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Review of *Empty Pastures: Confined Animals and the  
Transformation of the Rural Landscape* By Terence J  
Centner

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**Empty Pastures: Confined Animals and the Transformation of the Rural Landscape.** By Terence J. Centner. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004. 189 pp. Map, photographs, illustrations, appendixes, index. \$35.00 cloth.

The shift from integrated crop and livestock farms to confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) in the last thirty years requires better regulatory policies, better enforcement, greater incentives for farmers to prevent pollution, and modification of some “right to farm” legislation. This is the

thesis of *Empty Pastures: Confined Animals and the Transformation of the Rural Landscape* by Terence Centner, a professor of agricultural law and economics at the University of Georgia.

Each chapter begins with a vivid story from the author's childhood on a traditional dairy and grape farm in New York State. The vignettes, nostalgic yet clear-eyed about this vanished way of life, serve to contrast the old world of farming from the brave new world of industrial livestock production.

Centner devotes two chapters to water quality issues and laws (one for the Federal Clean Water Act, and one to review state regulations), one chapter to odors and nuisance law, one to the legal principles underlying pesticide law which might be applied to pollution from CAFOs, and one to accountability and enforcement of existing laws. These chapters present numerous concrete suggestions and are essential reading for lawmakers, citizen activists, and members of the livestock industry.

With all the detailed regulations on manure-holding facilities, setback distances, methods of manure spreading and nutrient content, inspections, permits, and so on, it becomes clear that factory farming necessitates a lot more bureaucracy to protect the public interest than did family-sized operations of the 1960s.

In one of the final chapters, Centner makes some predictions: among others, that the public will demand greater accountability. Agriculture will have to accept more "command and control" regulations, and governments will have to do a better job of enforcing the existing regulations, while making them more flexible to apply only to polluters and potential polluters. Conservation agencies will have to redouble their efforts at encouraging such practices as the use of filter strips and cover crops. The additional regulations, while increasing farm costs by as much as 20 percent, would only increase the overall food costs of a family by 2 to 3 percent.

Centner's dispassionate tone and scholarly approach, particularly in the legal chapters, make his work highly credible. I am puzzled, however, by the mostly unsupported claim that American consumers will start to care where their food comes from and demand public accountability. Clearly this is the major change that will have to take place before his recommendations can gain any traction. **Laura L. Jackson**, *Department of Biology, University of Northern Iowa*.