NODPA NEWS

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Organic Industry News

Organic Manure Hits the Fan in Washington: Cornucopia Complaint Prompts USDA Action on Pasture

By Will Fantle, Research Director Cornucopia Institute

The Cornucopia Institute, on January 10th, filed a formal complaint with the USDA's National Organic Program asking them to initiate an investigation into alleged violations of the federal organic law by a factory farm operating in Colorado. At issue is whether it is legal to confine cows in an industrial setting, without access to pasture, and still label milk and other dairy products *organic*. Similar factory-farm operations in Idaho and California are also under investigation by The Cornucopia Institute and will likely be targeted with formal complaints to the USDA in the near future.

"We have been interested in these *concentrated animal feeding operations*, or CAFOs, for some time," said Mark Kastel, Senior Farm Policy Analyst, at the Wisconsin-based Cornucopia Institute, a progressive farm policy research group. As demand for organic milk has skyrocketed, investors have built large industrial farms mimicking what has become the standard paradigm in the conventional dairy industry. "It is our contention that you cannot milk 3000–6000 cows and offer them true access to pasture as required by the *Organic Foods Production Act of 1990*, the law that governs all domestic organic farming and food processing," said Kastel.

Also in January, the *Chicago Tribune* published an investigative report that compared the 5600-cow Aurora Dairy in Colorado to a more traditional 70-cow organic farm in central Wisconsin (subsequently the story has been reprinted in newspapers from coast to coast). One of the owners of the large Colorado farm, located near Platteville, Colorado, Mark Retzloff, has justified an exemption from the requirement for pasture based on *not enough rain in the area to support it*. Federal law does give the farmer the ability to remove cows from pasture for "temporary" reasons based on weather, environmental, or health considerations. However, in their complaint, The Cornucopia Institute countered that the claim that pasture is impractical, or not cost-effective, in arid Colorado is no excuse under the law.

"There are many places in the United

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SAVE THE DATE: 2005 NODPA FIELD DAYS
August 12 & 13

Nichols, NY (just west of Binghamton) Farm Tours Featuring: 100% grassfed, seasonal dairy with New Zealand-style swing parlor,organic corn & soybean field walks, raising calves on cows, once a day milking, technicalworkshops, great food, networking, tradeshow & more.

Questions? Contact: Ed Maltby, NODPA Coordinator, or learn more in the May Issue of the NODPA News or visit www.nodpa.com

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States that are not ecologically compatible with livestock agriculture. If the Aurora dairy cannot incorporate a meaningful amount of pasture into their operation because they are located in an extremely dry, arid region, that is no excuse for them to scoff at the organic regulations," Kastel said.

"This just puts rank-and-file organic dairy producers, who are operating with integrity, at a competitive disadvantage," said Tony Azevedo, a Merced County, California, dairy farmer who was the first certified organic dairy producer in the San Joaquin Valley. "Pasture is the cornerstone of organic dairy farming. It is a great way to protect the soil create wildlife habitat, and makes an ideal filter system—protecting our waterways," added Azevedo.

"The complaint filed by the Cornucopia Institute echoes the concerns of a host of organic dairy farmers disturbed by the lack of pasture policy definition and enforcement on the part of the NOP" relates Dave Johnson, organic dairy producer in Liberty, Pennsylvania. "Pasture produced milk is what the organic consumer is shopping for and has been the backbone for defining organic production since its inception. It is different in taste and nutritional content than milk produced in confinement. To disregard the spirit and intent of the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA) and claim pasture doesn't work in a certain environment or for a certain stage of production is a deliberate attempt to circumvent the law."

There is evidence that pastured cows are healthier than cows that are routinely confined.

In addition, what cows eat affects the nutrients in their milk. The Danish Institute of Agricultural Research recently reported that organic milk—defined as produced by pastured cows—is 50% higher in vitamin E, 75% higher in omega-3 fatty acids, and 200%–300% higher in antioxidants than conventional milk. "The quality of our milk and our production practices are the very essence of why consumers are willing to pay a premium for our product," noted California dairyman Azevedo.

USDA Feels the Heat -Responds Immediately To Organic Pasture Controversy

The USDA's National Organic Program immediately responded to sharp criticism from the organic community alleging that agency complacency was allowing large factory farms to produce organic milk while skirting the legal requirement that the cows have access to pasture as a fundamental part of their feed source. The NOP late Monday, January 10, issued an internal memorandum requesting that the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) develop a strict policy on the

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NORTHEAST ORGANIC DAIRY PRODUCERS ALLIANCE

Mission Statement:
To enable organic family dairy farmers, situated across an extensive area, to have informed discussion about matters critical to the well being of the organic dairy industry as a whole.

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pasture requirement at its upcoming March meeting so that the agency can issue a guidance document enhancing enforcement.

"We are obviously pleased at the rapid response to our concern that factory dairy farms are playing loose with the organic rules. But it shouldn't take the threat of legal action or scrutiny from the news media to wake up our regulators at the USDA," said Cornucopia's Kastel. The agency has had a draft of a strong pasture policy, written by the NOSB, since 2001 but never chose to take action on it.

"It sure is an unusual juxtaposition," Kastel stated. "Every other sector of agriculture fights like hell against regulatory oversight. Here we are, the organic farming community, begging for strict regulation to protect the integrity of the organic label, and it takes political pressure and the power of the press before we get any attention."

While organic farmers and consumers await the results of any pending investigation by the USDA, all eyes will be on Washington next month for the upcoming NOSB meeting.

The Cornucopia Institute, the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance, The National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, and other groups will be out in full force at the March 1 meeting. Many livestock producers from throughout the country either will be in attendance or will be sending in their comments to be presented on their behalf (please see the attached *Action Alert* or contact The Cornucopia Institute).

"It is very important that farmers make a strong statement at this upcoming meeting. The USDA needs to adopt a strict pasture enforcement policy right now," Kastel concluded. "Furthermore, we need to throw the gauntlet down and let the corporate agribusiness lobbyists know that if they attempt to do an end run around the organic community, by trying to water down the organic standards in Congress, that consumers and farmers will be out en masse to challenge any dirty tracks."

For more information contact The Cornucopia Institute: organic@cornucopia.org or 608-625-2042.

***The Cornucopia Institute** is dedicated to the fight for economic justice for the family-scale farming community. Through research, advocacy, and economic development our goal is to empower farmers both politically and through marketplace initiatives. **The Organic Integrity Project** acts as a corporate watchdog assuring that no compromises to the credibility of organic farming methods and the food it produces are made in the pursuit of profit. We will actively resist regulatory rollbacks and the weakening of organic standards to protect and maintain consumer confidence in the organic food label.*

Organic Certifiers Form National Association

By John Cleary

The Accredited Certifiers Association (ACA) is a new organization that was formed with the goal of providing a forum and voice for the diverse certification agents charged with the responsibility of implementing the National Organic Program (NOP).

As the organic industry has grown, organic certifiers have played a critical role in ensuring the integrity of organic products in the marketplace as well as seeking to implement the National Organic Program in a way that meets the practical needs of organic producers. The ACA seeks to establish a constructive and positive relationship with all members of the organic community to address the challenges and opportunities facing the organic industry today.

The purpose of the ACA is to provide a forum for USDA-accredited certifiers to:

a.. Develop uniform criteria for certifying operations under the NOP
b.. Provide training on all aspects of the NOP
c.. Provide a forum for discussing issues impacting organic certification
d.. Develop strategies for reform of laws affecting organic certification
e.. Facilitate communication and sharing of information among organic certification agencies.

For more information, contact:
ACA c/o John Cleary, Vermont Organic Farmers, PO Box 697, Richmond, VT 05477.

From The NODPA Desk

By Sarah Flack

There is plenty to report from the NODPA Coordinator's desk, and lots of volunteers and supporters to thank this winter. Our new staff person, Ed Maltby was just hired (see his introduction in this newsletter), and he's started getting to know NODPA's other staff and the many farmer volunteers. We are all very pleased to have found someone with Ed's experience and enthusiasm for this project!

A fair amount of both staff and farmer volunteer time was spent writing and sending out the NODPA pasture position statement. A lot of "behind the scenes" conversations took place on this subject including farmers from all over the country, certifiers, milk processors, and other organizations. Thanks to all the people who gave the time and funds to make this important event a reality.

Work to begin organizing the 2005 NODPA Field Days has begun, thanks to the volunteer work of Lisa Englebert and Pam Moore of NY who are organizing the meals, locations and many other details. The dates will be Friday August 12 and Saturday August 13th. There will be a dinner and producer meeting on Friday, as well as workshops and farm tours on Friday afternoon and Saturday. Workshop topics will include soil fertility management, herd health management, as well as tours of the Moore and Englebert farms to look at organic corn and soybean production, milking parlor design and pasture management.

NODPA farmer representatives recently had a conference call meeting with farmers from MODPA (the Midwest organic dairy producers alliance) and western organic dairy producers. MODPA is about to begin producing a newsletter and will have a meeting in February. A Western Conference to be held early this spring is being put together.

ODAIRY (the online organic dairy discussion list started by NODPA) continues to be a place for farmers, service providers and industry people to talk to each other, and now OMILK provides a "farmer only" online discussion list. We also continue to get questions from the NODPA Website from consumers, farmers and businesses interested in organic dairy products and farming.

Fundraising is a constant activity for NODPA as we move into the third and final year of grant funds from the John Merck Fund. Our fall mailings have brought in more advertising for the newsletter, producers joining as subscribing members or signing up for the voluntary milk check off and several donations from businesses. We will soon be looking for sponsors and donors for the 2005 field days. Thank you to everyone whose donations help make NODPA possible. ■

Meet the New NODPA Coordinator!

By Ed Maltby

My first working experience was on a dairy and arable farm in Southern England, which started my lifelong work in agriculture. I obtained a solid grounding in practical agricultural as manager of a 1,000-ewe flock and a 100 head purebred herd of Welsh Black cattle for the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth. During my seven years at the university, I developed the Welsh Mule breed of sheep to increase the marketability of lamb from hill flocks. I then moved to managing my own relief farm services agency while owning a small sheep and pastured hog hill farm in Wales, UK. During this time I was also a consultant to the Welsh Cooperative Development Agency and managed a publishing cooperative.

Moving to the USA in 1987 I initially managed two medium sized dairy herds before becoming the manager of the Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School farm in Northampton MA. This position necessitated me being manager, teacher, community organizer and fundraiser and I was successful in revitalizing the 450 acre farm and the school program. I won several awards for the innovative programming that I brought to the school including the Rodale medal for outstanding achievement in composting. In 1997, I moved to Bramble Hill farm and established a 400 ewe sheep enterprise and an organic produce, flower, berry and year round greenhouse operation with all meat and produce sold direct to restaurants and retail outlets. Since 2003 I have been a consultant and business planner to grassroots organizations, farm enterprises, cooperatives and the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources' Farm Viability Enhancement Program (FVEP), with a focus on business planning, organizational structures, grant writing and program development.

In 1997, I led the development of the Pioneer Valley Milk Marketing Cooperative (PVMMC), a farmer owned cooperative marketing their own milk under the "Our Family Farms of Western Massachusetts" brand. The success of PVMMC led to the development of CISA's buy local program which was chiefly funded by the Kellogg Foundation, and I was one the leading organizers in the development and funding for this program. I have served on many boards including the following: Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture; River Valley Cooperative Market; NOFA-MA; Northeast Livestock Marketing Cooperative; Massachusetts Agriculture Promotion Board; Community Alliances of Interdependent Agriculture; North Atlantic Marine Alliance; Integrated Food and Farming Systems.

Contact Ed Maltby at: 413-772-0444 or email: emaltby@comcast.net, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342

Organic Dairy Wins Vermont's Highest Milk Quality Award

By Diane Bothfeld, St. Albans Cooperative

North Hardwick Dairy LLC was awarded Vermont's Highest Milk Quality Award at the 2005 Vermont Farm Show. Congratulations go to Stephen, Patricia, Andrew, Nick and Taylor Meyer of Hardwick, Vermont. This is the first certified organic dairy to receive this honor.

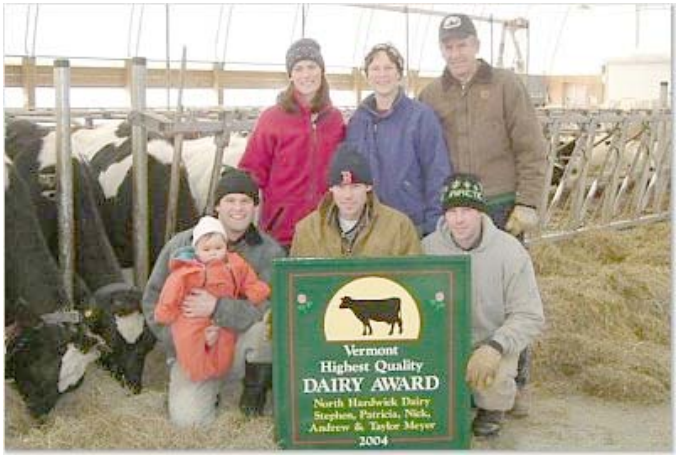
This award is determined using the yearly average of Raw (standard plate count), Pasteurized and Preliminary Incubation (P.I.) scores and the Somatic Cell Count Scores reported to the State. Also included in the scoring are the numeric scores from the two farm inspections conducted by the Agency of Agriculture. The wining scores highlight the health of the cows, milking management practices, quality of milk, proper sanitation and cleaning methods. Finally, the flavor score of a sample of the producer's milk completes the items which determine the winner.

Nominations for this award are based on membership numbers for each cooperative and handler in the state of Vermont. Over 15 nominations were received statewide. The Meyers have a dual membership with CROPP Cooperative / Organic Valley and St. Albans Co-op and have produced organic milk since Fall 2003.

The Meyer Family had the following averages for 2004: Raw Count 1,000; Past - 15; P.I. - 1,000; SCC - 53,000.

Inspection score - 100 average of two inspection scores. Flavor - excellent

St. Albans Cooperative Creamery, Inc. and CROPP Cooperative are proud of the achievements of the Meyer Family for producing the highest quality milk in the state of Vermont for 2004.



North Hardwick Dairy, bottom L-R : Andrew with daughter Lila, Talyor, Nick. Back row L-R. Mary (Andrew's wife), Patty, Steve Meyer.

What's the Harvey Lawsuit Ruling All About?

By Kathie Arnold

Shortly after the National Organic Program (NOP) issued the Final Rule in October 2002, Arthur Harvey, an organic inspector and organic blueberry farmer and handler from Maine, filed a lawsuit stating that several provisions of the Final Rule were inconsistent with the law (Organic Foods and Production Act-OFPA) authorizing the development of the national organic standards. He lost that original case but appealed the decision on some of the counts, including the 80/20 organic dairy herd transition clause, saying OFPA required feeding 100% organic feed to a transitioning dairy herd for a full year. Currently, the NOP Rule allows transitioning dairy animals be to be fed 80% organic feed for the first nine months of the year and only requires 100% organic feed for the last 3 months prior to sale of their products as organic.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit recently announced that Harvey had "won" two of the seven counts including that the 80/20 new herd transition must be discontinued. The other "win" is that because OFPA bars synthetics in processed foods, most of the 38 synthetic materials that have been added to the National List for use in processed food would no longer be allowed in foods labeled organic.

Both the plaintiff, Arthur Harvey and the defendant, USDA can now seek further review from the First Circuit Court, either from the same three judge panel, or the full court. Either party could also appeal to the Supreme Court. There is a 45 day period in which these appeals must be filed. If there is no request for further review, then the lower court must receive the ruling from the appeals court (after another 7 days), rewrite their opinion, forward it to USDA, and the offending provisions will need to be rewritten by USDA to make the rule consistent with the court's findings.

It is unclear at this time what action is going to take place. Whatever does happen will take time, possibly in the neighborhood of two years. During that time, the existing provisions of the NOP Rule hold so dairy farmers converting to organic can still use the 80/20 dairy herd transition.

There is great reluctance on the part of the organic community to open up OFPA to make changes for there would be no guarantee how the new law would read. There would be risk of losing provisions that are vital to the integrity of organic production because other agendas would likely lobby heavily for changes or weakening in the organic rules.

At this point, the organic community seems to be working collectively to figure out the best course of action to "fix" these court rulings and move forward with one voice if possible. Stay tuned.

Dr. Hue Karreman Appointed to NOSB

Five new members were appointed to the National Organic Standards Board in January 2005, for 5-year terms, including Hubert Karreman, veterinarian from Pennsylvania.

Hubert J. Karreman: Environmentalist

Dr. Karreman owns and operates a veterinary practice specializing in dairy. He works with farmers who are "ecologically motivated," and is responsible for all emergency, routine and preventative medicine, surgery, reproduction and obstetrics on more than 100 family dairy farms. He received his veterinary medicine degree from the University of Pennsylvania. He is a member of several professional societies, including the Veterinary Botanical Medicine Association, the American Association of Bovine Practitioners, and the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association. Dr. Karreman currently lives in Quarryville, Pennsylvania.

Gerald A. Davis: Producer

Mr. Davis has worked as an agronomist and pest control advisor for Grimmway Farms in Bakersfield, California, since 2001, where he supervises and directs the growing and harvesting of potatoes, as well as in-house seed potato operations. He is also technical advisor for on-farm compost production. Prior to his work with Grimmway, and its predecessor Cal-Organic Farms, Mr. Davis was owner and operator of the Connoly Orchard in Tehachapi, California. He holds a bachelor's degree in horticulture from Oregon State University and currently resides in Arvin, California.

Rigoberto I. Delgado: Producer

Mr. Delgado is the owner and manager of the 60-acre Delgado Farms in Esperanza, Texas, where he has been farming since 1988. He also works as an independent management consultant. He describes himself as a supporter of sustainable agriculture, and has devoted considerable time and resources to adapting organic agricultural practices to the harsh

conditions of the desert southwest. Delgado Farms is one of the first Hispanic-owned farms in Texas to be certified organic. Mr. Delgado holds an MBA from the University of California at Berkeley and a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics from the Universidad Autonoma de Chihuahua, Mexico. He currently resides in Houston, Texas.

Ms. Bea E. James: Retailer

Ms. James is currently the Whole Health Manager of the Lunds and Byerly's retail food stores. She oversaw

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the organic certification of Lund's and Byerly's 20 produce departments and was responsible for the creation and implementation of the natural foods training program for more than 5,000 employees. Prior to working for Lund's and Byerly's, Ms. James held positions with Blooming Prairie Natural Foods, Lakewinds

Natural Foods Co-op, and Wedge Co-op. She also owned her own bakery and worked as a pastry chef. Ms. James is Selected Chair of the Food Marketing Institute's Natural Advisory Committee. She is a graduate of Southern Oregon State University and is working on a bachelor's degree in holistic nutrition from Clayton College of Natural Health. Ms. James resides in Golden Valley, Minnesota.

Julie S. Weisman: Handler

Ms. Weisman is the vice president of Organic Product Development for Elan, Inc. She is also the founder and president of Flavorganics, LLC. She has a master's of social work degree from Smith College and a bachelor's degree from Hampshire College. Ms. Weisman is a member of the Flavor and Extract Manufacturer's Association and the Organic Trade Association's Manufacturing, Packaging, Processing, and Labeling Committee. She currently resides in Tenafly, New Jersey. ■

GE In Vermont

By Regina Beidler

As debate about genetically modified seeds continues across the country, Vermont has begun to take legislative action in relation to the monitoring of seed sales and to the protection of farmers against liability.

During the 2004 legislative session a bill passed into law called the Genetically Engineered Seed Labeling Law. This law requires all seed companies who sell genetically engineered seed in Vermont to report the type and amount of seed sold as well as clearly labeling the seed as GE. This law replaces the reporting program that was voluntary prior to this time. The intent of this law is to help farmers and home gardeners clearly identify the seed that they are buying and to see the trends of both the types and amounts of GE seed purchased in the state.

The *Agriview*, a publication put out by the Vermont Department of Agriculture, reports that the companies selling GE seeds will only offer GE corn and soybeans through 2007 and that these seeds will only be sold in bulk amounts to farmers, not in smaller quantities to home gardeners.

Another bill is coming back to Vermont's legislature

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this year. The Farmer Protection Act would protect farms from any damages caused by GE cross contamination by passing liability back to the seed companies who own the patents on these seeds. This protection would extend to all farms - conventional and organic. This measure passed the Vermont Senate easily in 2004 but didn't leave the House Agricultural Committee. Following this year's election the Democrats became the majority party and new leadership is in place on the House Ag Committee. The new chair is David Zuckerman, an organic vegetable farmer and representative from Burlington. Despite the protection offered to all farms by this bill there continues to be opposition from various sectors of the agricultural community.

The issue of genetic modification of seeds touches everyone in the agriculture community. GE vegetable seeds have already been introduced and GE alfalfa and clover as well as a turf grass being marketed to golf courses that would limit the height of grass are on the cusp of introduction. A wide cross-section of people are taking part in this conversation from consumers to conventional and organic farmers. For more information on the current GE legislation in Vermont visit GE Free Vermont at: www.gefreevt.org ■

Organic Valley Announces "Transition to Organic Fund"

Organic Valley Family of Farms - CROPP Cooperative announced the Transition to Organic Fund, a financial assistance program for dairy farmers who are making the transition to organic. This fund will offset the costs of transitioning for dairy farmers who become members of the Organic Valley Cooperative.

"The farmers of Organic Valley are committed to helping dairy farmers make the transition to organic. We know how tough this process can be, and we hope our 'Transition to Organic Fund' can help farmers meet the challenge," said Tim Griffin, Organic Valley National Milk Procurement Manager.

For further information about the Organic Valley's Transition to Organic Fund, farmers are encouraged to call the Producer Hotline at Organic Valley, (888) 809-9297.

Farmers in the greater Northeast (Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York and Pennsylvania) are welcome to contact Peter Miller, Organic Valley's East Region Pool Coordinator, (888) 444-6455 extension 407, or (612) 801-3506 (cell), or email him at peter.miller@organicvalley.coop . ■

Organic Valley's Southern VT Update

By Regina Beidler and Peter Miller

CROPP Cooperative-Organic Valley's New England membership began in Maine and Northern and Central Vermont in the 1990s. Currently, CROPP has 35 member dairy farms in Maine and 68 dairy members in Vermont. Over the past year the dairy pool membership has expanded to include Southern Vermont.

On December 6, two new member farms started shipping milk in the Brattleboro area. David and Mary Ellen Franklin in Guildford, VT recently transitioned their farm to complete required certification with NOFA - VT. The Aquaviva family in Putney, VT had been a certified organic dairy making organic cheese prior to shipping to CROPP.

Interest in organic dairy production continues to grow in Southern Vermont and New Hampshire. A number of farms in this region are considering or are in the midst of transition to organic production. CROPP continues to assist farmers by holding organic transition meetings to talk about issues such as: organic certification requirements, overview of organic crop production and herd health management options and techniques.

CROPP will be hosting a lecture series on organic soil management and crop production throughout the Northeast in early March 2005. This series will feature Gary Zimmer, a nationally known soils consultant using organic methods and inputs for field crop and forage production. These meetings are open to everyone.

For more information about the Zimmer meetings please contact Peter Miller, CROPP Cooperative's East Pool Coordinator at: peter.miller@organicvalley.coop or by phone - (612) 801-3506 (cell). (888) 444-6455 message. ■

More Organic Milk Sought in Northeast

- CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley is interested in growing our producer regions in the Northeast & New England now and into the future. Please contact Peter Miller, East Region Pool Coordinator, at (888) 444-6455, x407 to leave a voice message, or mobile at (612) 801-3506, peter.miller@organicvalley.coop.

- Dairy Marketing Services (DMS) is looking for organic milk for its customers - H.P.Hood and Horizon Foods - at very competitive prices. We also have very attractive packages available for farms transitioning into organic dairy farming. Please contact Diane Bothfeld at 1-888-589-6455 extension 5546.

- Horizon Organic continues to grow its producer partner network in the Northeast states of ME, MD, NH, NY, PA, VA & VT and also its Midwest base and is pursuing relationships in IN, IA, IL, KY, MI, MN, OH & WI. Horizon Organic offers competitive pay and long-term contracts. Producers in the east should contact Cindy Masterman at 888-648-8377. Producers in the Midwest should contact Neal Forsthoefel at 800-237-2711, x-159.

- United Ag Services in Seneca Falls, NY is looking for organic milk in NY and northern PA. Please contact Jim Patsos at 315-568-2750 or 800-326-4251.

- HP Hood is starting new organic milk routes in a number of Northern Tier States and would like to hear from you. Our support of sustainable agriculture, a signing bonus and transition assistance have helped many already. Please call Mike Suever at 617-887-8419.

- LOFCO is looking to procure more milk in PA & MD (the area served by LANCO). LOFCO has a strong & growing market. Contacts: field man: Jerry McCleary 717/577-8809; farmer: Dave Martin 717/626-5295.

Any buyers looking for organic milk who would like to be listed in this column for the May issue, please email the desired text to Kathie at randkarnold1@juno.com by April 25th.

Commentary

Dear NODPA Readers,

'Commentary is an open forum for sharing thoughts, opinions, concerns, and whatever else inspires you. Please send your submissions to any of the Editors (see page 18 for contact information).

Keep Them Honest

Dear Editors:

Well folks, shots have been fired, and the USDA has been challenged. The first shot being fired by Cornucopia Institute earlier this month asking the USDA to investigate violations of organic law. The second shot was fired by the Organic Dairy Producers Alliance, a national group of farmers commending the USDA for asking the NOP to change the vague and easily misinterpreted pasture guidance document. I say great job to all involved.

This could easily be the most important thing that can happen to the future of organic dairy farming. This will determine the life span of the 50-100 cow family farms in the country. Finally through organics we have found a way to prosper again only to have it endangered by factory farms that drove us out as conventional farmers. We have got their attention now and we must make sure we keep them honest and not let them (our elected officials) be swayed by big money and big business and do the right thing for sustainable agriculture. Remember friends, if we want organic farming to be different than conventional farming we have to choose a different path for better end results. Let's hope they get it right!!

George Wright, *Hermon, NY*
wrightwaydairy@yahoo.com

Stress On Organic Milk Supply

Dear Editors:

I recently received several calls from concerned dairy producers who had heard rumors that Stonyfield Farm was "getting out of the organic business". I'm relieved that they called so we can set the record straight. The answer is a resounding "Absolutely not!" The confusion has likely arisen from our recent decision to temporarily stop producing our organic fat free quarts and bring back the conventional versions.

Last March we converted our fat free quart product line to organic. It brought us from 70% organic to 85% organic and we were thrilled. The last hurdle to becoming 100% organic would be our fat free single serve cups. Converting the fat free quarts was a big step both for Stonyfield Farm and Organic Valley/CROPP who provides the milk for our yogurt. The conversion of that product line alone meant an additional eight to ten loads of milk per week and was no small feat for CROPP to develop the supply which enabled the conversion.

Since the conversion, there has been a culmination of factors that have put an enormous stress on the U.S. organic milk supply. Quality organic feed shortages and exorbitant feed prices, a dramatic increase in demand for organic milk, more competition for organic milk, and higher pay price for conventional milk causing fewer producers to convert, have all contributed to an organic milk shortage. It would be hard to imagine a worse time in the past five years for us to have converted this product line to organic.

We became unable to fulfill orders to our customers, across all of our product lines, and were facing deeper shortages in the upcoming months. Deep and extended periods of shorting orders are a recipe for disaster and extremely bad for relationships with our customers. In December, our management team evaluated our options and made the difficult decision to stop producing the newly organic fat free quarts and to reintroduce the conventional quarts. The organic milk that would have gone into making the fat free quarts could be redirected to fill all of our other organic yogurt orders, and any excess would go to CROPP/Organic Valley to help them meet their own milk needs. We have kept using the other organic ingredients in the quarts such as organic sugar and organic strawberry juice, but without the organic milk, it is now a non-organic product.

We are working closely with CROPP to determine when the milk will be available to bring the organic quarts back and look forward to doing so as soon as it is possible. As all NODPA members surely know, CROPP continues to look for new producers.

Thank you to NODPA for providing a forum to set the record straight and clear up any confusion! If you have further questions or concerns, please call me at 603 437 4040 or e mail me at nhirshberg@stonyfield.com.

Nancy Hirshberg
Vice President of Natural Resources
Stonyfield Farm
Londonderry, NH

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How Now, Industrial Cow?

By Francis Thicke

November 18, 2004-As a dairy farmer, I use nature as my model. But most dairy farming today—and farming in general—ignores nature. This should concern not only farmers but also consumers, for the sake of their health and Earth's.

Nature produces no real wastes, because the "waste" of one species is food for another. Also, nature does not use up resources. Its ways are efficient and sustainable.

The typical industrial dairy is a much different matter. First, consider the cows' diet. It is typically high in corn. Growing corn requires nitrogen fertilizer, whose production uses up a lot of nonrenewable fossil fuel.

Not all of this fertilizer stays on the field. Typically more than half of it is lost, polluting groundwater or flowing downstream through the Mississippi River basin to feed a process that sucks out oxygen and drives life from a New Jersey-size patch of the Gulf of Mexico.

Most corn producers also use pesticides, which further poison the landscape. And because corn must be replanted annually, it promotes soil loss through erosion from fields left bare to wind and rain much of the year.

Waste is another problem with industrial dairies, where cows are confined to feedlots or barns. Manure accumulates in lagoons. Eventually it must be hauled to crop fields. With thousands of cows in a typical industrial dairy, it often is difficult to find enough fields close by to accommodate the manure, which can end up fouling the air or spilling into streams.

In place of this industrial model, I run my farm based on ecology, an understanding of the interconnection of living things and their environment.

The most striking feature of a dairy farm designed and operated on ecological principles is that the land around the milking facility is pasture of perennial grasses and legumes covering the ground year-round. It does not erode. It does not require pesticides.

The cows harvest their own feed by grazing on these plants. The environmentally costly process of growing corn and transporting it is avoided.

There is no need for synthetic nitrogen fertilizer. As the animals move about, they deposit manure, a natural fertilizer. This manure is not concentrated, so it breaks down quickly and is thereby less likely to pollute air and water.

Pasture dairies make sense financially. Milk production per cow is less, but milk production per acre, when acres used to grow feed crops are included, is comparable. Studies at the University of Wisconsin show that grazing dairies are as profitable, or more profitable, than industrial dairies.

What's more, cows on pasture are healthier and live longer than those on a high-corn diet, which is not their natural food. And research is beginning to suggest that milk from grazing cows is more healthful because it has higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids, beta carotene and conjugated linoleic acids—substances that may be useful in helping to prevent heart disease or certain cancers.

Given all these benefits, it is time we get serious about focusing our agricultural research, education and government policy on farming that uses ecology as its guide. And we should begin requiring industrial agriculture to pay for the environmental costs that it imposes on our planet—costs now borne by society as a whole or charged to future generations.

Francis Thicke and his wife, Susan, have an organic, grass-based dairy near Fairfield, Iowa. He has served as national program leader for soil science for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Extension Service. He is a member of the Land Institute's Prairie Writers Circle, Salina, Kan.

Net Update

ODAIRY
Organic Dairy Replacements

ODAIRY, the online discussion list created and maintained by NODPA, has been a resource for producers and industry people covering topics on animal health & crops, posting calendar events, job listings, and livestock and feed for sale. If you haven't joined this list yet, we encourage you to give it a try. To join go to: ODAIRY-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Following is a recent posting:

What is the situation on allowable organic dairy replacements? It seems very confusing.

****

There is quite a bit of confusion out there regarding whether or not conventional replacement animals (if at least one year away from milking) can be purchased by a certified dairy farm and whether or not an animal treated with antibiotics can ever re-enter an organic dairy herd (go through another year transition). At the heart of both of these questions is NOP section 205.236, Origin of Livestock. Please bear with me on this complicated explanation. Now that we have federal regulations governing organic, we have to understand how they work if we want to improve them.

The problem is that the standards seem to say two different things. In one place it says that organic milk must come from animals that have been managed organically for 1 year. Further down, it says that, once an entire, distinct herd has been converted to organic, all animals must be under organic management from the last third of gestation. So, the question is, was the 1 year of organic management only intended for the initial transition of a conventional herd to organic — or does it allow animals to be continuously transitioned in (replacements or treated animals)? You might think that the second part I quoted above (once an entire, distinct herd...) answers this question and clarifies that the 1 year only applies to the initial transition.

However, in the field of administrative law (something I know very little about), there are specific rules about how to interpret regulations such as these based on the formatting, wording, indenting, etc. The NOP's lawyers have said that, regardless of the intent, the way the rules are currently written, some farms can continuously transition conventional (or treated) animals in (those certified prior to the federal regs and those that feed 100% organic feed for their whole initial 1 year transition), while other farms are not allowed to transition animals in (those that use the 80/20 feed exemption for the first 9 months of their 1 year transition). Basically, the NOP said, based on how you converted to organic, for the rest of your life — you may have to follow different rules than your neighbor.

The NOSB and many others, have repeatedly insisted that this is simply a mistake in how the rule was written/formatted and that clearly there was never any intention of this type of complicated, unfair interpretation. The NOP replied that once a federal regulation is published — it isn't easy to fix. However, at the fall NOSB meeting the NOP agreed to make changes to this section and said it would do so based on the recommendations of the NOSB. The NOSB currently is recommending that once you take a herd through the transition you can't continue to buy conventional replacements and that treated animals could not be transitioned back in. However, there hasn't been that much discussion about all of this yet (since the NOP just recently agreed to look at changes) and producer input will be critical.

In the meantime, some certifiers are letting farms transition in conventional replacements while other do not. Some are letting treated animals stay in the herd (with a one year re-transition), others are not. And some are following the NOP's bizarre interpretation that different farms have to follow different rules based on how they initially transitioned. All of this will probably be discussed at the upcoming NOSB meeting (2/28-3/3). Once we know the agenda, I will post the NOSB contact info so producers can weigh in!

John Cleary
Vermont Organic Farmers/NOFA-VT

A Little About OMILK

OMILK is alive and kicking , we presently have 26 members and have room for lots more. It has been nice to discuss a few things honestly without offending vendors and other professionals. Don't let introducing yourself to the group stop you from joining up, it just makes it easier to understand where we are all coming from and open our eyes to different possibilities. Heck we can't all be right!!!

http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/OMILK/

George Wright, Moderator
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Organic Production

Feature Farm

Provident Farm

By Dave Johnson, NODPA Vice President, Liberty, PA

My wife Maggie and I and our four children own and operate Provident Farms in Liberty PA, a spring seasonal grassed based dairy. While I am the primary farm worker, the kids help with calf care and the meadow hens and Maggie is gainfully employed in home-schooling and homemaking.

The farm is located in what is known as the northern tier of PA, a topography of rolling hills with elevations varying from 1500-2000 feet, with most of the tillable fields on the hilltops, resulting in a climate more akin to northern New England. This is grass and clover country, not corn and soybean heaven. The heavy clay soils support 130 acres of pasture, wetlands and hay fields with another 120 acres rented. Grazing usually begins by mid April and in a moist, warm fall ends in December.

From L to R: Caleb, Hannah, Naomi, Beth, Dave and Maggie in back. Dave reports that the picture is dated and they have all "matured" a bit since it was taken.

This is my second career, having spent 20 years in academia as a professor in Electronics and Telecommunications. A combination of burn-out and a re-kindling of the values of family, community, and creation work with real value led me to explore the feasibility of a grass based farm, direct marking meats to a consumer network. Neither Maggie nor I grew up on a farm, so our complete ignorance of how things are supposed to be done has enabled us to try things without the baggage or tradition that can hinder multi-generational farmers. After 5 years of struggling to grow the direct market meats while still teaching, we concluded my time and energy would run out before the customer base would grow enough to support our family. The huge plunge to start a dairy was made in 1998 with the construction of an open-air swing 8 parabone parlor and converting the 29 tie stall bank barn into a holding/feeding area. The first milk left the farm in March of 1999.

Organic practices were a given from the start, so the farm 30 miles north of Williamsport we found that was in CRP for 10 years was ideal. Initially there was no market for a seasonal organic producer until CROPP offered to let us join the mid-PA pool in 2002.

The major premise that guides the work at Provident Farms, is that the more we cooperate with the way God designed us, the land and animals to function, the better the system works, the less problems and stress we experience, and the more profitable (monetarily, socially, environmentally, spiritually) we are. Growing what thrives here, cows nursing calves, animals outside, cows feeding themselves on pasture or from round bales and fencing everything are ways this philosophy works out. Holistic management also aids in making decisions that improve the quality of life and addressing the real needs of the farm. Milking year round and multiple age groups always fails the testing guidelines.

Almost all calves are born outside on pasture or an open bedded pack starting in March. The main challenge with being seasonal is that my milk check needs to start before spring weather starts. March and April mud can be de-moralizing and exhausting on top of 4 and 5 calves in a day. We cull the cows that don't breed back in 11-14 months, so most of the pure Holsteins we had are gone and the herd is now a colored mix of Holstein, Jersey, Dutch belted, Normandie, Ayrshire and lineback. Apart from a year when bull power was lacking in breeding heifers, we always have more replacement heifers than cull cows. While some AI has been used, bulls (and lots of them) are what gets the job

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done in a seasonal herd. From a genetics standpoint, the line-breeding and cross-breeding that excels in fertility does not usually excel in milk production, but these animals that fit the system and thrive and last on the farm are still profitable. Maybe with better genetics the profit would improve.

10 pounds/head/day of straight corn or barley (and sometimes about 20% oats) are fed in a fine grind with minerals for the milk cows, fed in a free-for-all-stall type of system in the old barn holding area before morning and evening milking. Some cows pig out, some don't want any. Protein from roasted beans is only used for calves, poultry and hogs. Calves receive a 16% corn/oats/RSB/minerals grain mix from 6 weeks until late fall, up to 5#/head/day. Calves have been group raised in movable 3 sided sheds or a portable hoop house in a calf-proof yard with milk, usually 2+ gallons/day fed in milk bar and barrel feeders - giving the needed energy and protein for a fast growth start in cold weather. Calves are on pasture from birth or weaning till death.

Winter feeding at Provident Farm.

All grains are purchased (from area farmers if possible) by semi-loads and stored in bins, with grinding and mixing done on the farm. While we would rather buy ready mixed and delivered, the distance and cost from organic mills are prohibitive. The long term goal is to eliminate grain for the milk cows and raise small grains for calf rations only. Dry hay or baleage is available in the barnyard after milking but not much is consumed unless pasture allocation was underestimated. In the spring flush it is even hard to get the cows to eat their grain ration. All excess forage and hay is round baled dry or as baleage, including new seeding nurse crops of oats, peas and barley. Some sorghum-sudan has been used to offset the summer slump but lately the wet summers have made harvesting difficult. With cool nights and very few days over ninety, there is seldom enough heat to provide a good second grazing or cutting.

Winter feeding (January – March 15) for dry cows and bred heifers (now grouped together) is done in a sacrificed paddock in need of fertility, smoothing, and renovation, with hundreds of dry round bales placed 30 feet apart in 5-8 acres. Poly wire supported by wheel-posts™ or fiber posts in the bales is moved to provide access to 8-10 bales (about 2 days worth), and light duty bale rings are moved by hand to the next group. The bale maze helps to break the wind, and the waste hay provides bedding, along with some junk hay unrolled in an open "bedding pack" area. Why drive a tractor in winter when you can ski there to feed cows? Sometimes round silage bales are unrolled in the field for feeding, but most baleage is reserved for late lactation or spring freshening. All this makes the field look like a war zone by the end of March, but adds a real boost in fertility and organic matter. The down side is wet weather compaction, as winter frequently sees its share of freeze/thaw cycles.

The marginal soil drainage, combined with cattle always outside somewhere on some paddock has made cattle movement, mud, pugging and compaction a major challenge. Ideally a large reinforced gravel pad deep bedded pack covered by a hoop structure would be the best solution for wet weather and winter feeding; both from a soil health and fertility capture standpoint, but the startup budget has yet to fund this one. Plans for the coming year include a major investment with some cost share through an AMA/organic producer

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grant for cattle lanes. With half of the farm's acreage separated by 20 acres of hemlock swamp, these lanes will go a long ways towards improving cow cleanliness and health.

Our strategy for herd health is two-fold, first building immunity, and secondly, not pushing for high performance. Liberal use of kelp, trace minerals and vitamin E/selenium have kept health problems to a minimum, with pinkeye, heal warts, pneumonia rare. With dry cows on dry hay and lots of free choice minerals but no grain, and low levels of grain feeding for milk cows, DA's, acidosis, Ketosis and milk fever are rare. Only occasionally does a calving receive assistance or attention.

The biggest challenge comes from high SCC (strep Ag common) cows not showing clinical mastitis, and counts climbing towards the end of lactation. (In spite of cows outside sometimes in deep mud, environmental mastitis is uncommon.) The best explanation can be traced to a milking system design flaw that was undetected for over 2 years, and a "radiation sensitivity" to fluorescent lights mounted within 1 foot of the cow's tail in the parlor that contributed to poor milk letdown, finally identified after 4 years of milking. This past year we finally parted with some old (8-12 years) cows with high SCCs. SCC problems don't go away overnight, but I think we are on our way to a low count. The major treatment strategies for mastitis include homeopathy, Mu-Se shots, Mastoblast at dry off, and selective use of whey injections in keeping with the philosophy to encourage the immune system to function well.

I think organic production is more challenging, partly because one must be an aggressive self taught, flexible learner, a keen observer, willing to experiment. The rules aren't cut and dry and the recipe book can't be written. For us, it also requires the added work of producing all our own forage (risky to count on purchasing quality forage) which means renting land, and storing and grinding feed. With 70 cows next year it looks like some part-time help is needed. But we wouldn't think of farming differently. For us, shipping conventional milk at $13/cwt was also profitable, and maybe with less work, but the stable, organic price bonus for a superior product we would produce anyway is a blessing. We support the family, sometimes a bit lean on 40-60 cows, but have been able to start-up, buy equipment, improve facilities and build equity with a dairy run by one family. Bringing life back to dying farms and farmland, seeing living creatures thrive on loving husbandry, and the reward of knowing you are faithful stewards of your heavenly father's creation, producing healthy food for others is more valuable than what money, fame or power could give. ■

Organic Dairy Production Book Now Available:
One of a Series of NOFA Production Books

by Sarah Flack

From an overview on the process of becoming certified organic to discussions on managing for healthy soils, pastures, crops, and animals, Organic Dairy Production is a comprehensive guide on how to transition to organic dairying in the Northeast. Sarah Flack draws on other farmers' experience, as well as her own, in this detailed, practical manual that describes best practices under organic principles.

This book is an easy read with numerous helpful management checklists. A chapter on health care provides an overview of the many preventative and treatment options available. An additional chapter on marketing gives blunt advice on selling fluid milk and value-added dairy products, discussing the regulations governing both, milk production and its value-added production, labeling and sales. In six profiles, individual farmers help shed light on various aspects of dairying and value-added production on their farms. An extensive resource list makes it easy for readers to know where to go for more detail and information on numerous topics related to organic dairying.

Organic Dairy Production will be a valuable read not only for farmers considering or going through organic dairy transition but will provide a valuable source of understanding and information for educators, loan officers, and other professionals who work in the dairy farming community as well.

The handbooks are $7.95 plus shipping and handling.

You can order from your local NOFA office or you can contact Elaine Peterson at info@nofamass.org or call her at 978 355-2853 to order.

Folks from other states can go to the NOFA Interstate Council website, www.nofa.org and select which state to order through.

Sarah Flack is a sought-after workshop presenter, an agricultural consultant, and farmer. She does independent organic certification inspections and consults on grass farming, farm design, farm business management and planning. She has trained in homeopathy for livestock, medicinal herbs, production of value-added meat and dairy products and holistic management & planning. She helped found the Vermont Grassfarmers Association and is involved with NOFA-VT, NODPA and other agricultural organizations. She is presently president of the board of directors of the Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association. ■

Frost Seeding: A Cheap Alternative to Improve Pastures

By Heather Darby, Ext. Assistant Professor, UVM Ext. - NW Region

Frost seeding is a popular option to improve pasture yield and quality. The principle of frost seeding is to broadcast forage seed in the early spring when the ground freezes at night and thaws during the day. The main advantage to frost seeding is the ability to establish desirable species into an undisturbed sod at a low cost per acre. A 60 – 70% frost seeding establishment rate has been reported by many farmers. You can increase the success of frost seeding establishment by following these key steps.

The main advantage to frost seeding is the ability to establish desirable species into an undisturbed sod at a low cost per acre.

Remove vegetation before seeding

Seed to soil contact is critical to the success of frost seeding. The best candidate for frost seeding is the "run out" pasture. If you walk across a field and see bare soil these areas are ideal for frost seeding. Closely grazing or mowing pastures in the fall will also help expose the soil. Generally, fields with a thick thatch layer will not frost seed well because the seed will not have contact with the soil.

Seed in the early spring

The optimum is to seed early in the spring after the snow is gone but while the ground is still frozen. The repeated freezing and thawing will cause some of the seed to fall into soil cracks and germinate. Frost seeding can be done over a thin layer of snow. However be aware that rapid snow melt can cause the seed to be washed off the pasture. Frost seeding can also be done in December once growth has stopped for the year and before snowfall. This time works well in areas that receive good snow cover and do not experience prolonged winter thaws. Frost seeding does not work on sandy soils where there is no swelling and shrinking associated with the freeze-thaw cycle. Frost seeding is often done with seeders mounted on ATVs, or a tractor mounted or hand held broadcast seeder. When frost seeding with a broadcast seeder, make sure to first determine the effective seeding width to avoid possible overlap of seed. Although not always necessary a disk or cattle can help incorporate the seed into the soil. A no-till drill can be used but this will increase the number of trips across the field.

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Select species that can germinate when cold

Frost seeding works best with legumes and grasses that germinate fast and at cool temperatures. Recommended species and seeding rates are shown in Table 1. Red and white clovers are the most effective in establishment. Birdsfoot trefoil is less successful due to slow establishment. Alfalfa does not frost seed well because its germination is variable at cool temperatures. There are several benefits to adding legumes to the pastures including higher quality forage as well as nitrogen to support grass growth. Although legumes are the most successful for this system, some grasses can be successfully frost seeded. Of the grasses, perennial ryegrass and orchardgrass frost seed with the greatest success (20-30% establishment), bromegrass with intermediate success while reed canary and timothy have the least success. Typically, ryegrasses will not over winter in most areas of Vermont. Therefore, in most cases, ryegrasses should be seeded with the intent of filling single season forage needs. Ryegrass and orchardgrass will contribute to forage yields in the seeding year while bromegrass will need a full season before plants become productive. Since grass seed is light it will not throw as far as the heavier legume seeds when broadcast. If seeded as a mixture, this difference in seed weight will result in alternating strips of grass and legume plants. Therefore seeding the species separately will result in a more even distribution of grasses and legumes. To spread the risk of frost seeding it is generally better to seed at the lower rates and repeat in successive years than to seed at higher rates in any one year. Many people will frost seed 25% of their acreage each year so that they are spreading their risk over different years.

Table 1. Recommended species and seeding rates for frost seeding.

	Seeding rate (lb/acre)
Red clover	2 - 4
White clover	2 - 4
Birdsfoot trefoil	4
Perennial ryegrass	2 – 3
Orchardgrass	2 – 4
Smooth Bromegrass	8 – 10
Timothy	Not recommended
Reed Canarygrass	Not recommended

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Create an environment that allows the new seedlings to compete

Reducing competition from the existing stand will help the new seedlings establish. To begin, fall grazing down to 2 inches will slow re-growth of the existing stand in the spring. In addition, grazing the pasture when it is 6 to 8 inches tall will allow for better light penetration to the new seedlings. However, be careful because overgrazing can result in young seedlings being consumed before adequate establishment.

The best candidate for frost seeding is the "run out" pasture.

Frost seeding can be an effective and inexpensive method to improve the quality and quantity of pasture. The important key steps to success include good seed to soil contact, seeding early, proper species selection, and remove competition from seedlings. Periodic frost seeding will help maintain high quality pastures.

Contact Heather Darby, at UVM, heather.darby@uvm.edu for more information.

Sustainable Management of Internal Parasites in Ruminants

Ann Wells, DVM
Springpond Holistic Animal Health
Prairie Grove, AR

Internal parasites are a part of most every livestock producer's farm. Regardless of whether they are pasture raised or in a confinement setting, livestock will be exposed to internal parasites at some time in their life. Animals raised on the dry and arid rangelands are much less likely to be infested. But if these animals are brought to the more humid climates east of the Rockies, worms will be a major problem for these animals. Small ruminants are more likely to have major disease problems with internal parasites but cattle can also be affected, especially calves.

Chemical de-wormers are losing their effectiveness, with parasites developing resistance to them at an alarming rate. The situation is particularly serious in sheep and goats, but also occurs with cattle. There are some parts of the country where the internal parasites of sheep and goats have developed resistance to all commercially available de-wormers. This resistance means that not all the worms are killed during deworming. The surviving worms pass that genetic resistance on to offspring.

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Certified organic livestock producers face an additional challenge as they are limited to using only ivermectin and must justify why they are using it. Routine use is prohibited, and it also can never be used in animals raised for meat.

The growing concern about the resistance of internal parasites to all classes of de-wormers has caused people to look for alternatives. This also helps the organic producer who is even more in need of alternative management strategies and products. As de-wormers lose their effectiveness, the livestock community fears increasing economic losses from worms. Much attention both in the research community and on the farm is being devoted to discovering ways to prevent and treat internal parasites without relying on heavy doses of chemical de-wormers. Many people claim this treatment or that control measure works, but there are more questions than answers. There is no simple alternative way of preventing or treating worms. By looking at the whole farm as an interrelated system, it becomes apparent that there are parts of the system that can be managed to decrease internal parasites and their effects. These management adjustments not only postpone the day when chemical controls no longer work, but they also may decrease costs and increase the overall health of the animal.

Nutrition

Nutrition plays a major role in how well animals are able to overcome the detrimental effects of internal parasites. In fact, the signs of parasitism can often be used as a symptom of some other problem, usually poor nutrition. In an article in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association in 1943, researchers showed that sheep placed on a high plane of nutrition were able to reduce their worm burden significantly and many of the sheep were even able to cure themselves.

Pasture Management

Management of animals, pastures and any loafing areas is key to reducing the amount of internal parasite problems in livestock. An understanding of the life cycles of the different parasites within the whole soil-plant-animal system will help show the interrelationships between these three components. Managing internal parasites is just like managing fleas in dogs and cats. The major part of the parasite life cycle is outside of the animal. This point will help the producer to choose management strategies that reduce parasite levels on his or her farm and decrease the usage of chemical de-wormers. The same principle is used in inte-

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grated pest management for vegetables and other crops.

Many farmers closely monitor their animals but pay little attention to the plants and soil. Pasture contamination by infective larvae is the primary factor to deal with. If you start with an understanding of the interrelationship between the animal, the plants it eats and the soil on which those plants grow, then it becomes clearer how parasites infect the animal and how they can be managed so as not to cause as many problems. Everything a farmer does to his or her animals, including the grazing management, affects the manure, which affects the animal's environment.

For example, animals that continuously graze a pasture eat the grass into the ground, while contaminating the soil with so many parasites that nothing outside of regular de-worming with chemicals will control them. By using controlled grazing methods that allow pastures to rest and soil life to function well, contamination can be reduced. This reduction occurs because soil organisms, including earthworms, dung beetles, and nematophagous fungi will destroy or keep a lot of the parasite eggs and larvae from developing. Keeping the grass in a more vegetative stage, and tall enough to provide the animal with adequate forage, will provide better nutrition to keep the animal healthier, strengthening the immune system to prevent the adult worms from producing eggs. Parasites do not cause as much harm to a healthy, well nourished animal. The parasites that are present will not deplete the host as much as in an animal that is malnourished. Parasite loads affecting wildlife generally do not cause the death of the host, because the parasites need the host to survive. The same principle applies to livestock.

Pasture contamination can be reduced through management. Livestock will avoid manure piles and the grass surrounding them. This behavior also helps them avoid eating larvae. The height of the pasture sward can affect parasites. The majority of worm larvae crawl only one inch from the ground onto plants, so not allowing animals to graze below that point will cut down on a lot of infestation. This is one reason sheep tend to have more problems with internal parasites. They eat much lower to the ground than cattle do, picking up higher numbers of larvae. Therefore, it is important to monitor grazing sheep closely so they don't graze too low. Larvae migrate from the manure no more than 12 inches from the manure pile. If livestock are not forced to eat close to their own manure, they will eat fewer

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larvae.

With sheep and goats, the most important time to control pasture contamination is during the periparturient rise, which is the sudden release of infective larvae and eggs within the ewe's intestinal tract. This occurs right after lambing, and is due to the ewe and doe's immune system becoming temporarily less effective. By treating animals at this time, the exposure to newborn and young lambs (those most susceptible to parasites) is minimized.

Good grazing management includes the use of clean pasture to minimize re-infection. Clean pasture is pasture that has not been grazed by the host animal (in this case sheep and goats) for 12 months, and therefore is not contaminated with worm larvae. It may be new pasture, pasture grazed by livestock such as cattle or horses which do not share parasites with sheep (goats do share parasites with sheep), or pasture that has been hayed, renovated, or rotated with row crops. There is some killing of parasites on pasture during the winter due to freezing and thawing; however, snow cover insulates the larvae. Summer is the time in the Southern states when most larval kill will occur on pastures. Sunlight will kill them, and this occurrence can be used to determine which pastures can be used in the fall and into the winter. Grazing down to 2 inches from the ground allows more sunlight to get to those larvae and increases their chances of drying out and being killed.

Warmth, oxygen and moisture are the three most important things that increase the chances that larvae will survive on pasture. Knowing when your pastures are apt to be driest and coldest will help you manage them better for parasite control.

Cleanliness is a defense against parasites. Feed troughs and water sources located where they can be contaminated with feces will increase the chances of livestock infestation. This is only one reason not to water directly from ponds, or to allow animals continuous access to water sources. Feeders should be cleaned and elevated. Calving and lambing areas, as well as other holding areas, should be clean and dry. Prevent the transmission of infestations from new arrivals to the herd or flock by de-worming them before arrival and again three weeks later.

By-pass Protein

Researchers around the world have been studying the effects of by-pass protein on parasitized sheep. They have found that by increasing the amount of protein that is not degraded or broken down in the rumen, animals lose less weight than those animals that were not fed the increased level of by-pass protein. These researchers used fish meal as their source of by-pass protein. However, there are forages that also have an increased level of by-pass protein because they contain tannins. These include birdsfoot trefoil and lespedeza. The protein in native warm season grasses also has a higher level of by-pass protein. This may be one of the most exciting areas of new research.

Immunity

While it is usually neither possible nor advisable to completely eliminate internal parasites in sheep or other livestock, reduction of parasite load can be achieved. Many people have found, and research has shown, that adult animals rarely need to be wormed. Most animals develop immunity against internal parasites, though not to the level that is developed against viruses and bacteria. This immunity keeps the parasites from reproducing but rarely kills them. An example of an effective parasite control program can be found in Tennessee. Dennis Onks, superintendent of the Highland Rim Experiment Station in Springfield, Tennessee, has not wormed the adult cattle on the farm in eight years. They are wormed at weaning, around 7 months of age, and then not again. They have never shown any signs of internal parasites and their condition is excellent. These animals are on a high plane of nutrition, have a low stress level, and are strictly culled on production. All these things work together to produce an animal that shows no signs of internal parasites.

It is the young animal whose immune system is not fully mature and the animal whose immune system is compromised by disease, inadequate nutrition, or other stress, that is most adversely affected by worms. Animals brought from western rangelands, for example, where the arid conditions keep parasites from surviving, have no immunity and can easily be overwhelmed by worms.

Every farm is different. The parasite load of the animal depends on many variables —such as stocking density, time of year, the reproductive state of the animal, etc. Good nutrition plays a big part in how well the animal's immune system mounts the proper defenses, and in the animal's overall ability to tolerate the presence of some worms. Healthy and well-nourished animals will be able to develop resistance and resilience to worms and other parasites much better than thin animals that do not have good availability of quality feed. Resistance is the ability of an animal to prevent the establishment and maintenance of a parasite population within the gastrointestinal tract. Some individuals and some breeds show more resistance to parasitic infection than others. Research to identify characteristics in such individuals is a hot area.

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Culling susceptible animals can take advantage of this. While this is not done as frequently with organic animals, it still needs to be considered in some cases. Resilience is the ability of an animal to reduce production loss during a parasite infestation. Both of these traits are being looked at as ways of selecting animals that will be less susceptible to parasite effects. Animals that possess some genetic resistance or resilience can still be infected with worms. Therefore, you must keep in mind that this is just one more measure that will help control worm problems, not a cure by itself.

Soil Organisms

There are several soil organisms that can have an impact on parasites. Managing pastures to favor populations of beneficial soil organisms will decrease parasite levels on pastures. Oxygen is the primary requirement for worm eggs and larvae to survive and develop. Earthworms have been shown to ingest worm eggs and larvae, either killing them or carrying them far enough below ground to keep them from maturing. Dung beetles ingest and disperse manure, taking it to their burrows, thus keeping eggs and larvae from developing. There are also nematophagous fungi that produce "traps" that engulf and kill parasitic larvae. These fungi are more delicate than other fungi, so there are rarely great numbers of them in the soil. If the soil is depleted or out of balance, other, more dominant microorganisms will replace these fungi. Research at Louisiana State University shows that fungi fed to sheep completely destroy all the nematode eggs in the sheep's manure. The amount of time that feces remain on the pasture has an effect on the number of parasite larvae that survive and mature. Anything that hastens the breakdown of the feces will lessen the number of larvae. This can include the soil organisms mentioned above, mechanical dragging of pastures, poultry or other animal disturbance and the consistency of the feces themselves.

Strategic De-worming

There will be times when chemical de-wormers are the best treatment. But for organic dairy producers, these times will need to be kept to an bare minimum.

It does little good to de-worm livestock and return them to the same infected area. Do not de-worm and immediately move animals to a clean pasture. All the dead worms, with very viable eggs in them, will be passed to contaminate the pasture. Instead, de-worm, hold animals in their same location for 12-24 hours, and then move them to a clean pasture. Appropriate management minimizes re-infection. Strategies include calving or lambing on clean pasture, weaning calves and lambs to clean pasture (with cows and ewes grazing the infested pastures in the fall), and pasture rotation between cattle and sheep.

There are several ways to utilize multiple animal species to control the worm population. One technique that appears to work well is dividing your farm in half, with cattle on one half and sheep on the other half. Midway through the grazing season, switch halves of the farm. Having one species of livestock follow another one will have a benefit. Sheep and goats are infested by the same species of worms. Cattle are mainly infested by other species. The cattle parasite of most concern is *Ostertagia ostertagi*, the brown stomach worm. The barber pole worm, *Haemonchus contortus*, is a stomach worm that can severely affect sheep and goats. Horses and poultry each have their own species also. Mixing different species of livestock is one method of parasite control, by interrupting the parasite life cycle of each livestock species. The different livestock species will break up manure of other species and will not avoid those areas of pastures. This will break the life cycles of the parasites because their natural host will not be present.

Animals and worms have developed together. Getting rid of all worms all the time is not essential for the health of the animal, is rarely cost effective and can actually be detrimental since the immune system of the animal is an important defense mechanism in managing parasite effects. For sheep and goat producers the population of susceptible larvae, called refugia, may be the most important aspect when determining their parasite control program.

Managing the length of time animals remain on a pasture is also important to remember. This is just one other item that has to be figured in when doing pasture planning for a season. Don't let those pastures be grazed too short!

Alternative De-wormers

Most alternative de-wormers have not been shown by scientific research to have any effect on numbers of worms. Diatomaceous earth (DE) has been promoted by some for controlling internal and external parasites in livestock. Almost pure silica, DE is the finely ground fossilized remains of diatoms, tiny sea organisms that accumulate on the sea floor and can be mined from deposits. The diatom remains have microscopic cutting edges that are said to pierce the outer protective layer of parasitic worms and insects, causing dehydration and death. There is little scientific data on the effectiveness of DE for internal parasites, but researchers have seen a decrease in flies on animals when using DE. One study

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at Iowa State showed no benefit from using the DE. I have talked to Dan Morrical, Sheep Extension Specialist at Iowa State, who worked on the study. He told me that they had a hard time even getting the lambs infested with worms, which was necessary to test to the effectiveness of DE. I bring up this point to make you aware that farmers must know if their animals even have worms in order to know whether control measures are needed, are effective, or how to effectively change them.

Many producers have claimed that they have had good results with DE, but their management is usually very good. They may be giving credit to the DE when they should be giving it to themselves. Although I have nothing to back me up, I've often wondered if it isn't the minerals in the DE that provide the benefit. Worm egg count also naturally falls at the end of summer and the beginning of fall. People who are doing fecal egg counts (FEC) may be thinking the DE is lowering the egg counts, instead of realizing that it is the natural cycle. I haven't talked to any producer who uses DE without significantly changing and then watching their management.

Using DE is not just a simple substitute for a chemical de-wormer. This is another problem with the scientific research that has been done on DE. Researchers have simply substituted DE for their conventional wormer and done everything else exactly the same. This is component research, whereas to really prove that DE has an effect, systems research needs to be done, using the same or similar management techniques that producers use. This type of research is much more difficult to do. If you still want to use DE, one dosage that I've seen used is ten to twenty pounds per ton of mineral supplement. Every animal must be fed a dose every day to be effective

De-worming alternatives exist in herbal and folk medicine used for centuries in other cultures.

Herbs such as garlic work not by killing the worms, but by making the intestinal tract healthier. Since worms and other intestinal parasites have evolved to thrive in the unhealthy digestive tract, anything that will make that environment healthier will be detrimental to their survival. Herbal research is beginning in the U.S., looking at pasture plants as well as herbal medications that can be given to animals. There are also some herbal remedies on the market that may have potential for helping reduce the effects of worms. Herbal remedies will also not directly kill the worms, so must be part of an overall management program.

Conditions with Signs Similar to Parasitism

Keep in mind that there are other conditions that can mimic the signs of parasites. It is easy to assume that any unthrifty or thin animal with a rough hair coat or diarrhea is wormy. Internal parasites may be present, but the clinical signs are secondary or a symptom of some other, more insidious disease or condition. Any stressful condition, such as a weather extreme, can cause borderline clinical parasitism to become severe. If animals do not have enough forage or other feed in the fall so that they go into winter in good condition, this lack of condition will cause additional stress on the animal in other ways. This animal will be more apt to show extreme clinical signs of parasitism, including blood loss and death, than an animal which might have some internal parasites but is in good physical condition and is on a high plane of nutrition. In this case, poor nutrition is the cause of the animal's disease and worms are the symptom.

Fescue toxicosis is often blamed when animals are actually wormy. These two conditions can also work together, and it can be hard to determine which one is the main culprit. Fescue toxicosis is especially blamed when bringing animals from the western states. While that indeed may be a problem, the farmer needs to look at the time of year the animals have been placed on fescue, what their overall body condition is, and also check for the presence of worm eggs in the feces.

To Be Continued in the Next issue

Parasite control with minimal or no chemical de-wormer use requires a combination of extremely good management techniques and possibly some alternative therapies. Organic producers must be aware of the incidence of parasites in their animals. Cattle will be easier to manage than sheep or goats and older animals will be easier to manage than younger animals. Observation, testing and monitoring animals will be crucial to determining progress and success. Alternative parasite control is an area that is receiving a lot of interest and attention. Programs and research will continue in the pursuit of parasite control, using alternative and more management-intensive methods. The next issue will discuss specifics for organic dairy calves, as well as some of the alternative management strategies that are being used around the world.

Ann is a veterinarian with 15 years experience in organic livestock production. She has her own consulting business working with producers and educators across the country on sustainable animal health management. She feels very strongly that the health of the animal is tied to healthy soils/plants and that decreasing stress is important in enhancing health. She believes that controlled (management-intensive) grazing is the best way to achieve healthy animals. Contact: Ann Wells, DVM, Springpond Holistic Animal Health, Prairie Grove, AR, 479-846-5794, annw@pgtc.com

Many Thanks to Our 2005 Members

NODPA cannot do the work it does without the monetary contributions and volunteer time given by many. We are now in the 2005 subscription year. We realize that some of you cannot recall if you have made your annual contribution, so we are going to make it easy for you. Below is the list of all who have subscribed for 2005; if your name is not on the list, that means that **we need you to support NODPA again with an annual contribution of $20 or more in order to continue receiving the NODPA NEWS for the 2005 year. Our Annual subscription rate goes up after April 1st to $35 minimum fee.**

Please consider joining for the first time or making your annual contribution soon. If you are signing up for the 'Check-off', that is considered a renewed membership and you will automatically receive the NODPA News.

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NODPA Steps Out

Our generous 3 year foundation grant that helped NODPA get started will be ending May 1, 2005. We are evolving into a totally self funded, farmer run organization! NODPA is in need of your membership contribution more than ever before to continue with its mission to 'enable organic family dairy farmers to have informed discussion about matters critical to the wellbeing of the organic dairy industry as a whole.'

In order to achieve NODPA's goals and to best represent all of our members, we need to raise more funds from our membership. For this reason, we have raised the annual membership fee to a minimum of $35. Support NODPA with your annual contribution or sign up for the automatic check-off and encourage your fellow farmers, educators and consumers to do the same. NODPA has been making a difference and will continue with your support.

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As of 1/31, if your name is not list, your subscription is due.

Renew your membership for 2005 NODPA Membership Form

In order for NODPA to continue as a viable organization, it is necessary for NODPA to raise fund through grants and membership contribution. If you enjoy this newsletter, visit our web page, and / or benefit from the education and farmer representation that NODPA has been providing, please let us know by making a generous contribution to our efforts.

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Calendar

February 12, 10 AM – 3PM
Bringing Certifiable Land into Organic Crop Production
Dryden Fire Hall, Dryden, NY
Klaas & Peter Martens, Margaret Smith, Jane Mt. Pleasant discussing soil change, utilizing soil's potential, crop rotation, weed control, open pollinated corn, use of cover crops. Contact Sharon Vandeuson at 607/753-5078 or shv7@cornell.edu for registration or questions.

February 12, 19, 26 and March 5, 11 AM - 2 PM
Exploring the Small Farm Dream: Is Starting an On-Farm Dairy Processing Business Right for You?
Morrisville St College Dairy Incubator, Morrisville, NY
This four session course will help you set personal and farming goals, assess available resources, determine if farming as a business, specifically on-farm dairy processing, is right for you, and develop an action plan to guide next steps. Along the way you will take a close look at the realities of working for yourself, in particular what it will take to own and manage a successful agricultural venture. Fee: $75.00 for one individual; $125.00 for two people working on the same business idea. Contact: Chris Olds at the Partnership for Community Development, 315-825-3537, clolds@partnersatwork.org

February 28 and March 28, 2005, 10 AM – 4 PM
Marketing Your Livestock Products; Parts 2 & 3
Vermont College, Montpelier, VT
Topics in February will include different methods to determine a product's price, product promotion as well as how to understand the regulations related to marketing dairy products, meat and poultry, and organic products. The final class in March will feature guest speaker Chef Harvey Christie who will discuss "Promotion: Telling Your Story, Selling Your Product." Chef Harv" is owner and operator of Gourmet Central, a specialty food business in Romney,West Virginia. He has worked with livestock producers, WV Extension, and NRCS to produce and market premium grade "eco-friendly"beef called, "Petite Beef by Headwater Farms." Registration is $45 per class, $20 for the notebook. Contact: NOFA VT office 802-434-4122

March 1, 8AM
Public Comment Forum at the NOSB Meeting
Washington DC
Contact Kathie Arnold at 607/842-6631, randkarnold1@juno.com or The Cornucopia Institute at organic@cornucopia.org for information about attending to present comment &/or sending in public comment.

March 1, 10 AM
Organic Crop Meeting
Dryden Fire Hall, Dryden, NY,
featuring Gary Zimmer, sponsored by Organic Valley. Contact Sharon Vandeuson at 607/753-5078 or shv7@cornell.edu for registration or questions.

March 5, 2005, 1PM – 3PM
Maine Grass Farmers Network: Winter Management and Being Efficient.
Meadowsweet Farm, Swanville. Maine
Paula and Sumner Roberts will show their cows and sheep, 207-338-1265

March 12, 2005
Spring Growth 2005. "The Role of Local and Organic in a Global Food Economy."
Maine
Featured speakers are Fred Kirschenmann from Iowa State's Leopold Center; Lawrence Woodward from the Elm Farm Research Centre in the United Kingdom; Molly Anderson of Oxfam International; and Jan Schrock of Heifer International. Contact: www.mofga.org or 207-568-4142

March 17 or 23, 2005
Transfer the Farm Workshop
Sheraton, Burlington, VT or Lancaster, NH
Contact: Bob Parsons, Phone 802-656-2109, Bob.Parsons@uvm.edu, www.uvm.edu/extension

March 26, 2005 1:00 - 3:00 PM
Maine Grass Farmers: Calf Care and Grain Growing.
Oaklands Farm, Gardiner, ME
Logan and Phyllis Johnston will have calves to show you & talk about their grain & backgrounding operation.
More Info:207-582-2136

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