Seed Corn/Ethanol Issue
August 2020 Background

An ethanol facility in Nebraska utilizes treated seed corn as its sole feed stock in the ethanol production process. It has been in operation since 2015. A little over a year ago, area residents expressed concern regarding the large piles of by-product (wet cake) being stored at the facility. There were odor and runoff concerns and allegations of one or more wildlife and/or domestic pet deaths attributed to the piles. In conversations with both the Ag and the Environmental agencies we learned that this facility processes large quantities of seed corn and had received approval from the Nebraska Department of Ag (NDA) to apply the wet cake byproduct as a soil amendment. For various reasons the land application as a soil amendment of the material had not occurred for some period and had resulted in large stock piles of wet cake and complaints.

NDA had not been aware that treated seed was the feed stock for the ethanol plant and sampling found variously high levels of both insecticides and fungicides (some older sampling results and other

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The lab analysis provided at the time identified significant concentrations of the following pesticides: azoxystrobin, clothianidin, fludioxonil, metalaxyl, prothioconazole, tebuconazole, thiamethoxam and trifloxystrobin, and a low concentration of imidacloprid and selenium (this is the only heavy metal reported as detected). Clothianidin (neonic insecticide) topped the chart at 427,000 ppb. NDA's calculation found the proposed land application being used at the time was likely in the range of 20 tons per acre resulting in 17 pounds of this active ingredient per acre. Their calculations indicated the annual maximum amount allowed at 0.165 pounds per acre.

NDA chose to rescind the soil amendment label as they had not been aware that the wet cake contained pesticides at these levels and agreed with OPP's thoughts that these levels could present unacceptable risks as currently managed. The decision by NDA to rescind the soil amendment label eliminated the only useful purpose for the wet cake and the Nebraska environmental agency (NDEE) determined it to be a solid waste that would require disposal in a landfill.

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