

Ministerial decree amending the ministerial decree of 19 March 2004 establishing the list of low-ammonia-emission stable systems, implementing Articles 1.1.2 and 5.9.2.1bis of the decree of the Government of Flanders of 1 June 1995 laying down general and sectoral provisions on environmental hygiene in relation to the expansion of the list with the CowToilet system.

Legal basis

This Decree is based on:

- the Decree of 5 April 1995 laying down general regulations concerning environmental policy, Article 5.4.1, inserted by the Decree of 25 April 2014;
- the Decree of the Flemish Government of 1 June 1995 laying down general and sector-specific provisions on environmental hygiene, Article 1.1.2, last amended by the Decree of the Flemish Government of 21 June 2024;

Procedural requirements

The following formal requirements have been met:

- The Inspectorate of Finance issued its opinion on 3 October 2025.
- The Council of State issued its opinion no. XX on XX.
- This draft was notified to the European Commission on XXX pursuant to Article 5 of Directive (EU) 2015/1535 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 September 2015 laying down a procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical regulations and of rules on information society services.

Legal context

This Decree is consistent with the following regulations:

- the Decree of 26 January 2024 on the programmatic approach to nitrogen;
- the Decree of 19 April 2024 on ammonia emission reduction measures.

THE FLEMISH MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND AGRICULTURE HEREBY DECREES:

Article 1. In Annex I to the ministerial decree of 19 March 2004 establishing the list of low-ammonia-emission stable systems, implementing Articles 1.1.2 and 5.9.2.1bis of the decree of the Government of Flanders of 1 June 1995 laying down general and sectoral provisions on environmental hygiene, last amended by the ministerial decree of 16 July 2025, a sub-section 7.1.31 in chapter seven of the same annex is added, consisting of points 7.1.31.1 to 7.1.31.5 and that reads as follows:

“7.1.31. CowToilet – urine collection station
7.1.31.1

Animal category:

R-1 Dairy cattle and mature cows over two years of age

Code:

R-1.29

Name of the system:

CowToilet – urine collection station

Emission reduction:

35%

7.1.31.2 Operating principle

The ammonia emission reduction is based on the collection and discharge of the urine into a separate closed storage before it can come into contact with the manure or stable floor. This prevents the conversion of urea from the urine into ammonia.

An attractant such as concentrated feed stimulates the cow to visit the urine collection station.

The urine collection station allows the cow to urinate in the desired place using the natural plasma reflex. This reflex is triggered by automatically touching the area of skin on the cow between the vulva and udder (perineum massage).

7.1.31.3 Design of the measure

§1. Design requirements

Floor requirements: The corridors, passageways, waiting area and walking routes are designed as a concrete slatted floor or as a non-permeable floor.

Requirements for urine collection stations:

1° The walking area has a urine collection station where the cow can stand undisturbed and urinate. The cow is undisturbed because the cow is separated from the other cows by the fence at the back of the urine collection station. The installation and adjustment of the urine collection station must be carried out according to the supplier's instructions and adapted to the walking routes in the stable;

2° An attractant such as concentrated feed is provided at the urine collection station;

3° The urine collection station is equipped with an automated system with a collection tray that encourages the cow to urinate, collects the urine in the collection tray and immediately discharges the urine into a separate sealed storage facility as specified in Article 5.9.2.3. of the Flemish Government decree of 1 June 1995 containing general and sectoral provisions on environmental hygiene for urine outside the stable.

4° The urine collection station is always linked to software for individual animal recognition, system control and registration.

5° The urine collection station is fitted with lighting that indicates whether the urine collection station is functioning properly.

Requirements for manure pit and manure discharge:

1° Under the entire surface of the slatted floor is a manure pit, whereas with a non-permeable floor, there is at least one manure pit under the manure disposal area.

2° The disposal of manure and part of the urine that is not collected in the urine collection station takes place via the slats above the manure pit or is discharged from the non-

permeable floor to the manure discharge or underlying manure pit by means of a fixed slurry or a manure (collecting) robot.

Requirements for emitting floor area:

1° The floor area soiled with manure may not exceed 5.5 m² per animal place. This area includes the corridors, passageways, waiting area and walking routes. It does not include either the floor area of the milking shed or feeding step (if present).

2° The waiting area is not included in the 'area soiled with manure' of up to 5.5 m² if the following conditions are met:

- a) The waiting area may be closed so that the dairy cows do not have access to the waiting area between milkings;
- b) The floor of the waiting area consists of a low-emission floor system or is designed with a non-permeable floor;
- c) The floor is cleaned after each milking;
- d) The manure pit under the waiting area is closed off from the rest of the stable or adapted so that no additional emissions from the pit can occur (the so-called 'chimney effect').

Requirements for registration equipment: The following registration equipment is present:

1° Equipment for registering the operation of the urine collection station, including the occurrence of a malfunction and cleaning and maintenance times;

2° Equipment for registering the number of visits per dairy cow per 24-hour period to the urine collection station where urine has been collected.

§2. Requirements for the use of the system

Usage requirements for the urine collection station:

1° At least one urine collection station is available per 25 dairy cows;

2° All dairy cows in the stable must have access to the urine collection station at all times, except where these dairy cows have been isolated from the room with the urine collection station for a limited period of time for treatment or when using the waiting area during milking. During periods when the dairy cows are out to pasture, the urine collection station does not need to be available;

3° The number of visits during which urine is collected in the urine collection station, measured over a continuous period, must result in an average of at least five visits with urine discharge per cow per day. This average is calculated over the entire flock of dairy cows with access to the urine collection station. When dairy cows are allowed to graze, the number of visits per day is adjusted to the number of hours that the dairy cows spend in the stable.

Usage requirements for waiting area:

1° The period of use of the waiting area is limited to the milking times. Outside milking times, no animals are kept in the waiting area. When the waiting area is available to the animals outside of milking times, it forms part of the walking area. In that case, the waiting area is considered part of the floor area soiled with manure;

2° After each use, the waiting area is cleaned immediately, with all manure and urination being discharged into the manure pit. This requirement does not apply if the waiting area is accessible to the dairy cows outside of milking times.

Usage requirements for cleaning: The catch basin with mesh and transport pipes for the urine in the urine collection station must be cleaned and rinsed weekly with water.

Maintenance requirements:

1° The user inspects the system on a daily basis and, if necessary, maintains it in accordance with the supplier's installation and operating instructions. Daily monitoring of the proper functioning for luring cows, stimulating the urinary reflex and efficiently

collecting and pumping the urine. When the lighting on the urine collection station turns red, the user must always take immediate action;

2° The urine collection station is inspected at least once every six months for damage and serviced if necessary. A maintenance contract with the supplier of the urine collection station or other expert party is mandatory.

e) Registration requirements:

1° The registered values are kept for at least five years;

2° For the purpose of system operation monitoring, the following data is registered automatically:

a) The operation of the urine collection station, including the occurrence of a malfunction and cleaning time;

b) The number of visits per 24 hours to the urine collection station where urine was collected per dairy cow.

3° A digital logbook must be kept that registers when and by whom the cleaning and maintenance of the urine collection station took place (including how malfunctions were resolved).

7.1.31.4 Monitoring of the measure

The following conditions must be met during monitoring:

Stable design:

1° The floor is constructed as a slatted floor or a non-permeable floor;

2° The floor area soiled with manure may not exceed 5.5 m² per animal place;

3° Under the entire surface of the slatted floor is a manure pit, whereas with a non-permeable floor, there is at least one manure pit under the manure disposal area;

4° The removal of manure and the portion of urine that is not collected in the urine collection station takes place:

a) through the slates to the manure pit or;

b) from the closed floor by means of a manure slide in a fixed installation or a manure (collection) robot to the manure discharge or underlying manure pit.

Urine collection station:

1° At least one urine collection station is available per 25 dairy cows.

2° The urine collection station is equipped with an automated system with receptacle which:

a) encourages the cow to urinate;

b) collects the urine in the receptacle;

c) immediately drains the urine to a separate closed storage facility for the urine outside the stable.

3° A dairy cow must be able to go to a urine collection station at any time, except:

a) when it has been isolated for a limited time from the room with the urine collection station for treatment;

b) when the waiting area is used during milkings;

c) during periods when the dairy cows are out to pasture, the urine collection station does not need to be available.

4° An attractant (concentrated feed) is provided at the urine collection station.

5° The cow is separated from the other cows in the urine collection station by the fence at the back of the urine collection station.

6° The urine collection station is always linked to software for individual animal recognition, system control and registration.

7° The urine collection station is fitted with lighting showing that the urine collection station is functioning properly.

8° There are an average of at least five urinary discharge visits per cow per 24 hours. This average is calculated:

- a) over the entire flock of dairy cows that has access to the urine collection station or
- b) when dairy cows are allowed to graze, the number of visits per day is adjusted to the number of hours that the dairy cows spend in the stable.

Usage requirements:

1° After each use, the waiting area must be cleaned immediately, with all manure and urination being discharged into the manure pit. This requirement does not apply if the waiting area is accessible to the dairy cows outside of milking times;

2° The collection tray with mesh and transport pipes for urine in the urine collection station must be cleaned and rinsed with water every week;

3° Daily inspection of the proper functioning of the system for attracting cows, stimulating the urination reflex, and efficiently collecting and pumping the urine. When the lighting on the urine collection station turns red, the user must always take immediate action;

4° The user checks the system daily and, if necessary, services it in accordance with the supplier's installation and operating instructions.

Maintenance contract:

A maintenance contract with the supplier of the urine collection station or another expert is mandatory. The urine collection station is checked for damage and, if necessary, serviced at least once every six months;

2 ° This maintenance contract must be submitted to the supervisory authority on request.

Registration:

1° The following registration equipment must be present:

- a) Equipment for registering the operation of the urine collection station, including the occurrence of a malfunction and cleaning and maintenance times;
- b) Equipment for registering the number of visits per dairy cow per 24-hour period to the urine collection station where urine is collected.

2° The registered data must be kept for at least five years;

3° A digital logbook must be kept that registers when and by whom the cleaning and maintenance of the urine collection station took place (including how malfunctions were resolved).

4° It must be possible to submit the registered data and digital log to the supervisory authority on request.

7.1.31.5 Emission reduction

The emission reduction of the CowToilet is 35%.

Article 3. This Decree shall enter into force on the day of its publication in the Belgian Official Gazette.

Brussels, (date).

The Flemish Minister for Environment and Agriculture,

Jo BROUNS