

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **MDA promotes water quality assurance program**

ST. PAUL, Minn. – Minnesota livestock producers have a new voluntary and proactive way to address water quality issues on their land through the Livestock Environmental Quality Assurance Program (LEQA). With funds from the environmentally-dedicated sales tax, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has launched the program to help livestock producers take the initiative on a non-regulatory basis to evaluate water quality issues and implement appropriate practices.

“Livestock producers are at the forefront of managing Minnesota’s soil and water resources,” says MDA Assistant Commissioner Joe Martin. “We would hope this program will be another tool for those individuals who wish to be more proactive in addressing environmental concerns on lands they manage.”

Martin says the LEQA program merges the farmers’ and government’s efforts to obtain a ‘water quality score’ for any particular farm. The assessments help the farmers figure out what actions they can take themselves, how the government programs can help and how to move forward.

MDA has contracted with Ag Resource Strategies, LLC, to recruit farmers to enroll in the LEQA program. The company trains technicians to look at the farm in separate resource management areas, such as the farmstead, livestock facilities, fields and wooded areas. The technicians then develop an assessment and an action plan, if necessary. The assessment and plan is confidential unless the farmer decides otherwise.

The cost to register for the program is \$225. The farmer then receives an assessment, action plan and up to 20 additional hours of assistance from the LEQA technician. More information is available at [www.agresourcestrategies.com](http://www.agresourcestrategies.com) or contact Tim Gieseke at 507-359-1889.

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