

What is Minimum Distance Separation (MDS)?



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Minimum Distance Separation is a formula and set of guidelines developed by the Province to separate land uses to reduce incompatibility concerns about odour from livestock facilities.

The Minimum Distance Separation is specific to each property/ development proposal and depends on a number of factors including:

- The size of the farm operation;
- The type of manure storage;
- Potential type and number of livestock; and
- Existing neighbouring land uses and their level of sensitivity.

Minimum Distance Separation distances are required to be met prior to the creation of a new lot, building permit or change of land use. Minimum Distance Separation is not only for active livestock facilities and anaerobic digesters but for all structures capable of housing livestock even if they are vacant.

Why is Minimum Distance Separation Important?

Minimum Distance Separation helps to prevent conflicts in land uses between agricultural operations and their neighbours, minimizing nuisance complaints. Any required MDS calculations need to be identified early in the planning process to ensure that the proposed use is compatible with the surrounding area. Depending on the scale of development and agricultural operations nearby, you may be required to retain a professional to assist with the calculation.

What is MDS I and MDS II?

MDS I provides setback distances for new non-agricultural development. MDS I setbacks are required for the creation of a new lot, change in land use or issuance of a building permit when there is a livestock facility or facilities (vacant or used) or anaerobic digester within 1.5 kilometers of the subject property.

MDS II provides setback distances between new or expanding livestock facilities, permanent manure storage or anaerobic digesters and the nearest non-agricultural uses. MDS II setbacks are required prior to the issuance of a building permit for new or altered livestock facilities greater than 10 m² or any aerobic digester and is measured from existing land uses.

Where do I find more information?

The [Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs](#) produces the Minimum Distance Separation (MDS) Document: Formulae and Guidelines for Livestock Facility and Anaerobic Digester Odour Setbacks. Although the Ministry is unable to complete MDS calculations, they have other valuable resources that explain MDS requirements.