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Delay on New Chicken Houses in Maryland

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(Photo: WBOC)

POCOMOKE CITY, Md.- New federal environmental rules governing CAFO, or Concentrated Animal Feed Operations, have many poultry farmers at a stand-still.

Dale Stevens, a poultry farmer in Pocomoke City, said, "It's going to keep us from expanding, I mean we're just waiting and waiting."

Stevens said he built his chicken houses just under the deadline at the beginning of the year and he had hoped to have four more built by now, but he is going to have to wait.

The new regulations became effective in February, but Stevens has to wait because now a permit is necessary to build new chicken houses.

Stevens said, "The poultry business is very competitive, anyone with old style houses cannot compete effectively in the marketplace anymore."

No permit means no loan for farmers.

Kenny Bounds at MidAtlantic Farm Credit said, "If we were to advance money to a borrower to construct buildings and then they didn't get a permit to put chickens in, obviously we'd be putting them in a financial bind at the end if they were unable to have the income stream from the chicken."

According to the Maryland Department of Environment, the permit includes stricter rules on what farmers do with chicken waste. The ultimate goal is to keep area waters clean. The Environmental Protection Agency says the rules will help do that with the chicken houses.

The new regulations include: waste storage and handling, such as having zero manure storage, site runoff management including storm water, and setbacks like all poultry houses must be so far away from waterways.

Farmers who are looking to build chicken houses will need a permit by Dec. 1.



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