SD Slaughterhouse Accused Of Wastewater Violations

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — A beef processing plant in northern South Dakota that is trying to get up to speed after years of delays caused by everything from financial problems to lawsuits to flooding is now accused of violating its wastewater permit.

The city of Aberdeen says the Northern Beef Packers plant is failing to monitor pollutants and properly operate its treatment lagoons, and that it does not have a certified wastewater supervisor on staff. The city issued a notice of violation on Tuesday, the American News [1] reported. Plant officials declined comment.

The violations are not acceptable, City Attorney Adam Altman said.

"We have no indication that the effluent is harmful, but we don't know that it isn't because they (Northern Beef) didn't test anything," he said. "We don't have any chemistry on it."

The plant will not be fined but has been given 10 days to come up with a plan to fix the problems and start implementing it.

"We want Northern Beef to succeed," Altman said. "We just want them in compliance."

Aberdeen's response to the permit violations seems appropriate, said Kelli Buscher, a supervisor with South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

"What they are doing is heading off a bigger potential problem," she said. "They are holding the plant accountable."

Construction of the $109 million plant began five years ago. It eventually aims to process 1,500 cattle per day from the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa and Minnesota. The city cleared the plant for testing and limited production in mid-October, allowing it to gradually increase production as long as it continued to pass inspections. Plant officials have not said how many cattle they have actually been processing.

City officials this week reduced the number of cattle Northern Beef could process, from 500 to 125, because the plant had failed to meet construction guidelines dealing with wastewater. Altman said that is a separate issue from the wastewater violations, however.

"The monitoring and testing could have been done without the equipment" in question, he said.

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