

In the bull's-eye

Our environment in cross-hairs

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SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

The past few weeks I have been reading a book called *Animal Factory* by David Kirby.

It is a well-documented and well-written book about three different areas of the country (Eastern North Carolina, Western Illinois and the Yakima Valley in Washington State) where large factory operations—not farms (hog, dairy)—began operating in the 1990s. The similarities between what is happening in Mount Judea surrounding the C&H Hog Farms concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) on Big Creek that runs into the Buffalo River and what happened to these folks is strikingly similar and quite scary.

These three places listed in the book had the first eight of the 10 characteristics listed below. Here are my 10 reasons why Cargill and possibly other hog factories are headed to our state.

1. Poverty.
2. Relative low population areas (high correlation with poverty).
3. Perceived lack of educated citizens.
4. Overall very lax environmental laws, and the laws that do exist are intentionally complex and ambiguous (often written by industry).
5. No requirements for use of “advanced technologies” such as lining hog sewage ponds with concrete or covering the ponds.
6. Large immigrant population.
7. Traditionally agricultural-friendly state.
8. Environmental groups and/or land-grant universities that have taken money to do research in the past from agri-business and now may not be able to criticize Big Agriculture or conduct unbiased research.
9. No porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDV) reported in our state yet.
10. Arkansas is close to the epicenter of Cargill’s pork operation with a feed mill in London, genetic labs in Morrilton and Umpire, and a company office in Russellville.

To see the locations of Cargill’s pork operation, go to www.cargill.com/company/businesses/cargill-pork/locations/index.jsp.

Despite Cargill’s statements that they are not going to put any more hog factories in the Buffalo River wa-

Guest writer

tershed, don’t believe them for a second. This company and others like it create known toxic environments for their neighbors and communities that are adjacent to the factories; pollute the air that local children breathe, increasing the prevalence of asthma; contaminate the water, ground and air with ammonia that can travel up to 300 miles away; and kill our streams, our fish, our tourism.

With China’s growing middle class demanding pork, and the high hog mortality from PEDV in other U.S. states, Cargill is looking for a new place to pollute.

After experiencing at least 30 devastating lagoon breaches and overtopping of hog waste into waterways, North Carolina implemented new laws requiring additional precautions to prevent contamination. But industry said it was too costly and moved on to other states.

There are hundreds of scientific case studies with numerous examples demonstrating how bad these farms are for the environment and how economically they don’t make sense for the local grower, community or state. This method of doing business with large concentrations of animals, slurry ponds, and applying the manure to fields is a broken and dangerous system and should be outlawed.

The only thing good about it are the profits generated by the vertically integrated, multibillion-dollar companies such as Cargill. Of the 400 richest Americans, six are Cargill heirs. They are billionaires with money made by polluting our country and others around the world. I ask you to read *Animal Factory* and see if you do not draw the same conclusions.

Speak up, write your legislators, and demand stronger environmental legislation now. Write Cargill and tell them to leave our beautiful state alone.

Don’t let this happen here—let’s truly keep it the Natural State, and a great place to live!



Teresa Turk lives in Fayetteville.