

Hog wild

Factory farm awaiting approval

BY MARK HARDY
Staff Reporter

Six months ago, the Adair County Commissioners might have snorted at the suggestion that anyone would apply to build a Confined Animal Feeding Operation. For some residents, John Mark Miller's proposed facility sparked debate.

Miller operates a farm northeast of Kirksville in Brashear, Mo. Late in the spring, he applied to build his second CAFO, an automated building where he could raise as many as 2,400 hogs on his land. If officials cannot find any violations of Adair County health codes, they said they are legally obligated to approve his proposal. However, the county clerks have faced a wealth of opposition from Miller's neighbors who do not wish to live near such a facility.

"Our main concern as neighbors is the smell," said Colleen Primmer, a Kirksville resident who lives on the road where Miller plans to build. "Who wants to live by one of those?"

Primmer said she and other concerned neighbors found out about Miller's application during the third week of July. More than 30 neighbors who opposed the CAFO convened in a living room to discuss a course of action. A week before last Monday, the group turned in a petition with about 125 signatures citing reasons not to approve Miller's application.

"Our reasons included health, air quality, lifestyle, lower property value [and] deteriorating road conditions," Primmer said. "Once one gets started, the concern is that more will begin. Knox [Mo.] has 12 or 13."

Primmer also farms and raises hogs and said she sympathizes with many of Miller's goals.

"Well, this is just a job – it is really hard for farmers, they need to get bigger and bigger," she said. "We're not against the family farmer. We're families who farm."

Primmer's concerns also are deeply rooted in the plight of small, diversified farms that must compete with larger corporate operations. She and her husband raise about 60 pigs on a more traditional farm she said.

"If we go to MFA to buy hog feed, he gets a different price, and that's why we don't have many people like us, who farm and raise hogs," Primmer said. "We're taking a stand against corporate farmers – that kind of control."

Many concerns of Primmer's and other Brashear residents warrant investigation. The American Public Health Association and the Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians both called for a moratorium on new CAFOs until more studies analyzing health risks can be performed. Associate County Commissioner Gene Schneider said he sympathizes with them but thinks there is little the County Commission can do.

"We studied his application, did our preliminary read through before sending it to the Health Department, but it doesn't appear to have any problems," Schneider said. "If he meets the rules outlined in the health code, there's nothing we can do."

The current commission approved



Factory Farm Facts

- Factory farms are known for producing excessively large amounts of animal waste.
- Disease-causing pathogens like Salmonella, E. Coli, Cryptosporidium and fecal coliform can be 10 to 100 times more concentrated than in human waste.
- Humans can contract more than 40 diseases from exposure to animal waste.
- In the United States, about 24 million pounds of antibiotics (70% of the nation's total usage) are added to animal feed every year to speed livestock growth.
- Large hog farms have been known to emit hydrogen sulfide gas. When humans are exposed to the gas, flu-like symptoms occur.
- At high concentrations, exposure to the gas can lead to brain damage.
- The National Institute of Health reported 19 human deaths as a result of hydrogen sulfide emissions from manure pits in 1998.

Natural Resources Defense Council at www.nrdc.org

the Adair County health code two years ago. The code was a copy of Linn County's health code, designed to prevent the expansion of CAFOs from the neighboring Sullivan County.

"The code was very strict ... and in Linn County, it worked," Schneider said. "Adair County is so populated that you wouldn't think someone could get far enough from a residence, but [Miller] seems to be in the right place."

A week before last Wednesday, Schneider went with many of the opposition to Miller's existing CAFO in Knox County. He said that although there was definitely a strong stench inside the facility, from the outside he did not detect much of an odor.

"From 50 feet away I could catch a whiff every once in awhile, but from 100 feet I couldn't smell a thing," he said. "Not that it's a scientific study."

The Commission is taking care to choose very deliberate, targeted actions in anything involving the situation. Schneider said they are aware that litigation is likely regardless of what decision they make and that both sides have strong cases and feelings.

"We tried to be objective," Schneider said. "But this man seems very genuine and honest about what he intends to do."

Miller began building and operating poultry CAFOs in Iowa before selling them and moving to Missouri about four years ago. Two years ago he opened a CAFO in neighboring Knox County, and Schneider said there have been no complaints concerning smell.

Schneider discussed some plans Miller has for his farm. Because of increasing fertilizer prices, Miller wants to use the pig manure to fer-

tilize his land, he said. Schneider said Miller mentioned the Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension program at the University of Missouri to commissioners, a program that teaches how to take samples of soil to calculate how much manure can be safely added to land without resulting in water polluting runoff.

He said Miller also mentioned the University's Nutrient Management Plan, though how these practices are put to use and who performs them or pays for them is unclear.

Schneider said Miller wants to use farming to support his family and sons who also work the land with him but that making a living off of farming is difficult. In order to make a living as a family farmer, John Mark Miller and sons have incorporated.

Miller could not be reached for comment.

ATTENTION ALL TRUMAN AND ATSU STUDENTS AND SPOUSES

TEETH WHITENING SPECIAL!

For a limited time Dr. Steve Barber and Associates General Dentistry Practice located at **215 East McPherson** is offering all Truman and KCOM students and their spouses a teeth whitening special.

Special includes a teeth cleaning, in-office laser teeth whitening, and custom take home bleach trays.

NOW JUST \$275!

Call Kim or Crystal at 665-5653 Today to schedule your appointment

Offer expires 9/30/08

Disclaimer: Must show student I.D. Offer does not include any other discounts. Cosmetic, teeth whitening and implant dentistry are non-specialty interest areas that require no specific educational training to advertise this service.

Cultural Competency and Spirituality in Medicine Conference

September 12-13, 2008

Location

Connell Information Technologies Center
800 West Jefferson
Kirksville, MO 63501

Registration

\$20
\$10 student rate

For registration, contact:

Carrie Gaines
cgaines@atsu.edu
660.626.2057

Keynote Speakers



Pauline Chen, M.D.
"The Tyranny of Diagnosis: One Surgeon's Search for What Really Matters"



John Chibnall, Ph.D.
"Spiritual, Cultural, and Humanistic Aspects of Medical Care and the Illness Experience"



Nicholas Comminellis, M.D.
"Health Through the Eyes of Culture"

* Registration includes all conference materials and a continental breakfast and lunch on September 13.

* Continuing Medical Education credits are available.

* Program sponsored in part by The George Washington Institute for Spirituality in Health Spirituality and Medicine Curricular and Residency Training Program Award funded by the John Templeton Foundation and ATSU's Predoctoral Training in Primary Care. Grant Number D56HP08338 funded by the Division of Medicine, Bureau of Health Professions, Health Resources and Services Administration, Department of Health and Human Services.

ATSU
A.T. STILL
UNIVERSITY