

## **Underground Stray Voltage from Wind Turbines? A Correction and Comment**

Calvin Luther Martin, Ph.D.

[rushton2@westelcom.com](mailto:rushton2@westelcom.com)

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Last November I wrote an editorial in these pages titled "The Wind Factory Next Door," describing cattle deaths in Delta, Utah. "Now those [Delta] farmers say they've figured out what's causing the deaths: electrical currents running through the ground from the Intermountain Power Plant," writes John Hollenhorst for KSL News, Salt Lake City (see <http://www.100megsfree4.com/farshores/n03cd.htm>).

Allow me to make a correction here: it was my understanding that the alleged culprit (Intermountain Power Plant) was a windfarm, whereas in this case it is not: the Intermountain Power Plant is a very large coal-fired power plant. Hence, the underground voltage Maria Nye and her Utah neighbors complain about is not from a windfarm, as I claimed—and I stand corrected.

That said, in Lincoln Township, Wisconsin, the underground stray voltage which has decimated the prize-winning dairy herd of Scott Srnka is, almost certainly, from the 14-turbine windfarm next door (the closest turbine being 1100 feet from his barn). Mr. Srnka has had this confirmed in a variety of ways, including testing by licensed electricians. His herd is a closed breeding herd and, before the turbines went in 5 years ago, his milk production ranked among the highest in the state. No more. Within the first 6 months of the turbines going on-line, he tells me, 14 of his cows died of cancer (all of this confirmed by his veterinarian, Dr. Paul Mleziva). Autopsies showed, curiously, a black liver in virtually all cases. In those first 6 months, along with the deaths, Srnka was getting heifers born with no tails, no eyeballs, and at least one born with a colossal head—monstrosities he had never experienced before. As I say, his veterinarian got involved and began his own research into this bizarre phenomenon. For a long time, Srnka told me, he would have 4 cows die on average per month.

Srnka believes the turbines are dumping excess voltage into the ground, and when he managed to (illegally) disconnect the ground wires from the turbines, his herd miraculously became healthy again—till the utility company discovered what he'd done, reconnected the severed ground lines, and marched him into court (where it quickly dropped the charges, fearing adverse publicity over its obvious stray voltage problem).

This is not a pleasant story. Any dairy farmer contemplating living near wind turbines would do well to give Mr. Srnka a call (I have his number, if you're interested) and hear him out. (Srnka will tell you that, initially, he was all for the windfarm, and even helped install it.) I invite you, as well, to speak to Srnka's veterinarian: Dr. Paul Mleziva at (920) 863-2184 (office). Srnka tells me his neighbor, on whose land the turbines are situated, has lost 350 cows since the turbines went in. Next to the voltage crisis, the turbine noise ("a running shoe in a tumble dryer" is how he describes it) is his next significant problem.

What Scott Srnka tells me about cattle mortality, miscarriages, and monster heifers—all starting with the arrival of a windfarm next door—is repeated nearly verbatim by Roger Hutzell of Meyersdale, PA, whom I also spoke to. Talking to Maria Nye (Delta, Utah) by phone the other morning, she pointed out that her farm is 10 miles from the (coal-fired) power plant—ten miles away and, yet, still getting zapped by underground voltage from a (admittedly huge) power plant. The Nyes and others are suing Intermountain Power for \$100 million, so destructive has been the impact on their livestock.

Surely we in the North Country should contemplate this issue carefully. Srnka strongly advises anyone living within a mile of a proposed windfarm to have his/her property measured for in-ground electricity before the turbines begin operation, to establish an ambient, baseline voltage for future litigation with the wind companies over underground voltage. In addition, he recommends that municipalities insert a clause in their windfarm ordinance, requiring a windfarm to shut down until its stray voltage problems are corrected. No one thought to write this into the Lincoln Township ordinance, he tells me—and Scott Srnka and his family live to regret it.