIC BEFOREHAND.**



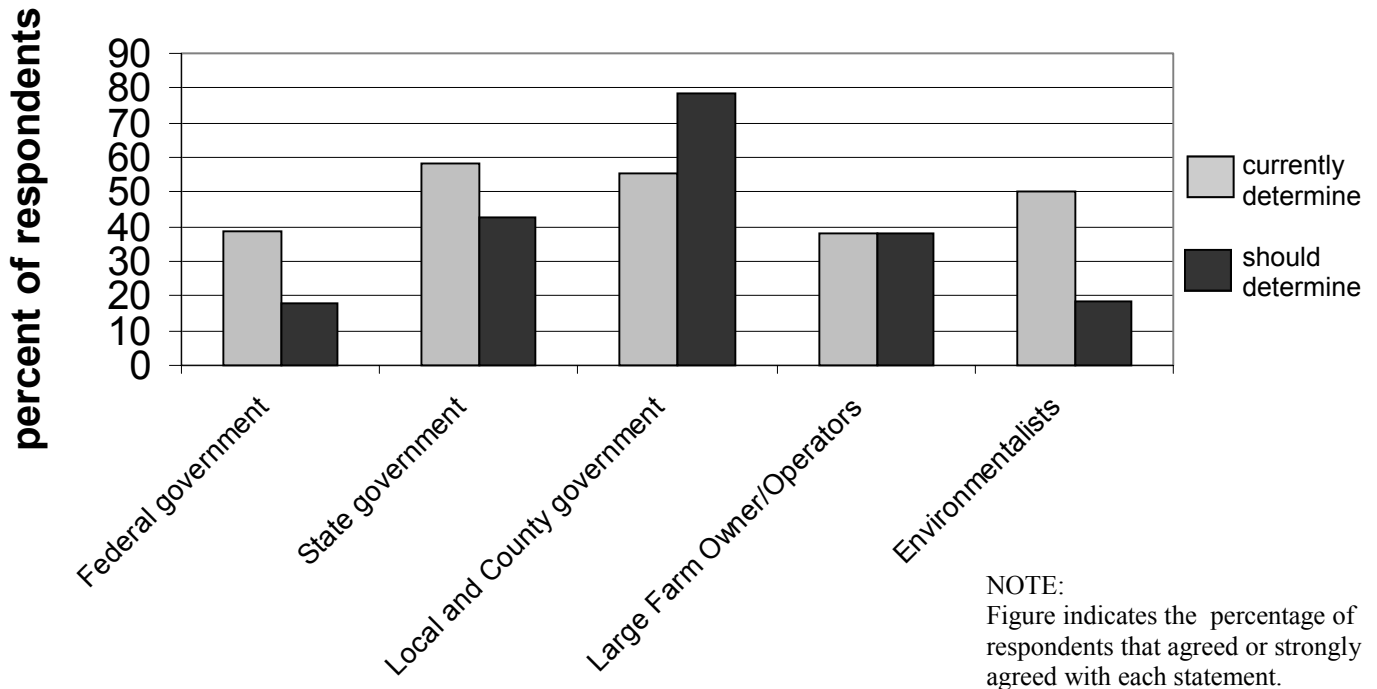
**I AM MORE CONCERNED THAT COMMUNITY INTERESTS ARE GIVEN CONSIDERATION WHEN LARGE FARMS ARE OWNED BY PERSONS FROM ANOTHER STATE OR COUNTRY.**



**66% of the respondents** either agree or strongly agree that they are concerned that community interests are given consideration when large farms are owned by persons from another state or country.



**IN MY OPINION, THE FOLLOWING GROUPS 1) CURRENTLY DETERMINE AND 2) SHOULD DETERMINE PUBLIC POLICY AND REGULATIONS AFFECTING LARGE DAIRY/LIVESTOCK FARMS.**



Respondents listed other groups or organizations that they feel currently have an affect on public policy and regulations. These included:

- Public (3 responses)
- Businesses and Cooperatives (2 responses)
- Lending institutions
- Consumers
- PETA
- Real Estate

Respondents listed other groups or organizations that they feel should have an affect on public policy and regulations. These included:

- Neighbors and adjacent property owners (5 responses)
- Producer groups (3 responses)
- Small farms
- Sportsmen

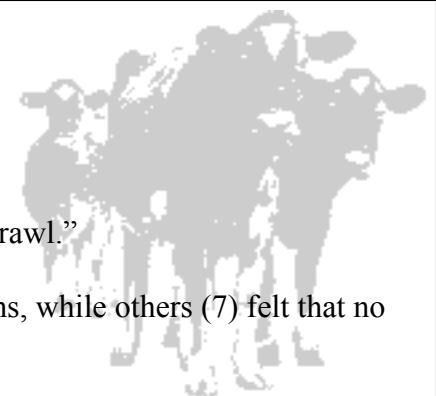
**More written comments:**

Several comments (10) related to separating urban from agriculture.

“...the government has done a poor job of protecting ag from urban sprawl.”

Some respondents (7) felt farms need to grow and we should support big farms, while others (7) felt that no large farms should be allowed.

Nine landowners expressed additional concerns about roads, property values, groundwater supply, odors, dust and regulations.



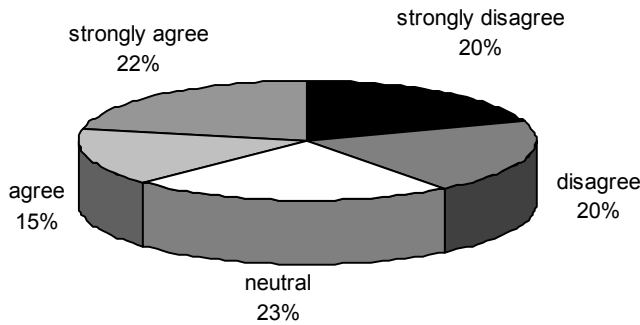
**THE IDEA OF A 'AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISE DISTRICT' APPEALS TO ME.**



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212 River Drive  
Suite 3  
Wausau WI 54403  
715-261-1230

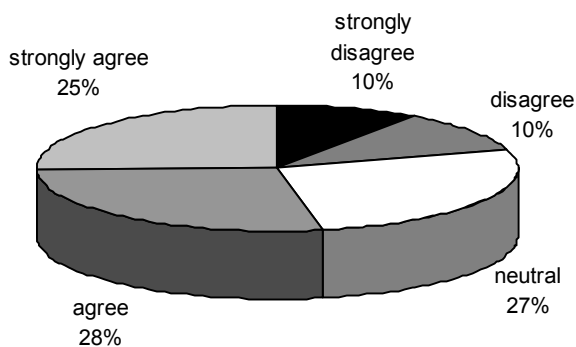
Mike Wildeck  
Dairy Agent

Mary Kluz  
Community Resource  
Development Agent



NOTE: For the purpose of the survey, an agricultural enterprise district was described as “allowing all types of agricultural uses, including large dairy/livestock farms...but not allowing new residences.” 37% of respondents agree or strongly agree that such a district appeals to them; 40% disagree or strongly disagree.

**THE IDEA OF A 'RURAL RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT' APPEALS TO ME.**



NOTE: For the purpose of the survey, a rural residential district was described as “allowing low-density residential usage and rural activities such as low-intensity farming.” 53% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that such a district appeals to them; 20% disagree or strongly disagree.

**ABOUT THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS...**

**Survey respondents indicated that household income was primarily from:**

- 31% Agriculture/forestry
- 22% Not employed at this time
- 21% Construction/manufacturing
- 18% Trade/commerce/services
- 6% Government/education
- 2% Transportation/communication/utilities



76 % of the survey respondents were male.

23 % of the survey respondents were female.



2% did not respond.

**AGE OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS**

1%	Age 25 or younger
26%	Age 26-45
52%	Age 45-65
21%	Age 66 or older

**A NOTE ABOUT DEMOGRAPHICS:**

Demographic information is collected as a way to gauge how much the survey results that are collected do, in fact, represent the population of Marathon County.

Nearly three-quarters of respondents (74 percent) have lived in Marathon County for 25 years or more. A majority of respondents (59 percent) live less than one mile from an active dairy or livestock farm.

In comparison, according to the U. S. Census Bureau, 50 percent of the population in Marathon County is male. Thirteen percent of the population in Marathon County are in the age group of 65 or older; 22% are in the age group of 45 to 64 years; 28 percent are in the group 25 to 44 years.