

Dairy lagoon's runoff investigated by state agencies

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By KERRY CRAIG

News-Telegram Staff Writer

A spill or overflow from a lagoon holding dairy waste near Wood County Road 1800 into a creek that flows into Lake Fork is the subject of a formal investigation by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality [TCEQ].

The overflow of organic dairy waste was first noticed on Wednesday of last week, according to Yantis resident Billy D. Deverell.

"Yesterday [Thursday], you could tell the water was black" Deverell said Friday afternoon. "You could see dead fish floating down the creek toward Lake Fork."

Investigators from TCEQ, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and Sabine River Authority were in the area of Wood County Road 1800 last week and were contacting property owners along Glade Creek about the lagoon spill.

Jene Leshe, who owns a farm along the creek, was one of those contacted.

"An environmental agency called me and said the water would kill our cows," Leshe said. "I had to section off our part of the creek to keep my animals protected."

Sabine River Authority, which owns Lake Fork, also had investigators watching the progress of the dairy waste as it moved toward the lake.

Bill Kirby, assistant Lake Fork Division manager, said the authority was monitoring the situation.

"We are concerned about water quality," Kirby said. "Lake Fork is a fishing jewel and we certainly don't want to hurt the fishery. That's why we are all out there getting it done."

While Lake Fork is one of the major water sources for the City of Dallas, Kirby said there was no immediate concern.

"Once the lagoon waste material reaches Lake Fork, the lake will naturally filter out and dilute the organic material," Kirby said.

By Friday, the waste materials had not reached the lake but, with rainfall Sunday and Monday, the runoff could be pushing it into the reservoir.

"The drinking water intakes are a long way from where the waste would flow into Lake Fork," Kirby said. "In isolated incidents, it's amazing how good natural water treatment can be."

Lisa Wheeler, a spokeswoman for TCEQ, confirmed Monday that a formal investigation into the spill and its implications is underway and that investigation might take up to two weeks to complete.