
**Agriculture & Ecology
Committee**

ESB 6726

Brief Description: Protecting dairy farmers from unwarranted complaints.

Sponsors: Senators Rasmussen and Honeyford.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Provides the Department of Ecology with permissive authority to not conduct certain dairy farm inspections.

Hearing Date: 2/28/02

Staff: Jason Callahan (786-7117).

Background:

In 1993, it became mandatory for the Department of Ecology to investigate complaints filed against dairy farms for alleged violations of water quality laws. Written complaints are to be investigated within three working days and a written report of the department's finding is to be issued. The report must include any water quality measurements, photographs, or other pertinent information.

In 1998, the state enacted the Dairy Nutrient Management Act that provides for the inspection of dairy farms. In addition, dairy farms must develop dairy nutrient management plans. These plans must be approved by the local conservation district by July 1, 2002 unless federal and state funding to support technical assistance is insufficient. A plan must be certified being fully implemented by December 31, 2003.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Ecology (department) has the permissive authority to not conduct an inspection of a dairy farm that has been the subject of a complaint if the same or similar complaint has been filed by the same person against the same farm within a six month period, and the inspection prompted by the initial complaint did not find a violation. If the department decides not to conduct an inspection, it must document the reasons for that

decision within 20 days and inform both the complainant and the dairy farm of the decision.

The report of findings of any inspection, or the decision not to conduct an inspection, must be placed in the department's administrative records.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.