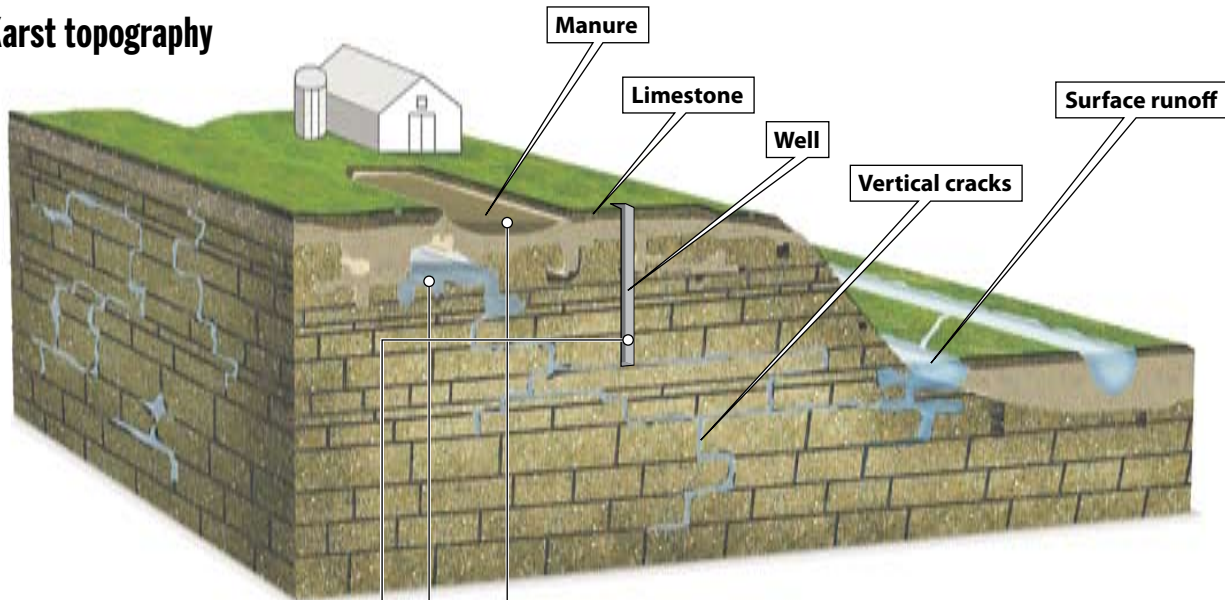


This land is cow-farm land ... or not

California dairyman A.J. Bos wants to build a 5,464-cow farm in rural Nora, making it the state's largest dairy farm. But a state geologist says the bedrock in Jo Daviess County is "karst," meaning it's fractured and groundwater travels particularly fast. The region is highly susceptible to groundwater contamination, the geologist says. Bos commissioned his own test of the farm site, saying there is no karst.

Karst topography



What is karst?

Karst is fractured bedrock marked by vertical crevices, caves and sinkholes. Water and other surface material penetrate the earth, blending with groundwater relatively quickly.

The Bos farm would hold millions of gallons of liquified manure in vast ponds. Critics say the manure could leach into the ground, particularly if a pond wall ruptures.

Unlike other aquifers in Illinois, the aquifer under Jo Daviess County is not packed with gravel and sand. Water, therefore, travels more quickly underground.

If manure flows through the bedrock and blends with groundwater, it could travel several miles within hours, potentially contaminating wells around the region.