

State Water Resources Control Board

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TEHAMA COUNTY CATTLE OPERATION TO PAY \$1 MILLION TO RESOLVE POLLUTION PROBLEMS

SACRAMENTO – To resolve a water pollution case filed by the State Attorney General's Office, a Tehama County feedlot has agreed to spend more than \$1 million, partly to improve its manure handling practices, and in part as penalties.

"This is the largest penalty any California confined animal feeding operation has paid. More importantly, the agreement puts Masami at the state-of-the-art for regulatory compliance," said State Water Resources Control Board Chairperson Art Baggett.

A stipulated judgment approved Friday in Tehama County Superior Court also requires the Masami Cattle Ranch, located near Red Bluff, to take additional steps to prevent a repeat of environmental problems caused by the mishandling of the manure created at the 6,000-head feedlot.

In January 2000, the Attorney General's Office filed a civil complaint against Masami Cattle Ranch, Inc. and its owners, Masami and Takako Ishida (defendants), on behalf of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Department of Toxic Substances Control.

The defendants operate a feedlot where they confine and fatten 6,000 - 7,000 head of cattle, and had an ongoing problem managing the estimated 391,000 pounds of manure produced daily by the operation. Enforcement actions began in 1995.

According to the complaint, the defendants' two main feedlots drained manure-laden water into Elder Creek and Willow Creek near Red Bluff. In addition, manure was improperly stored and spread in a manner which caused contaminated runoff into local streams. The complaint also alleged that the defendants confined hundreds of cattle in extra pens with no facilities for capturing manure runoff.

The settlement approved today, includes an injunction requiring the ranch to correct its practices. Under the agreement, the ranch is required to perform regular and specific environmental monitoring, inspections, and for five years to consult with certified specialists in manure management practices.

"The Regional Board staff has worked tirelessly with Masami Ranch staff to ensure that proper steps are taken to protect the environment," Baggett added.

The agreement provides that defendants demonstrate \$700,000 in improvements have been made to the ranch's waste management system in the next year.

Additionally, Masami Ranch must pay a total of \$305,000 in penalties and investigative costs as follows: State Water Resources Control Board (civil penalty, \$212,660); Department of Toxic Substances Control (civil penalty, \$32,340); State Water Resources Control Board (investigative cost reimbursement, \$34,247); Department of Toxic Substances Control (cost reimbursement, \$25,753).

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PHOTO EDITORS: Three electronic images (including one which is graphic) of Masami violations are available via email: info@exec.swrcb.ca.gov.