



STATE OF IDAHO

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NEWS RELEASE

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ISDA WORKS WITH DAIRY INDUSTRY TO REDUCE PHOSPHORUS LEVELS IN MAGIC VALLEY

(BOISE) The Idaho State Department of Agriculture is working with dairies, academia, and federal agencies after department soil testing revealed higher-than-acceptable levels of phosphorus on Idaho fields used for land application of livestock nutrients. ISDA officials found the higher soil phosphorus levels during routine and subsequent soil testing and are actively pursuing corrective measures.

Phosphorus poses no direct threat to health, nor does it contribute to odor. But excess phosphorus can contribute to excessive algae growth in surface bodies of water. That algae growth, when it dies, saps oxygen from the water, affecting aquatic life. ISDA and dairy leaders want to act before that happens. Phosphorus thresholds were scientifically established in 1999 to provide added assurance against adverse impacts of nitrogen to groundwater.

"The fact that we were able to identify a problem and take corrective steps shows we have the appropriate protocols in place to protect the public and the dairy industry from elevated nutrient levels. This is the type of program we want to have in place. We'd rather be in a position to identify issues before they become real problems," said Idaho State Department of Agriculture Director Pat Takasugi.

As a result of the phosphorus levels, the department will work closely with dairies and the Idaho Dairymen's Association to reduce phosphorus levels.

Bob Naerebout, executive director of the Idaho Dairymen's Association, thanked the department for moving swiftly to alert dairies to the issue and for forming a collaborative response to it.

"We're pleased ISDA has been working with other state and federal agencies in a collaborative fashion," Naerebout said. "As a result, we'll be able to correct these levels and move forward making the dairy industry better and stronger than before."

Idaho recently became the No. 4 dairy state in the nation, displacing Pennsylvania in the production of milk. Only Wisconsin, California and New York produce more milk than Idaho.

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