

Pork and Pollution

A Guide to Health, Environmental Justice and Civic Action around Industrial Hog Operations

“The modern world worships the gods of speed and quantity, and of the quick and easy profit, and out of this idolatry monstrous evils have arisen.”—Rachel Carson, foreword to *Animal Machines*

What are Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)? According to the EPA, CAFOs are industrial operations “where animals [cattle, dairy cows, swine, chickens] are kept and raised in confined situations. They generally congregate animals, feed, manure, dead animals, and production operations on a small land area. Feed is brought to the animals rather than the animals grazing or otherwise seeking feed in pastures.”¹

CAFOs were created through a system of **agricultural subsidies, deregulated manure management,** and the **concentration of the industry** in the hands of a few at the expense of many.

A large CAFO with 800,000 pigs may yield over 1.6 million tons of waste per year, 1.5 times the amount of sanitary waste produced in the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.² Unlike human waste, the fecal matter is not treated, and instead ends up in football field-sized pits or is sprayed on crops, polluting **water, soil, air, and human health.**

Concentration of Industrial Swine Operations in the United States

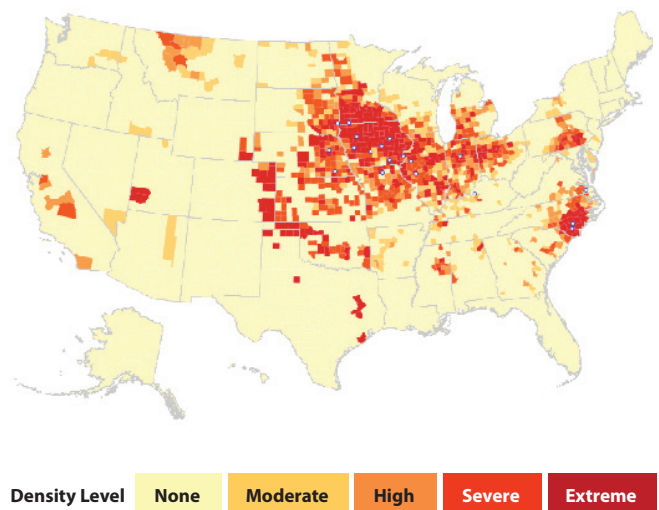
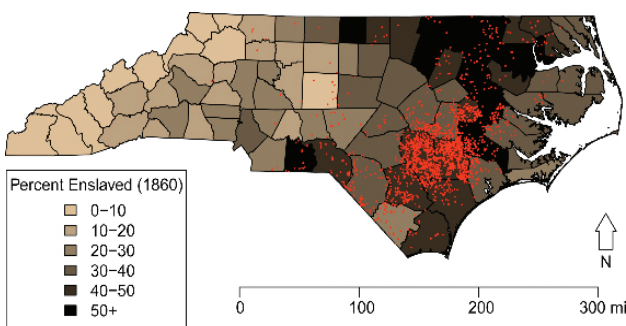


Fig 2. Credit: Food and Water Watch³

North Carolina Enslaved Population in 1860 And Industrial Hog Operations Re-Permitted in 2015



Source: 1860 Census: Population, Agriculture & Other Data [US, States & Counties]

Fig 3. Credit: Nathaniel MacNeill, UNC Ph.D. student in the Department of Epidemiology⁴

North Carolina has the highest density of hog factory farms in the U.S.

95% of NC hog CAFOs are located in low-income communities of color in the eastern part of the state, making it an **environmental justice** issue.

- Top 2 hog producing counties in the U.S.: Sampson County and Duplin County
- Largest hog slaughterhouse in the world: Bladen County

Impacts of Hog Factory Farms & Ongoing Actions

Water



Waste and fertilizer runoff from hog factory farms are riddled with microbes, pesticides, and hormones, which enters rivers, lakes, and streams. The waste causes algal blooms, kills fish, and pollutes drinking water. CAFOs are poorly regulated under the Clean Water Act.

Support the [North Carolina Environmental Justice Network](#) and [Waterkeeper Alliance's](#) campaigns to clean up hog operations.

Air



Hog CAFOs emit **hydrogen sulfide**, a toxic gas that causes vomiting and other side effects, as well as **ammonia**, which can convert to acid rain. Children near CAFOs may experience more **asthmatic symptoms**. Factory farms are not regulated under the Clean Air Act.

Learn about the [Community Engagement, Environmental Health and Justice](#) Laboratory at the University of Maryland-College Park.

Save Antibiotics



Nontherapeutic use of antibiotics— for promoting growth and preventing disease in animals— can lead to **antibiotic resistance**, undermining the treatment of human infection.

Join the Save Antibiotics Campaign through [Food & Water Watch](#). **Support** research by [Rural Empowerment Association for Community Help](#).

Labor



Contract growers are required to spend vast sums to convert their farms into large operations. They often enter debt cycles and become economically dependent on the integrators. Workers face job insecurity, few breaks, and exposure to disease and extreme heat.

Support the efforts and recommendations of the [Iowa Farmer's Union](#), concerning the rights of contract growers.

End Ag Gag



Ag Gag laws silence insider revelations, including conditions inside CAFOs, environmental harms, food safety breaches, and labor violations. They evolved from **Right-to-Farm Amendments** and criminalize free speech.

Support the [Food Integrity Campaign's](#) efforts to protect whistleblowers and advance free speech.

Climate



Warming Temperatures: The worldwide slaughtering of animals accounts for 18-51 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, in the form of carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide. A rise in extremely hot days (above 95 degrees) will continue to affect the health of workers.

Hurricanes and Extreme Weather: After Hurricane Floyd in 1999, pig feces overflowed from lagoons, ran off spray fields into watersheds, and cloaked trees in toxic waste. Over the next few years, category four and five hurricanes are predicted to strike NC every 2 years.

Sea Level Rise: CAFOs in coastal areas will flood, causing lagoons to overflow, compromising the infrastructure of small towns, and further spreading infectious disease.



Want to learn more about the economic and political injustices surrounding CAFOs? Find the full report at <https://rachelcarsoncouncil.org/pork-and-pollution/> Any questions or comments? Email us at office@rachelcarsoncouncil.org Connect with us on Facebook @RachelCarsonCouncil and Twitter @RachelCarsonDC.