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Mr. Gary Swanson, Chairman
Cherry County Planning Commission
365 N Main St #8
Valentine, NE 69201

Dear Chairman Swanson and members of the Planning Commission:

My name is Ed Brown and my family and I own Two Rivers Ranch in Cherry County. Our ranch is located just downwind and down slope of the proposed hog confinement operation and the fields where the operator plans to spread manure. As you may imagine, we are opposed to this project for a myriad of reasons.

Being in the beautiful sandhills of Nebraska for the past 30 some years, we have been blessed with a paradise that has stunning vistas and fresh air. To think that this might come to an end due to a large hog confinement operation is a depressing thought.

Below I will briefly touch on some issues of concern regarding the Danielski/Valentine Feeders application for CUP 001/20.

German Settlement Road

The German Settlement Road is an inherently dangerous road. It is narrow, often icy and fog shrouded. During winter storms driver visibility is near zero. If the application is approved, the residents and children of the German Settlement area will also have to deal with significantly increased traffic at all hours of the day and night, as well as dangers resulting from workers running late for their shifts. This is a situation no parent would want for their children or for themselves.

The cost of maintaining the German Settlement Road both during and after construction will be significant and will be borne by all Cherry County residents without any resulting economic benefit. The German Settlement area will also be affected by an increase in light produced by the facility both during and after construction.

Potential Pollution

If run off produced by the proposed facility pollutes the Niobrara River, the local economy could be damaged greatly. Most of the canoeing and recreation along the Niobrara is down stream of this proposed project and would be directly affected. The local economy could also be damaged just from the increased risk and rumors that run off from the proposed facility could pollute the Niobrara River. Water quality will also become unsafe if runoff pollutes our water supply. We don't want the currently pristine aquifer to become tainted.

Property Values and the Local Economy

Studies done on the effects of hog confinements show that land values for neighboring properties decline once a hog confinement is constructed. Herriges, Joseph A. et al. "Living with Hogs in Iowa: The Impact of Livestock Facilities on Rural Residential Property Values." Center for Agricultural and Rural Development, Iowa State University (2003),

<https://www.card.iastate.edu/products/publications/pdf/03wp342.pdf>. A reduction in property values will result in a reduction in tax revenue for Cherry County. In the future when someone chooses to sell their property due to retirement or perhaps an estate sale, potential buyers will be minimal since people generally don't want to live near a hog confinement. Also, if the hog confinement is approved, fewer people will be incentivized to start or continue ranching in the area, which will also hurt Cherry County's economy.

Community Health

The literature I have reviewed shows that the health risk posed by a hog confinement is incredibly significant to neighboring landowners and their children. Researchers have found that residents living in proximity to a swine CAFO have elevated rates of headaches, runny nose, sore throat, excessive coughing, diarrhea and burning eyes. Wing, Steve et al. "Intensive Livestock Operations, Health, and Quality of Life among Eastern North Carolina Residents." Volume 108, Number 3 (March 2000),

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1637983/pdf/envhper00304-0089.pdf>. Guidance from the UNL Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources website also states that there are reports that suggest that odors may elicit respiratory problems with nausea, vomiting and headaches. Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, "Air Quality Issues."

<https://water.unl.edu/air-quality-issues>. The literature also shows that as air quality deteriorates, neighbors of hog confinements have higher rates of respiratory tract and breathing problems. Okun, Melva. "Human Health Issues Associated with the Hog Industry." Environmental Resources Program, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (1999), <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.538.2802&rep=rep1&type=pdf>.

The proposed operation will also have a detrimental effect on its employees' health. Swine confinement facility workers often develop respiratory problems secondary to their work including acute bronchitis, the asthma-like syndrome, exacerbation of asthma, chronic bronchitis and mucous membrane irritation syndrome. Von Essen, Susanna et al. "The Respiratory Inflammatory Response to the Swine Confinement Building Environment." National Ag Safety Database (2001), https://nasdonline.org/static_content/documents/1821/d001765.pdf. Overall the proposed operations impact on community health could be significant, yet the majority of the community will not benefit from the operation at all. These troubling facts cannot be ignored.

Odor

I have not said much about the smell that emanates from a hog confinement and its manure spreading fields because it is well known that the odors produced are offensive and potentially horrific. The Danielski/Valentine Feeders application says as much. The applicant's plan is very vague and discouraging on how the operator will control the odor. It appears the applicant may spread the manure next to anyone's property so long as it meets NDEE's specifications. Cherry County approval is not needed if the applicant decides to spread manure on a property not listed in the Nutrient Management Plan. One quote from a scholarly paper that seems to hit the mark comes from "Community Health and Socioeconomic Issues Surrounding Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations":

"One of the most significant social impacts of CAFOs is the disruption of quality of life for neighboring residents. More than an unpleasant odor, the smell can have dramatic consequences for rural communities where lives are rooted in enjoying the outdoors (Thu 2002). The encroachment of a large-scale livestock facility near homes is significantly disruptive of rural living. The highly cherished values of freedom and independence associated with life oriented toward the outdoors gives way to feelings of violation and infringement. Social gatherings when family and friends come together are affected either in practice or through disruption of routines that normally provide a sense of belonging and identity—backyard barbecues and visits by

friends and family. Homes are no longer an extension of or a means for enjoying the outdoors. Rather, homes become a barrier against the outdoors that must be escaped.”¹

Remaining Concerns

Currently we offer hunting trips for auction at the National Junior High and High School Finals Rodeos to help raise money for local students. We will not be able to continue to do so if the application is approved because people will not want to bid up a goose hunt in the Sandhills knowing that they will have to deal with the smell of hogs while lying out in a cold blind. We would like to continue supporting our local students and provide people the opportunity to hunt in the Sandhills to benefit our local community.

The German Settlement Road area is in fact a settlement. Many families call this area home. It is one of the most heavily settled rural areas in the Sandhills. Please notice that none of the people involved in this project live anywhere near this proposed hog confinement, including the investors and the landowners who will spread the manure produced on their fields. Hopefully, we will not have to send our children to school to be ridiculed for smelling of hog.

Even though this is only a brief summary of some of our concerns, I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration of these issues. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me for more information or the great number of research resources available regarding the effects of hog confinements.

Respectfully,



Ed Brown

¹ Donham, Kelley J et al. "Community health and socioeconomic issues surrounding concentrated animal feeding operations." *Environmental health perspectives* vol. 115, 2 (2007): 317-20.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1817697/>