

FARM

FROM A1

ment and a place of employment which was free from recognized hazards," according to the agency's findings.

During the probe, investigators also found unrelated instances when Matsche Farms employees unsafely entered cow manure pits, were exposed to hazardous chemicals, were not given adequate safety training, operated equipment improperly and suffered injuries that were not properly documented.

The agency's findings

listed eight workplace safety violations; six were categorized as serious.

OSHA hit Matsche Farms with fines totaling \$28,000, although records show the amount was lowered to \$25,000 in a settlement agreement.

Sheriff's deputies who responded the day of the incident reported that Matsche Farms officials told them that lowering a worker into the tank was unusual, but that Flores had volunteered.

Reported one sheriff's deputy: "The odor coming from the tank was very strong. It made breathing difficult when I got too close to it."