

Could Maryland Pollution Ruling Soon Affect Pa.?

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A Maryland circuit court recently ruled that the Maryland Department of the Environment must regulate ammonia air emissions from livestock operations as a water pollutant.

The [court case](#) specifically dealt with ammonia emissions from poultry houses but applies to other livestock operations that are subject to National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) water discharge permits under federal and state statutes in Maryland. The court found that gaseous ammonia is discharged to the Chesapeake Bay through the use of industrial fans, and a [2020 study](#) showed that millions of pounds of ammonia are emitted from Maryland's poultry industry. The study then showed the emitted ammonia settles on nearby land and waterways, causing significant pollution to the bay.

If the ruling is implemented by Maryland, it would likely result in costly monitoring and mitigation measures by livestock operations to address ammonia emissions for the state's livestock industry. It is expected that the court's ruling will be appealed.

Although the Maryland court's ruling is not directly applicable to Pennsylvania livestock operations, its underlying rationale could serve as a basis for legal actions to regulate agricultural ammonia emissions in Pennsylvania, part of which is also part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Addressing these emissions could have a significant financial impact on livestock operations, and livestock operations in Pennsylvania may want to start researching this issue now to decide how a similar ruling or law it could affect them if one comes to pass in the state.

If you have any questions about the ammonia emissions in your livestock operation, please [contact me](#).

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