



## Fact Sheet

# Meat and Poultry Products Industry Effluent Limitations Guidelines and Standards, Final Rule

*EPA sets wastewater discharge standards for meat processing and poultry processing facilities. The final rule revises the existing effluent standards for direct discharging slaughterhouses, further processors, and independent renderers. The rule also establishes, for the first time, national effluent limitations for poultry processors.*

### Background

Effluent guidelines are national regulations that control the discharge of pollutants from industrial facilities to surface waters. EPA sets effluent limitations based on process or treatment technologies that are technically feasible and affordable. Since 1974, EPA has promulgated effluent guidelines for more than 50 industrial categories.

On February 26, 2004, EPA established new wastewater discharge limits for the Meat and Poultry Products (MPP) industry. The MPP regulation affects about 170 facilities that discharge wastewater from slaughtering, rendering, and other processes such as cleaning, cutting, and smoking. The new rule reduces discharges of conventional pollutants, ammonia, and nitrogen to rivers, lakes, and streams. The rule establishes effluent limits for poultry processors for the first time.

Nutrients, including nitrogen, are the fifth leading type of pollutants contributing to the impairment of rivers and streams. Nutrients are the leading contributor of pollutants to impaired lakes. Nitrogen occurs in MPP discharges in several forms, including ammonia and nitrate. Ammonia is toxic to aquatic life and reduces the level of oxygen in the waterbody. Too much ammonia and other forms of nitrogen can lead to fish kills, reduced biodiversity, and growth of toxic organisms.

### Which facilities are covered by the new regulations?

The final rule applies to direct discharges of wastewater from *existing and new*:

- Meat first processors (slaughterhouses) that slaughter more than 50 million pounds per year;
- Meat further processors that generate more than 50 million pounds per year of finished products (examples: bacon or sausage);

- Independent renderers of meat and poultry products that use greater than 10 million pounds per year of raw material;
- Poultry first processors (slaughterhouses) that slaughter more than 100 million pounds per year; and
- Poultry further processors that generate more than 7 million pounds per year of finished products (examples: ready-to-cook chicken cutlets or ground turkey).

The final rule also applies to direct discharges of wastewater from *new* poultry processors at lower production thresholds. Specifically, the final rule applies to new

- Poultry first processors (slaughterhouses) that slaughter less than or equal to 100 million pounds per year; and
- Poultry further processors that generate less than or equal to 7 million pounds per year of finished products.

### **What are the costs and pollutant reductions for the new requirements?**

The regulation revises the existing effluent guidelines for the meat industry by adding ammonia and total nitrogen limits for meat slaughterhouses, and total nitrogen limits for meat further processors and independent renderers. For poultry slaughterhouses and further processors, the rule establishes limits for conventional pollutants, ammonia, and total nitrogen.

EPA estimates reductions in the discharge of total nitrogen of about 27 million pounds per year and reductions of conventional pollutants (e.g., BOD, total suspended solids, oil and grease) of about 4 million pounds per year. EPA estimates water quality benefits of about \$2.6 million, primarily from increased recreational opportunities, such as swimming and fishing. There are likely to be other ecological benefits, although these are harder to quantify. EPA estimates compliance costs of \$58 million per year.

### **How to Get Additional Information**

For more information, please call Samantha Lewis at (202) 566-1058, or send an email to [lewis.samantha@epa.gov](mailto:lewis.samantha@epa.gov). You can also learn more about this final rule by visiting EPA's Internet web site at <http://www.epa.gov/guide/mpp>.