

NODPA NEWS

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Organic Industry News

Measuring 30% DM from Pasture

By Lisa McCrory

Current USDA National Organic Program Regulations require access to pasture for all ruminant animals [§205.237, §205.239] (*see end of article for exact wording*). USDA Accredited certifiers have been enforcing this standard since the inception of the program in 2002.

The current rule, however, lacks measurable standards and has led the USDA / NOP to say that the current standard is unenforceable and as a result, organic dairy farms are not being treated equally. Producers and consumers alike have not been happy about the lack of enforceable standards. Knowing that there are organic dairies selling milk as organic and *not* using pasture sends a confusing message to consumers and threatens the health and potential growth of the organic dairy industry.

In April 2006, USDA/NOP invited producers, certifiers, resource individuals and industry representatives to participate in a pasture symposium. This meeting was intended to assist the USDA / NOP in understanding the importance of pasture on organic farms and to develop standards for pasture that were reasonable and enforceable within an organic system plan.

At that meeting, the majority of the certifiers and farmers agreed that specific and quantifiable pasture standards were necessary and could easily be documented using current record-keeping re-

(Continued on page 4)

SAVE THE DATE
NODPA's 7th Annual
Field Days Event and
Annual Producer Meeting
August 17 & 18, 2007
Freund's Farm Market
324 Norfolk Road
East Canaan, Connecticut

By Ed Maltby

This year's NODPA Field Days will take you through two states and many different years of experience in organic dairying. The event will be hosted by Rick Segalla and Morvan Allen who farm on either side of the Connecticut / Massachusetts border and will take place in the Freund family dairy farm store and greenhouse.

NODPA's Field Days are a great place to re-connect with friends and with what is going on in the organic dairy world. Friday afternoon will feature a tour of Rick Segalla's farm in Canaan CT where he can share the many years of organic production experience he and his family have accumulated. Friday evening will feature a banquet of local foods and organic meat starting at 6:00 pm and a producer meeting starting at 7:30 pm. The annual producer meeting will be an opportunity for NODPA farmer members to be updated on the previous year's work and set the priorities for the NODPA work in 2008.

As usual, we will have a trade show for both days and on Saturday we will have a number of workshops including a pres-

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From The NODPA Desk

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Spring and Summer are finally here, don't quite know where one started or another finished, but we have definitely made it through the mud season. The past few months have been busy with work around the Farm Bill and all the various "marker bills," numerous conference calls, and action alerts as we work with our advocates in DC to keep pace with the fast tracked progress of activities that will affect us all for the next four years. Kathie

Arnold made a great impression when she testified to the US Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry during a hearing on *"Economic Challenges and Opportunities Facing American Agricultural Producers Today."* Her testimony can be read at:

<http://www.nodpa.com/Arnold-testimonySenAgFB4-24-07.pdf>.

On another front, the work that NODPA has been doing with the two other regional organic dairy farmer organizations on national issues, which was formalized under the umbrella Federation Of Organic Dairy Farmers (FOOD) in Wisconsin and California, has been moving forward on the other critical issues for organic dairy. FOOD Farmers have invited processors to a summit meeting in Boulder, Colorado on the morning of June 20th to explore ways that we can all work together to speed the implementation of the forthcoming access to pasture rule and also to facilitate a single rule for defining replacement animals. Other items on our agenda focus on promoting a positive image for organic dairy and providing technical assistance to transitioning and new-entry organic dairy producers. We will be having a producer meeting the day before, June 19th, from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm, in Boulder to discuss issues that more directly affect only organic dairy farmers.

The NODPA Field Days and Annual meeting will be August 17th and 18th (Friday and Saturday) in Canaan, CT. There will be some excellent farm tours of Rick Segalla's and Morvan Allen's dairy farms plus interesting and relevant workshops, with plenty of time for NODPA business and visiting with each other. We have scheduled the producer meeting at an earlier time in the evening this year to allow for more discussion while

FOOD farmers have invited processors to a summit meeting... to speed the implementation of the forthcoming access to pasture rule and to facilitate a single rule for defining replacement animals.

folks are still awake. I encourage you all to attend to express your opinions on NODPA's work now and into the future. We can also promise some wonderful local food and a unique setting for the meeting. Look for the flyer in the mail and sign up quickly as accommodations might be difficult to find, although Rick and Morvan welcome campers on their land.

In looking at workshop topics for the Field Days there were two that kept rising to the top. One is the availability and price of corn which Kathie discusses later in this issue. The other is labeling and an understanding of the consumer expectation of the organic label. To develop and implement accountable standards takes time, resources and plenty of head ache and the fact that Whole Foods and others are looking at the practicality of having their own standards shows there is an economic pay off in the future. The bigger question is how will these other labels affect the value of the USDA or-

ganic label and how can we ensure that the base line for all these other "value-added" labels is organic certification. What we want to avoid is a farmer having to carry numerous different certifications to market their milk to the greatest profitability or have to absorb increased delivery costs to separate milk. Are we going to have numerous different milk tankers crisscrossing the countryside or will the processor "require" dairy farms to carry the necessary certifications to build a pool of milk, as they are doing with Posilac free milk? Farmers need to be part of any future standard making, labeling or "more than" branding to ensure whatever has been gained by increased price is not lost in increased costs and time.

The organic milk market is growing and changing and the flush of milk that we all have been predicting for many months is now with us and has challenged the processor's infrastructure in balancing this temporary excess supply. The companies are all handling this slightly differently and are looking at the long term need in order to have a stable sustainable supply, even if it affects their short term bottom line. Farmers recognize this temporary blip and have not been looking for an increase in pay price to compensate for lower margins as fuel and feed costs rise. Nobody doubts that there is continued growth in demand and next year will see fewer farmers transitioning with perhaps more realistic farmer recruitment by some companies as they gain experience in the maturing organic market. NODPA will continue to work with farmers, processors and regulators to build a strong and sustainable marketplace for everyone. A successful grazing and growing season to everyone. ♦

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.

(Continued from Measuring 30% DM, page 1)

games of certified organic livestock farmers. The following standard has been approved by producer organizations, advocacy groups, processors and certifiers throughout the United States: **“Ruminant livestock must graze pasture for the growing season but not less than 120 days per year. The grazed pasture must provide a significant portion of the total feed requirement but not less than 30% of the dry matter intake on an average daily basis during the growing season.”** This wording was also voted on and approved by the NOSB in 2005 as a guidance document for certifiers.

Because a measurable higher standard has not yet been adopted by the NOP, Organic Valley/CROPP has developed higher standards, which were voted and approved by their producer members.

Organic Valley is now requiring that the producer's farm plan includes a provision that “ruminant animals over 6 months of age receive a ... minimum of 30% of their dry matter intake from pasture for a minimum of 120 days per year”.

In anticipation of a measurable pasture standard, Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF), the certification arm of NOFA-VT, and NOFA-NY Certified Organic LLC

have included a section in their application forms that allows a producer to evaluate their pasture use. These forms help the certifier and the producer determine if the NOSB recommendation of 30% dry matter and 120 days is being met. If a producer is not meeting the 30% minimum requirement, they are asked to justify their management and in some cases to increase their pasture acreage.

Other Northeast certifiers (MOFGA Certification Services LLC, Baystate Certifiers, Pennsylvania Certified Organic) do not provide any record keeping forms that evaluate dry matter intake from pasture at this time. Don Franczyk of Bay State Certifiers said that they are taking the ‘wait and see’ approach; when the NOP presents their proposed standard, they will move forward with the necessary paperwork for

documentation. At this time, Bay State Certifiers has 6 certified dairies in Massachusetts and Connecticut, 4 of which are practically 100% grass-fed. MOFGA Certification Services and PCO work with their producers if they see that the producer is clearly limited in pasture for the size of their herd. They make it clear that if the NOP rule implements measurable pasture requirements,

(Continued on page 7)

Producers are required, by any certifier, to submit an Organic Farm Plan....From these requirements, a system is already in place to calculate intake from pasture .



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(Continued from NODPA Field Days, page 1)

entation by Lynn Clarkson (invited) and a panel of retail and consumer representatives. Saturday afternoon will feature a farm tour of newly transitioned organic dairy farmer Morvan Allen. Morvan's farm is located in Sheffield, Massachusetts, and he completed his transition early in 2007. There will be an article on his farm in the August edition of NODPA News. There will also be many opportunities for farmers to visit the trade show, network with one another, learn about trends in the industry, and meet resource people who will be on hand.

Freund Dairy is a conventional dairy that makes full use of its location with its farm store and finds multiple values for manure. They capture the methane from decomposing manure liquids to heat the farm house and the hot water supply for their dairy barn. And they're making "cow pots" for starting seeds out of some of their manure solids.

Save the date and watch the mail for a brochure on the event; remember to check out the August NODPA News and occasionally check out the NODPA website for further details as they develop. If you are interested in sponsoring this event, or making a donation to support it and NODPA's great work, please contact Ed Maltby by June 15th in order to be included in the 3,000 brochures that will be mailed out. If you want to be an exhibitor and promote your product at the trade-show, contact Ed Maltby quickly before the limited space disappears. For more information contact Ed Maltby by phone: 413-772-0444 or email: emaltby@comcast.net. ♦

Organic Dairy Policy and Production Trends

By Kathie Arnold

Within a month, there will be three times as many farms shipping organic milk from my township. For years, we have been the only organic dairy farm in Truxton, but will be joined by two other farms by June and a fourth farm is planning to start their herd transition this fall. That will mean that by the fall of 2008, 40% of the dairy farms in our town will be shipping organic milk (that's assuming that the other six non-organic farms will still be in business then). When my husband, his brother, and I started in partnership in 1980, there were 22 farms shipping milk in our town—now it's down to 10. Organic is being seen more and more as a management system and philosophy that is doable, and a viable way for grass based dairies to capture more market place dollars.

We are now in the big organic milk flush period due to the expansive numbers of farms who started their herd transition last spring coupled with the normal spring flush. Numbers I'm hearing point to a 30-50% increase in organic milk supplies coming out of this period. However, on a Dean Foods Earnings Conference Call on May 3rd, Gregg Engles, CEO and Chairman of Dean Foods, parent company of Horizon Organic, said that their supply was growing by 25%. So if the supply of the largest player in the market is only growing by 25%, perhaps the flush of new milk isn't quite as big as some might have thought.

Whatever the size of the actual increase, the supply will be greater than demand for at least a period of time and all the major buyers of organic milk in the Northeast have put out the word that they do not plan to sign on any more milk until fall of 2008. That means that any farms that were planning to start their last year of transition this spring or summer should be sure to have a contract with a buyer, otherwise a market may not be available next spring or summer.

We are now back to what was the tradition for many years--processors not taking on new organic milk during spring flush, but looking to build new supply in the fall of the year. Over the last few years, processors have been willing to sign on new milk any time of the year. This was atypical and was a reflection of under-supply. Now that the organic milk market is out of the deficit supply situation, there will be more measured sign-ups. Most processors are not planning to sign up any additional farms to start their 1-year herd transition year until this fall.

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(Continued from Measuring 30% DM, page 4)

their continued certification may be in jeopardy. When writing non-compliance notices to producers, MOFGA Certification Services cites the definition for pasture included in the rule which states that "pasture must provide food value and that natural resources must be maintained or improved". Certifiers have a long history with using feed calculations to red-flag potential compliance issues. For example, the 80/20 feed exemption, when calculated on an as fed basis, was based on certain assumptions about the weight of hay bales. It is also a requirement for producers to provide information on feed harvested for each production year. Certifiers must be aware that a margin of error exists in all of these calculations and realize that their best use is determining which producers need additional evaluation.

Producers are required, by any certifier, to submit an Organic Farm Plan that demonstrates how they are building soil fertility, preventing soil degradation/erosion, a description of their out-door access practices, and where their feed is coming from. From these requirements, a system is already in place to calculate intake from pasture. Pasture intake information can be determined by 'back-calculation' or by providing a ration plan for the herd during the grazing months.

To back-calculate, one compares what is fed in winter, to what is fed in the summer. The total dry matter is determined from both rations; then the summer ration is subtracted from the winter ration. The difference between those two rations would be the amount being provided from pasture. Divide the dry matter value of the pasture into the dry matter value of the winter ration and you will get your pasture %.

Example:

100 milking cows weighing an average of 1100 each.
Average milk production per cow is 50 lbs/cow.

Winter ration:

50 # Haylage (40% dry matter) = 20 lbs dry matter
5 # dry hay (90% dry matter) = 4.5 lbs dry matter
15 # grain (90% dry matter) = 13.5 lbs dry matter
Total Dry Matter = 38 lbs

Summer ration:

12 # grain (90% dry matter) = 10.8 lbs dry matter
4 # dry hay (90% dry matter) = 3.6 lbs dry matter
Total Dry Matter = 14.4 lbs

Winter Ration (38) – Summer Ration (14.4) = 23.6 lbs
dry matter remaining = pasture portion of the ration

To determine the % Dry Matter from Pasture: 23.6 divided by 38 = **62% of the daily ration = pasture.**

To calculate the ration based upon the dry matter needs of your cows, you can also forward calculate. Dairy cattle consume approximately 3.5 % of their body weight in dry matter intake daily. Total dry matter intake can vary slightly based upon the breed and the total pounds of milk produced, but these average values will help producers and certifiers identify those farms that are close to the minimum allowances.

Example 1: a herd of 100 Jerseys weighing an average of 950 lbs each. They each need approximately 33.25 lbs dry matter per cow per day ($950 \times .035 = 33.25$ lbs). The cows are fed 12# of grain per day (90% dry matter) and 4 # of dry hay (90% dry matter) per day to complement their pasture.

Expected dry matter intake per cow: 33.25 lbs
- minus dry matter intake from grain -10.8 lbs
- minus dry matter intake from hay - 3.6
Total dry matter from pasture = **18.85 lbs**

To determine the % dry matter from pasture: 18.85 divided by 33.25 = **57% of the daily ration = pasture**

(Continued on page 27)

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(Continued from Policy and Production Trends, page 5)

It does look like this year's big surge in transitioning dairy farms will be a one year blip. Applications at many certification offices are back to more typical pre-2006 levels and with the rising price for conventional milk, there will be less incentive for producers to transition—although higher conventional milk prices may give those planning ahead a financially easier transition. However, it will take some time for the market to digest this extra large dose of organic milk coming on line.

Already, some organic milk is heading to the conventional market to balance current supply and demand. Processors cannot always gear up new accounts and expand sales as fast or quite in tune with the increased supplies that the current situation is delivering. The fact that conventional milk prices are rising will help stem the financial losses that selling to the conventional market brings to bear. Unfortunately, this excess organic milk is impacting producers. Some co-ops and groups in the Midwest who supply the spot market have had to reduce their pay price to adjust for the lower pay they are receiving from buyers and in some cases, to compensate for the necessity to sell on the conventional market.

Our farm's buyer, HP Hood, has recently made the decision that all new contracts will be at a \$24 base price with a \$2.50 Market Premium versus the \$26.50 base price that was established at the beginning of 2007. The Market Premium will allow Hood the flexibility to reduce the pay price should other processors drop their pay price. Mike Suever, Vice President of Milk Procurement and Processing at HP Hood, has pledged, however, that Hood will not be the first to lower the Market Premium, but will only do so if another major processor does so first. This change will only affect Hood producers who have signed a contract recently under this new pricing or those of us whose initial contract periods have passed. We have been told that we will be receiving notice letters that contracts with the new pay distribution will be forthcoming. On the May 3rd Dean Foods conference call it was good to hear that CEO Engles is now saying that he does not see a dropping farm gate price for organic milk. This is a change on his part, as noted in the question and answer section of the call by Chris Growe, AG Edwards analyst for consumer staples, who observed that Mr. Engles had previously thought that milk costs would come down.

Mr. Engles says that no one in this environment seems to be thinking short term, but all want to protect their supply. Although Dean Foods did not own Horizon Organic at the time, I'm sure they are fully cognizant that on the occasion when Horizon did drop their

price to farmers (when they bought out Organic Cow) that they did indeed lose supply--as many farmers left Horizon rather than take a pay cut of \$1/cwt of milk. Let us hope that both Mr. Engles from Dean Foods and Mr. Suever from HP Hood are true to their word, for if both are, then Horizon won't lower their producer pay price and subsequently neither will HP Hood. The other major buyer, Organic Valley / CROPP Cooperative, has a long history and a foundation principle of steady and increasing pay prices without price drops. With rising costs for organic feed, fuel and other inputs, any drop in farmer pay price would be doubly economically damaging to producers.

Pasture and Replacements

And what about the NOP pasture rule and replacements issue? There's nothing to report except to pass on what Mark Bradley, Deputy Administrator of the National Organic Program said at the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting in March. *"Pasture requirements for ruminants is still currently in internal, in departmental clearance, but we're expecting some activity on that. Dairy herd replacement requirements, as soon as we get done with the pasture requirements,*

(Continued on page 9)

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(Continued from Policy and Production Trends, page 8)

we'll immediately move into rule making on that. And there is already a work plan in place for that."

When asked by NOSB member Kevin Engelbert to specifically expound on where things are at with the pasture rule, Mr. Bradley replied: *"The pasture rule, we said that we would have, try to have something out by August of last year, and then we said, by the end of the year, and now we are saying by the end of this year. It is a work load based issue."*

It's been in...internal clearance for a matter of months now. The Office of General Counsel and the Office of Management and Budget will be involved in that clearance process. Exactly how long that takes, and even once we get a proposed rule out,...there'll be substantive comment involved with that."

That process will involve at least, I would say, 90 days of public comment to make sure that everything is well vetted. And then they would have to go back into considering those comments, putting that out as a proposed rule and then go ahead and publish that. But its work load, Kevin. It is exactly work load. We have a lot of things going on."

It seems that is the story of most of our lives—more to do than there is time to do it. ♦

Economics of Organic Dairy Production in the Northeast

By Lisa McCrory, Bob Parsons and Rick Kersbergen

The organic dairy industry, still very much in its infancy, has been growing steadily in the Northeast since 1994. Vermont had 3 certified dairy farms in 1994 and today there are 137 certified farms with another 67 to complete their transition by June of this year. Organic milk, sold from the farm gate, is in its 13th year of existence in Vermont, and most of the farms shipping organic milk today have been doing so for less than 5 years. Understanding the costs of production on an organic dairy farm has been a challenge because many of the farms shipping organic milk are still making investments in the infrastructure of their farm while others are still working out the kinks and getting used to a new style of management. Nonetheless, collecting information on the costs of producing organic milk is needed. This information can assist those producers considering the transition to organic, will help the loan officers decide if they are going to support a farmer's interest in transitioning, and will help maintain a sustainable pay price for organic milk.

In 2004, a 2-year study was initiated to determine the profitability of organic dairy farms. University of Vermont Extension, University of Maine Extension, NOFA-VT and the Maine Organic Milk Producers (MOMP) have been working together to collect the numbers and survey information. To supplement the economic findings, technical articles will be written covering subjects on organic dairy transition costs, growing high quality forages, growing small grains, successful farm management systems and more.

The Findings

To date, two years of economic data have been collected (2004 & 2005) and additional funds have been raised to collect two more years of economic information (2006 & 2007).

There were 30 farms participating in the 2004 production numbers; 13 from Vermont and 17 from Maine. Results showed that the 'average' organic dairy farm milked 48 cows, sold 689,000 pounds of milk and received an average of \$22.97/hundredweight for milk sold. Premiums for components and quality provided a \$7.16/cwt spread between the lowest (\$19.88) and highest (\$27.04) pay price. The farms averaged a net farm income of \$21,898 after taking depreciation and accrual adjustments into account.

The 2nd year of the study (2005) has found that profitability is up 18.8% from 2004. There were 44 farms

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(Continued from *Economics of Organic Dairy Production*, page 9)

participating in year 2; 26 from Vermont and 18 from Maine. The farms for 2005 averaged 56 cows, sold 740,098 lbs of milk, were paid an average of \$24.94 per cwt. As compared to the 1st year of the study for 2004, the farms averaged 8 more cows, sold more milk per farm, and received an additional \$1.97 per cwt. In contrast to the first year of the study, milk production per cow was down by nearly 1500 lbs. This was attributed to the wider number of variation of the farms in the study for this year. The farms averaged a net farm income of \$33,409 per farm after taking depreciation and accrual adjustments into account.

Both years of the study have shown that feed, labor, and supplies/repairs are the leading cost categories. Feed expense was actually down a bit, from \$1003 per cow in 2004 to \$936 per cow in 2005. Supplies and repairs, labor and depreciation were up slightly.

The difference in pay price from one year to the next was due to a dramatic increase in pay price to the producers during the third quarter of the 2005 year. Preliminary results of the 2004 numbers came out a few months earlier. Producers now had reputable study results available to prove that the pay price of \$21.50/cwt was stale and they needed more money for their organic milk. After 5 years at a fairly constant price, processors needed to raise milk prices to encourage additional or-

ganic milk production.

Looking at some of these figures from another perspective, the total production cost per cwt was \$24.58 and net return per cow was \$579. Overall, the net income per cow was down a bit from 2004 and was nearly \$250 lower than a similar study in 1999. Since then we have seen a rise in organic milk prices but a greater rise in farm expenses.

When looking at the difference in Maine and Vermont organic dairy farms, there was no statistical difference between the farms in the two states. Vermont farms were a bit more profitable but tended to have lower depreciation costs. Therefore the study is not slanted by a difference between the two states.

Can 'Return On Equity' (ROE) be positive?

Finding that organic dairy farming in the Northeast did not generate a positive return on equity in 2005, we looked at what it would take to achieve a 5 percent ROE and projected profitability for 2006.

To do that in 2005 would have required a milk price of \$28.43 per hundredweight. This would cover all costs including depreciation, provide \$35,000 for unpaid family labor, and provide the owner with a 5 percent return on equity of \$483,595. Although well over the \$24.94 received for 2005, many organic dairy farms are now receiving more than \$28 with quality and com-

(Continued on page 11)

Thank you,
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(Continued from *Economics of Organic Dairy Production*, page 10)
ponent bonuses.

Organic feed concentrate costs have risen between 5 to 10 percent since 2004. They make up 90 percent of the purchased feed bill and amount to \$49,696 for our average organic farm. Second, fuel prices continued to rise in 2006, although stabilizing and declining in the later part of the year.

So how would farms do with an additional 10 percent increase in fuel price and a 7.5 percent rise in concentrated feed cost? The ROE would drop to -1.23 percent, and the average milk price would have to be \$25.74 per hundredweight for farmers to break even. To generate a positive return on assets of 5 percent, milk prices would need to be \$29.02 per hundredweight.

Despite the fact that many of the farms are not making an economic profit that will enable them to remain competitive, 85 percent of farmers in the study indicated they were "very satisfied" with their switch to organic. None were unsatisfied.

In conclusion, profitability was up 18.8% from 2004, primarily from higher organic milk prices. But the organic dairy sector is not as profitable as it was in 1999 due to faster rising production costs. There is a great variability between farms indicating that management is still the key ingredient for farm profitability.

What does the future offer? Organic dairy can be expected to be more profitable in 2006 as preliminary figures predict milk prices rose above \$27 per cwt with quality premiums. Producers with higher components were paid nearly \$30 per cwt. On the conventional side, we can expect 2006 milk to average closer to \$14 per cwt, nearly \$2 lower than 2005, feed prices up considerably as corn doubled, and fertilizer prices soaring. This explains why more than 80 farms are currently transitioning to organic dairy production this year in VT.

NOFA-VT staff, UVM Extension staff, and UMaine Extension staff are collecting 2006 income and expense information now; if you are interested in participating in this study, please let us know. More information will be forthcoming in the near future as we examine various aspects of the study.

For more info, contact Bob Parsons, University of Vermont, 802-656-2109, bob.parsons@uvm.edu

Recognition goes to the following individuals for making this econ study possible: Glenn Rogers, Dennis Kauppila, and Qingbin Wang from the University of Vermont; Rick Kersbergen, Timothy J. Dalton, and Lisa Bragg, from the University of Maine; Maine Organic Milk Producers (MOMP); Nat Bacon and Willie Gibson, Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont ♦

NOSB Nixes Animal Cloning In Organic

By Kathie Arnold

Animal cloning is not for organic production, said the NOSB at their March 27-29, 2007 meeting. This action was in response to the US Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) December announcement of tentative approval of cloned animals and their products in the US food supply, with no requirement for labeling of food products from clones.

This quick action by the NOSB sends a clear message to organic consumers that they can continue to feel secure that organic food will not harbor the meat, milk, or other products from cloned animals. The NOSB work was on top of a statement that was issued by the National Organic Program (NOP) in January stating that animal cloning is prohibited under NOP regulations. However, that statement had left open the question of progeny of clones.

At first, it looked like the NOSB would table any action on cloning until the next meeting because of disagreement on wording, but Kevin Engelbert, acting as chair of the livestock committee at that meeting,

(Continued on page 12)

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(Continued from NOSB Meeting Summary, page 11)

worked diligently after hours to come up with satisfactory language and secure the support of almost the entire NOSB. The NOSB vote was 12 yes, 1 abstention, and 2 absent. The NOSB's recommendation is to add the term "animal cloning" to the definition of organic excluded methods, and to specifically mention that the disallowance does not include "artificial insemination". Additionally, the NOSB recommended the addition of a new sentence to the Origin of Livestock section in the regulation to specifically note that progeny of clones or their reproductive materials (i.e. semen, eggs) and all succeeding generations are prohibited from organic production.

These NOSB recommendations need to be adopted by the NOP to become fully official, but the NOSB has taken a quick step to get the process on its way. Below is the actual text adopted by the NOSB. The underlining shows the new wording the NOSB recommends be added to the existing regulations.

IV. Recommendation

The Livestock Committee recommends that the NOP implement rule change to clarify that

cloning technology excluded from organic production. The Livestock Committee recommends the following change to existing regulation:

Terms

§ 205.2 Terms defined.

Excluded Methods. A variety of methods used to genetically modify organisms or influence their growth and development by means that are not possible under natural conditions or processes and are not considered compatible with organic production. Such methods include cell fusion, microencapsulation and macroencapsulation, animal cloning and recombinant DNA technology (including gene deletion, gene doubling, introducing a foreign gene, and changing the positions of genes when achieved by recombinant DNA technology). Such methods do not include the use of traditional breeding, artificial insemination, conjugation, fermentation, hybridization, in vitro fertilization, or tissue culture.

205.236 (b)(3) Livestock , progeny and all suc-

(Continued on page 13)

The NOSB's recommendation is to add the term "animal cloning" to the definition of organic excluded methods, and to specifically mention that the disallowance does not include "artificial insemination". Additionally, the NOSB recommended the addition of a new sentence to the Origin of Livestock section in the regulation to specifically note that progeny of clones or their reproductive materials (i.e. semen, eggs) and all succeeding generations are prohibited from organic production.

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(Continued from NOSB Meeting Summary, page 12)

ceeding generation from cloned livestock reproductive materials, or any other products derived from animals produced using animal cloning technology

The Livestock Committee and the NOSB will work in collaboration with the NOP on further rule making recommendations as issues are identified. ♦



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A Farm Bill Year Calls For Farmer Activism

By Maureen Knapp

2007 is a Farm Bill year, and this is important because the Farm Bill sets the stage for the next 5 years. It seems that every other week, especially during Farm Bill years, there is a call to action for farmers to contact their representatives about one issue or another. It is much easier to act upon these "Action Alerts" when you know the person you are speaking to, especially if you have established a working relationship with them.

As farmers are now less than 2% of the population, and organic farmers even fewer in number than that, it not only behooves us to speak up for ourselves, it is absolutely essential. It's understandable that it may be uncomfortable to initiate a conversation with someone you don't know about a topic you may be lacking information on. It can be hard to step outside of one's comfort zone, but after you make the effort to stretch your boundaries, the discomfort eases or disappears, rather like sore muscles after a new activity. If you think of it as an educational experience and opportunity for personal growth, then the idea of doing such things becomes a little more palatable. At least it did for me.

At this particular time, opportunities for change abound because of the new blood in Congress. Many newly elected officials are being thrust into a debate they know little about and are grateful to hear from constituents the changes they'd like to see as well as how different aspects of the Farm Bill affect them. Once a relationship with an aide is established it is much easier to pick up the phone and call them for whatever reason, or email a question. Quite often they also turn to you for advice or an opinion because you are the expert. So, how do we go about this?

Often, different Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) will bring farmers and others to Washington DC to hold informational sessions for the purpose of educating on lobbying efforts. This is followed by actual congressional visits. These groups have done the research on the Farm Bill that farmers don't have time to do. Quite a bit of information is packed into these seminars and there is usually ample time for questions if you are still not clear about some things. The result is that when it is time to do the visits, you actually do know what you are talking about. Sustainable Ag Coalition www.msawg.org is one such organization. They have an outstanding website with all sorts reference and educational material. Another good one to investigate is

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from Farmer Activism, page 13)

the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture
www.sustainableagriculture.net

During the first week of March, Kathie Arnold, her

daughter Carly, I, and many others attended the Sustainable Ag Coalition (SAC) summit "Roots to Reform" in Washington D.C. There was a wide variety of extremely interesting and informative workshops, so many that it was hard to choose which ones to attend. Some of the topics included:

- **Getting Your Message Across** – How to Write an Effective Op-Ed and Letter to the Editor,

- **Effective Media for Grassroots Organizations**

- **Effective Lobbying** – Basic Skills and Tips,

- **Appropriations 101**- Organizing Grassroots Advocacy for Long Term Policy Change

Notes from some of these sessions can be found at the SAC website listed above, under **Farm Bill Advocacy Toolkit**. This is a great resource - check it out!

The night before the Summit, there was a "Meet and Greet" reception on Capitol Hill that allowed time for attendees to meet with Members of Congress and their staff. This was valuable networking time. The day after the Summit, armed with our newly honed skills and information, we made our way around Capitol Hill (an education in itself!) and met with our representatives. During one of the visits to our local congressman's office, we were joined by Tony Azevedo (WODPA, California) where we had a nice chat about the possibilities of his congressman working in concert with ours on Farm Bill issues. Tony's congressman happens to be the Chairman of the new House Subcommittee on Horticulture and Organic Agriculture. Later on in the day we met with Samuel Fromartz, author of **Organic, Inc.** and *Chews Wise*, www.Chewswise.com, for lunch. Chews Wise- "Devouring the Food Chain one Bite at a Time" is an up-to-the-minute blog, about all things organic and some things not. Sam interviewed Kathie and Tony for Chews Wise, and we all had a great lunch at the Native American Museum cafeteria.

Regardless of where you obtain your information, here are some guidelines that are helpful for successful visits:

- Make appointments first
- Thank the legislator or aide for taking the time to meet with you
- Have your talking points organized in your mind to convey a succinct message

As farmers are now less than 2% of the population, and organic farmers even fewer in number than that, it not only behooves us to speak up for ourselves, it is absolutely essential.

It is called the Farm Bill, and as farmers we are in a unique position to be able to impact this important legislation and in fact, should consider it our duty.

- If you are leaving any written materials behind, make sure that they are organized into a neat folder or packet. Make references to the material during the visit

- If you have a unique farm product, bring it along as a small gift.

- These are busy people. If your appointment is for a half hour and you've said what you have to say in 15 minutes, then give them the gift of the 15 minutes. They'll remember you for it.

- Follow up with a thank you email.

- Business cards are helpful

Personal stories seem to have a longer lasting effect than simply listing changes that you'd like to see, i.e.

how this change affects your farm

Another easy way to meet your representatives and establish a relationship is to tag along on a local office visit with someone who already knows the ropes, or grab a friend and learn to do it together. Staff people, especially at the local level, look forward to learning

(Continued on page 15)



USDA Organic Certification for Dairy Producers in PA and Adjoining States

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(Continued from Farmer Activism, page 14)

things from an actual farmer. There is much to be learned from the staffers as well.

It's been said that the term Farm Bill is a mis-nomer. It should be called the Food Bill, as it affects everyone and would attract the attention of a whole lot more people if it were called such, but it isn't. It is called the Farm Bill, and as farmers we are in a unique position to be able to impact this important legislation and in fact, should consider it our duty.

Maureen and her husband Paul own and operate Cobblestone Valley Farm in Preble, NY, which includes an organic dairy, along with organic pick your own strawberries, various pasture raised meats, and compost. <http://cobblestonevalley.com> ♦



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More Organic Milk Sought in Northeast

The purpose of the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance is to enable organic dairy family farms, situated across an extensive area, to maintain the sustainability of organic dairy farming in the Northeast Region.

HP Hood is starting new organic milk routes in a number of Northern Tier States (ME, NH, VT, NY, PA, OH, MI, WI, MN, IA) and would like to hear from you. Our support of sustainable agriculture, a signing bonus and transition assistance have helped many already. Please call Karen Cole, HP Hood Milk Procurement, karen.cole@dairymarketingservices.com or at 1-866-383-1026.

CROPP Cooperative~Organic Valley Family of Farms, a national farmer owned organic marketing cooperative is looking for organic dairies, both established and transitional organic dairy producers, in New York, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and all of the New England States. Competitive Organic Milk Pay Price once certified organic and complete year of Transitional Funding for new farmers during herd's transitional year.

In New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia contact Peter Miller, Northeast Region Dairy Pool Coordinator, at (888) 444-6455, x3407 to leave a voice message, or mobile at (612) 801-3506, peter.miller@organicvalley.coop.

In New England States contact John Cleary, New England Dairy Pool Coordinator, at (888)-444-6544 x3330 to leave voice mail, or mobile at (612)-803-9087, or email at john.cleary@organcivalley.coop

Upstate Niagara Cooperative is a dairy farmer owned, full service cooperative headquartered in Buffalo, NY who own and operate 4 milk plants in Buffalo, Niagara Falls and Rochester. Our members are interested in producing organic milk and proc-

essing organic dairy products. We currently process & package fresh, not ultra-pasteurized organic milk in our Rochester Milk Plant. If you are interested in learning more about Upstate Niagara Coop, please visit our website www.upstateniagara.com or give me a call or email me. Talk to you soon.....Bill Young at 800-724-6455 x 6225 or byoung@upstatefarms.com

LOFCO continues to look for milk in PA/MD, particularly southeast PA. The market is strong. Please contact Levi Miller at 717/661-8682 or Jerry McCleary at 717/577-8809.

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 Dave Eyster at 1-888-589-6455 extension 5409.

Horizon Organic continues to grow its producer partner network in the East and Midwest. Horizon Organic offers competitive pay, transitional funds during the 12 months transition of the herd and long-term contracts. Producers in Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Michigan, Virginia and Kentucky contact Cindy Masterman 888-648-8377; New York, Maryland, Ohio and Pennsylvania contact Peter Slaunwhite 800-381-0980; Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois and Indiana contact Mike Bandstra 877-620-8259.

United Ag Services in Seneca Falls, NY is looking for organic milk in NY and northern PA. Please call 800-326-4251.

Any buyers looking for organic milk who would like to be listed in this column for the August 2007 issue, please email the desired text to Ed at ednodpa@comcast.net or call 413-772-0444 by July 1st 2007.

Horizon Organic 'Standard of Care'

By Sue Unrue, Horizon Organic

Horizon Organic published its "Standards of Care," a comprehensive set of guidelines that will govern how the company runs its company-owned farms while helping educate consumers and others about the complexities of organic farming.

The Horizon Organic "Standards of Care" encompass every aspect of life on a Horizon Organic dairy farm — from calf-raising to health care to pasture management. Besides complying with the USDA requirements for organic certification, these Standards of Care aspire to the next level of organic stewardship.

"Today, a growing number of consumers are interested not only in organic products but also in how they are produced," said Kelly Shea, vice president of industry relations and organic stewardship for Horizon Organic. "Our 'Standards of Care' reflect how we manage our company-owned farms. We were one of the companies that pioneered organic practices more than 15 years ago, and we continue to aspire to those founding principles. Our goal is to be part of a larger organic community that fosters the highest possible standards for animal welfare, environmental stewardship, and agricultural sustainability."

Following are some of the practices outlined in the standards:

- Raising the company's own calves from certified organic mothers to ensure the organic integrity of herds from generation to generation;
- Taking a holistic, preventive and natural approach to animal care and welfare, including proper nutrition, stress management and homeopathic health care remedies;
- Ensuring that cows graze on organic grass every day during the active growing season (frost to frost) and as many days as possible during the dormant season;
- Ensuring that cows are outside year-round to exercise, socialize and interact with the land; and
- Managing pastures in a way that encourages the growth of grass for grazing, improving biodiversity, while conserving precious soil and water resources.

Shea said the "Standards of Care" demonstrate what Horizon Organic is doing to protect the integrity of the USDA's organic seal on its company-owned farms. They also play an important role in educating the public about what organic farming means, how it's done and

why it's good for consumers, communities and cows.

"Most consumers already know that we're certified organic and that we produce milk without the use of antibiotics, added growth hormones or synthetic pesticides," said Shea. "But we also want them to understand that organic milk is so much more than that — it's all about producing milk in a way that is sustainable for the land, animals and our planet."

Our goal is to be part of a larger organic community that fosters the highest possible standards for animal welfare, environmental stewardship, and agricultural sustainability.

In developing the standards, the company collaborated with third-party experts, including Dr. Hubert Karreman with Penn Dutch Cow Care, a specialist in natural and homeopathic veterinary medicine, and with Shannon Horst with Holistic Management International, an authority on sustainable pasture management. Horizon Organic said the standards are in

effect now on its company-run farms in Idaho and Maryland.

"These standards reflect what we have learned over the past 15 years about organic dairy and farming and what we've determined we can do even better in the future," said Jule Taylor, vice president of milk supply for Horizon Organic. "We want our farms to set an example and we hope other farmers can share and learn from our experiences in way that will help the industry. We feel a responsibility to continuously improve the way we do organic." ♦



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NOFA-VT Announces 2007 Organic Pasture & Livestock Management Workshops

The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont's Dairy and Livestock Technical Assistance Program has scheduled nine organic pasture and livestock management workshops for the 2007 grazing season from May 21 through September 19. Workshops will be hosted by organic dairy and non-dairy livestock farmers throughout the state and cover all aspects of rotational and intensive grazing for several species of livestock. Other topics will include animal healthcare, forage quality, soil quality, fly control and more. Most workshops run from 10am to 2pm and are free to all organic and transitioning farmers; a small registration fee applies to others. More information, workshop schedule and locations may be found at www.nofavt.org, or contact NOFA-VT at 434-4122; info@nofavt.org.

Producer Workshop and Veterinarian Roundtable on "Quality Milk and Udder Health on Organic Dairy Farms", Friday, June 8 in Waterbury, VT

Organic and non-organic dairy farmers interested in learning how to improve milk quality and udder health on organic farms are invited to attend this special workshop presented by Dr. Linda Tikofsky, Senior Extension Veterinarian, Quality Milk Production Services, College of Veterinary Medicine, Cornell University.

Dr. Tikofsky has extensive on-farm experience concerning milk quality and udder health on organic dairy farms and is an active researcher in this field. She is an experienced and effective workshop presenter and facilitator for producer and professional groups.

A morning session will consider strategies and methods for improving milk quality, udder health, disease management, improving milking and milking systems, approaches to disease treatment and effective treatments with organically approved products. Lunch will be followed by a panel discussion and Q&A's with Dr. Tikofsky and several experienced organic dairy farmers and veterinarians with experience on organic farms. A special Roundtable Discussion for Dairy Veterinarians with Dr. Tokofsky will take place from 4-6pm. For more information contact NOFA-VT

Organic Dairy Workshop "Managing Health on Organic Livestock Farms" Saturday, June 23 in Hyde Park, VT, with Nationally Known Veterinarian Dr. Hue Karreman, one of the nation's foremost experts on organic livestock health. For all dairy producers interested in learning up-to-date, practical and proven strategies for maintaining organic livestock health.

The workshop will be held at Applecheek Farm in Hyde Park, Vermont. A 10 AM presentation by Dr. Karreman and Q&A session will take place at Applecheek's conference facility. A catered lunch will be followed by a hands-on session, demonstrations and discussion with Dr. Karreman in the barn. Materials and books on livestock health from NOFA-VT's bookstore will be available for sale.

Dr. Karreman is an organic dairy veterinarian, and former organic dairy herdsman, who works with 85 certified organic and transitioning dairy herds in Lancaster County, PA. He is a highly sought after speaker at farmer meetings, livestock and veterinary conferences all around the country. Dr. Karreman is the author of Treating Dairy Cows Naturally: Thoughts and Strategies (Acres, USA), as well as many other publications on alternative livestock health practices. He is the Chair of the USDA-National Organic Standards Board's Livestock Committee.

This is a not-to-be-missed workshop for all newly certified and transitioning-to-organic dairy farmers, as well as more experienced organic producers. It is made possible with funding from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets.

Pre-registration is strongly encouraged. For registration, directions and information contact NOFA-VT: 802-434-4122; info@nofavt.org. ♦

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Organic Production

Feature Farm

Segalla Farm
Rick Segalla
East Canaan, CT

by Lisa McCrory

It was just 2 years ago that we featured Rick Segalla in the NODPA News, but we felt it would be good to visit Rick once again as many of us will be at his farm in August for the upcoming NODPA Field Days.

Rick is one of the original NODPA members who descended upon Roman Stoltzfoos's farm in Lititz, Pennsylvania for the first Annual (2001) NODPA Field Days. It is amazing to think how much NODPA has grown in this short amount of time, and Rick has grown with NODPA as our Connecticut Representative, and a NODPA Board member since 2004.

Rick started transitioning to organic dairy in 1997 when he gave up the use of synthetic fertilizers and started using more sustainable practices such as crop rotations, green manures and mined minerals for his soil health and management. Other things he was wrestling with at this time was stray voltage. His farm was certified organic in 1999, but he did not have a market for his organic milk. A couple of options were in the making, however, and eventually Rick decided to sell his milk to Colabro Cheese and has been shipping to them ever since. Colabro Cheese is a 43-year-old Italian cheese company located in East Haven, CT that specializes in producing Ricotta, Ricotta Impastata, Mozzarella Fior Di Latte, Grated Parmesan and Romano and a line of select specialty cheeses.

Rick operates his family's 900-acre farm in Canaan Connecticut, milking 115 cows and raising an equal number of young stock. At this time there are _____ dairy farms remaining in the state of which _____ are certified organic. The farm has been in the family since



the early 1900's and today it is a corporation owned by Rick and his siblings. A second and separate incorporated business owned by the family members is a gravel business, which totals about 100 acres of the farm property. Rick has lost about 50 acres of tillable land to the gravel business and continues to give up additional farmland when more gravel acreage needs to be put into production.

The farm consists of 300 acres wooded land, and the remaining tillable/open land is used for corn silage (65A), Alfalfa (76A), grass hay (200A) and pasture (160A). This year Rick and Morv Allen (whose farm will also be toured at this year's NODPA Field Days) are going to collaborate on some of the cropping needs and corn planting. Some of the

land that Rick owns is right next to Morv's farm in Massachusetts (5 miles from the Connecticut farm), so this partnership should be beneficial to both parties. Rick has raised soybeans in the past, but had some issues with flooding the last few years, which devastated the crop. This year, he would like to plant some flax seed as a nurse crop hoping it will increase the omega-3 values of the forages grown. Along with the dairy cows, Rick has been raising some Hereford dairy crosses for a small, but growing organic beef market.

Most of the dairy cows are Holsteins, though there are some Holstein/Jersey and Holstein/Hereford crosses. Cows are housed in a freestall barn, bedded with sand, and milked in a double six herring-bone parlor. At one time, he was milking 200 cows 3 times a day, but reduced his cow numbers to match the readily available pasture on the farm, as the cost for land (to purchase or rent) is incredibly high in his area. At one time Rick mixed lime in with the sand, but the pH of his soil went over 7.0 and his Magnesium levels (using high Magnesium lime) were way out of balance with his calcium, so this practice had to end.

(Continued on page 19)

(Continued from Featured Farm—
Segalla Farm, page 18)

Feeding cows and calves

During the winter months, the cows are fed a corn silage/haylage/16% grain TMR (Total Mixed Ration). All but 6 lbs of grain is mixed into the TMR and the rest of the grain is offered in the parlor; 3 lbs per milking per cow. During the summer time, cows go out to pasture and have the option to return to the barn for a small amount of TMR. When the cows are on pasture, the % protein in the grain goes down to 12%. The TMR is fed out three different times over the day meaning that the feed gets cleaned up quickly, the cows are not slug feeding any one type of feed, and they are encouraged to go to pasture and graze in order to get their fill.

Calves are raised in groups of 4-6 and are fed milk from a bottle at the beginning and then learn to drink out of pails. From day one, the calves are offered hay and at 30 days, they are offered grain. The calves are weaned at 60 days and are out to pasture between 6-9 months of age depending on the time of year.

Basic Farming Philosophy and Attention to Herd Health

Rick's basic philosophy to farming is to keep the operation simple and not push the cows for high production. He raises all his own heifers, has had a closed herd for 20 years, vaccinates calves for pink eye plus the 9-way vaccine at pasture time, trims feet as needed and uses DHIA as a farm management/record keeping tool. Cows are bred naturally with Holstein bulls (and the occasional Hereford bull that sneaks over from their small beef herd). Traits that he breeds for are longevity and good production traits. The bull will spend its first season with the heifers, then will graduate to the cows during the second season and will go down the road after that.

Milk quality is excellent with Somatic Cell Count running around 140,000. To maintain quality, Rick makes sure that the problem cow does not go into the tank, applies good milking practices and equipment maintenance and culls aggressively.

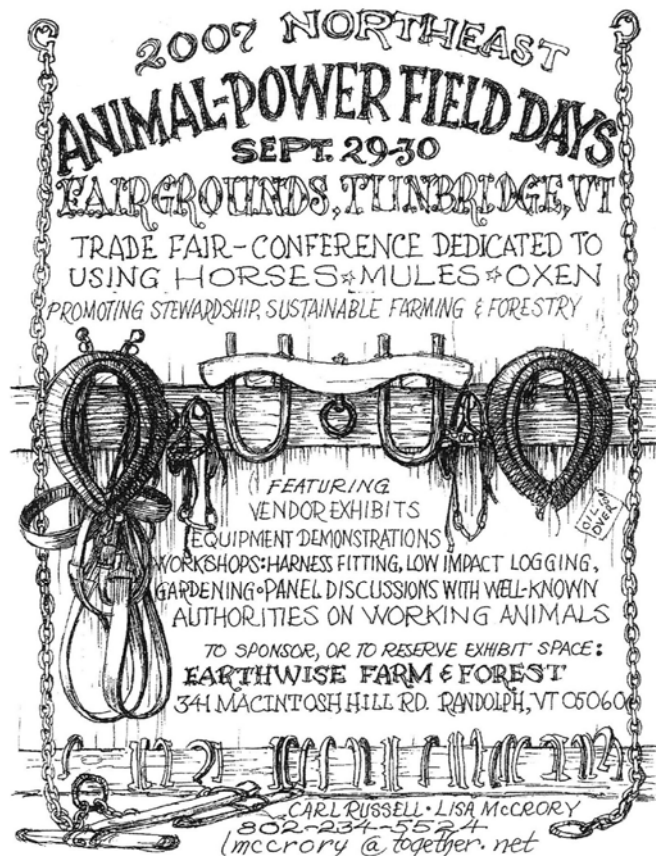
"You need healthy soils to produce healthy crops and pastures", says Rick. "Once you have that, you are sure



to have healthy cows. Rick is not afraid to have a couple weeds in his feed; "it provides a broader spectrum of minerals in the diet", says Rick.

Involvement with NODPA and Looking into the Future

Rick has traveled to numerous Midwest and west coast events in the last couple years contributing to the incredible efforts of establishing a national network of organic dairy producers (FOOD Farmers) as well as other regional organic dairy groups (WODPA and MODPA). He made the time to attend the NOSB meetings in the fall of 05 and spring of 06 during times when the pasture standard was being looked at closely and makes it to the NODPA Field Days every year. His leadership, feedback and consistent presence are qualities that seems to permeate the NODPA membership as a whole. It seems only right that we bring the 2007 NODPA Field Days to Rick's doorstep this August. ♦



Nutrient Availability and Soil Tests

*By Klass Martens from the November 2006 PASA
3 day soil fertility workshop with Neal Kinsey*

Next to weed control, interpreting soil tests and deciding which fertilizers to use are THE most common questions that organic farmers struggle with. There are some very important differences between fertility management strategies we use on organic farms and those used on conventional farms but the basics are still the same. When you get back soil test results, they will give you levels of calcium, magnesium, potassium, hydrogen, pH, CEC, phosphorus, and often sulfur, sodium, zinc, iron, manganese, copper, boron, and aluminum. In addition, many tests report "base saturation" percentages of the major cations. If they are all testing for the same things, then why are there such big differences between the numbers you get from different labs? Neal Kinsey explains it this way: If you see a word that is written in English, and then see the same word written in French, German, and Spanish, even though each different language uses the same 26 letters and appear similar, they will look like 4 different words and make no sense to you unless you can read the language that the word is written in. Looking at different soil test reports is a lot like seeing different languages in print. They may all say the same thing using the same set of letters and numbers but will appear different until you have learned how to read them. Even 'percent base saturations' may not be calculated the same way by each lab that reports them. For this reason, there are no 'right' or 'wrong' soil test labs to use. You just need to learn how to understand the reports from the lab you decide to use, and realize that comparing results from different labs may be confusing.

Most fertilizer programs are based on something called "The law of the minimum". This is a theory that says that crop yields will be limited by whatever element is in the shortest supply. Often an illustration of a barrel with several broken staves is used to explain this. The barrel can only hold as much water as the shortest stave, no matter how high the others are.


We all know that often the most limiting factor is not a mineral element at all, but instead is rainfall. We also know that it is possible to have so much rainfall that yields are lowered by it. That illustrates a less known and understood law called "The law of the maximum". This law states that when you have an excess of one thing, it will cause something else to become short. In the case of too much water, this causes a shortage of soil oxygen which limits yields. With fertilizers, the interactions aren't always as obvious or as simple as with too much rain, but they can hurt your crops just as

much. That is why when a little is good, a lot more may not be better - it may cause a disaster instead.

Soil tests are as important for avoiding excesses as they are for determining what is deficient. Organic fertilizers like compost and manures contain many different minerals. That is usually an advantage because we put on trace elements along with the major elements whenever we fertilize with these materials. However, when we already have an excess of something, putting even more of it on can cause trouble even if the material we use contains something else that we really need. Putting on too much of something is often much worse than having a shortage and can cost you in at least three ways: First, buying the unneeded material wastes money, second it lowers yields and quality, and third it may cost even more money to correct the imbalance caused by the over-application of fertilizer.

An excess of some materials can cause things you need to leach out or be tied up. That not only costs you in lost fertility, but can also impact water quality. Excess nitrogen can cause calcium or potassium to leach out of the soil and cause loss of organic matter. Excess sulfur can leach out many of the cations on the soil colloids. Excessive phosphorus ties up zinc, excessive po-

(Continued on page 21)



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(Continued from Nutrient Availability and Soil Tests, page 20)

tassium can tie up magnesium, and excessive magnesium ties up everything including magnesium! Excessive calcium can do the same. Even something as good as organic matter can be overdone – if the organic matter has too wide a carbon-to-nitrogen ratio, it can tie up nitrogen so severely as to cause crop damage. Too much organic matter can also cause weed problems.

It is important to not put on materials unless you know what nutrients they actually contain. There is a tremendous possible range in nutrient content in materials like manure and compost. For this reason, it is important to test each amendment before application to soil. Be sure you understand whether the test results are on a 'dry matter basis' or 'as is'. If the test is on a dry matter basis, and you are putting on something with varying moisture like compost, you will have to take the moisture level into account by varying the application rate.

Klaas Martens, along with his wife Mary-Howell and their three children, farm 1,400 acres of organic grains in the Finger Lakes area of western New York. They also own and operate Lakeview Organic Grain, an organic feed and seed business in Penn Yan, NY. They can be contacted at kandmhfarm@sprintmail.com. ♦

Grain, Grain, Where's the Organic Grain?

By Kathie Arnold

Along with the current big increase in organic milk supply, comes perhaps what could be called a perfect storm to limit a similar increase in organic grain supplies. I recently had an opportunity to testify before the Senate Ag Committee on behalf of organic needs for the 2007 Farm Bill and had a chance to visit with Lynn Clarkson, who was also testifying. Mr. Clarkson is current president and founder of Clarkson Grain Co., Inc. in Illinois. In the business of contracting with grain growers and supplying organic, non-GMO, and conventional grains domestically and internationally, he is in a position to know what is going on in the grain business. He related that he is concerned that the supply of domestic organic grain may actually go down this year as he sees farmers deciding to make the switch from organic grain production back to conventional because of what they are perceiving as less risk with conventional production. With the government subsidies for corn based ethanol, conventional corn prices have been driven to record heights that look very attractive. And crop insurance, although not working very well for conventional producers, works considerably poorer as a risk management tool for organic grain growers.

That was made clear to me by Rick Glenister, a grain grower from Moravia, NY that we buy from who has this to say: "While transitioning to organic grain farming, I recognized just how vulnerable crop farmers are since their income and financial survival depends on just the current crop season. Therefore in late 2004 I began researching crop insurance options for the 2005 season. After studying the various crop insurance programs it became clear to me that none of the policies really offered very much effective protection at affordable premiums. Nonetheless I enrolled in the standard corn and soybean policies thinking that some insurance was better than none.

Unfortunately the 2005 season was exactly the kind of drought year that tests a farmer's mental health. You could practically draw a line running east west across Central New York about half way between Auburn and Ithaca with record drought to the south and perfect growing conditions to the north. I could stand here in my dooryard and hear the thunderstorms pass to the north just out of reach. Of the 10.6 inches we received that growing season (our average is 16-18) 6 inches came on or before June 12th (with 3 inches in one event) and the remaining 4 inches two days after Katrina de-



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UNTREATED SEED ALSO AVAILABLE

(Continued from *Where's the Organic Grain?* page 21)

stroyed New Orleans on the 29th of August. Remarkably there was enough moisture in the soil that the earlier planted corn pollinated and made a partial crop (about 50%). The soybeans, however, while they managed to grow plants, simply didn't set seed so that there were empty pods but very few beans. In my case, what should have been an expected 2100 bushels was only 398 which includes the 2 Bu/A field losses (they even count those beans you lose during harvest).

Now the typical crop insurance policy is written such that it guarantees some level of yield (in my case 55%) if the yield is below a certain trigger level (45%) adjusted for any actual yield. You can purchase higher levels of protection but the premiums increase dramatically and are unaffordable. In the case of the corn, since the yield (47%) didn't drop below the trigger level I couldn't recover. For the soybeans the actual yield was 4.9 Bu/A instead of the guaranteed 26 Bu/A. As a consequence, instead of a \$30,000 soybean crop, I recovered \$3418 in crop insurance, enough to pay for the seed used but almost nothing for the land rent, taxes, fuel and labor.

My part of the policy premium was \$689 and the government's portion was \$1705 for a total premium of \$2494. In addition, my premiums for the next year

were doubled so the company recovered any loss and in effect punished me for the weather."

Not only do organic crop producers have to pay a 5% surcharge for crop insurance, but they are most often reimbursed for crop loss at the conventional price, not the organic price for the crop. Both Mr. Clarkson and I testified before the Senate Ag Committee that changes in the crop insurance program for organic producers are sorely needed.

Here in NY, NOFA-NY has no new grain growing applicants to be certified this year so it looks like the impetus to convert more grain acreage is nowhere in sight for the time being. So here we have it—increased demand for organic livestock feeds matched with a likely stagnant domestic organic grain supply. Supply and demand does seem to be alive and well in the grain market so we are no doubt going to see organic grain prices continuing to increase until the prices get high enough to encourage more acres into organic production—which may not be until 2008 or beyond.

So what is your game-plan to weather the year with higher organic grain prices? Those who are 100% grassfed don't have to change a thing but the rest of us

(Continued on page 23)



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(Continued from *Where's the Organic Grain?*, page 22)

had better sharpen our pencils and plan ahead and think about how we can put more high quality pasture and grass into our animals and less grain.

Sumner Watson, of Cold Springs Farm in Sharon Springs, NY who processes and sells bulk and bagged organic grain, related that he has clearly seen a correlation between those farms who buy lots of high protein feed being the ones who are building his unfortunately long list of accounts receivable versus the producers who buy little high protein grains being the ones who are paid up. This shows that there may be real opportunity on some farms for reformulating rations to use lower protein feeds which are cheaper and / or less grain over all and yet still have a better bottom line.

At Twin Oaks Dairy, we take the higher protein grain out of the ration for May and June while the cows are consuming large amounts of pasture and then keep the level reduced compared to the winter ration for the rest of the grazing season. We also have not used corn silage in many years and believe that we can do better economically by raising much of our own protein through high quality grass / legume crops and buying energy feeds like corn and barley that, while expensive, are far cheaper than soy meal.

It has been years since we have fed any soybean feed.

We use wheat midds as an economical protein source and when they are unavailable, we turn to field peas, sunflower meal, and we have used linseed meal with good success.

With higher grain prices, pencil pushing to determine economic levels of grain feeding will be necessary. And in any changing environment, it behooves producers to rethink their strategies and management and consider alternatives.

Kathie Arnold is the Policy Committee Chair for NODPA. She, her husband, and brother-in-law have been shipping organic milk from their Truxton, NY farm since 1998.♦

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Research and Education

2007 NESARE Grants to Keep an Eye On

By Lisa McCrory

It is always nice to stay apprised of interesting projects taking place in the Northeast; especially this year as there are many grant projects funded for 2007 that would be beneficial for organic dairy operations. Below is a summary of grants that have been funded by the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (NESARE). To see the full listing, visit the NESARE web site: www.uvm.edu/~nesare.

FARMER GRANTS are awarded to farmers conducting projects that explore improved stewardship, increased profits and benefits through outreach to the wider community. Grants are capped at \$10,000 run 1-2 years and are due in December. Below are some grants that may be of interest to our readers.

FNE07-597 Japanese Mille Seed Harvest, *Brent Beidler, Randolph Center, VT*. Japanese millet is a warm-season annual crop that can be used on Northeast farms as a green manure smother crop, and livestock or wildlife feed. Currently there are no certified organic seed sources available, and the project manager will explore the feasibility of producing millet seed as a seed crop for possible crop diversification and will compare two harvest methods to determine the advantages of each method under Northeast conditions. (\$5,682)

FNE07-602 Interseeding Legume and Grain Crops with High Oil Content Sunflower, *Dorn Cox, Lee, NH*. Northeast farmers have found that they can successfully grow high-oil-content sunflowers for use as animal feed and for biodiesel production, but late-season weed control is an issue, as are the long drying season required and the inability to seed a winter crop, which leaves the soil vulnerable. This project will explore options of interseeding small grains and legumes that will smother weeds and provide a winter cover. (\$8,633)

FNE07-611 No-till Seeding of Cover Crops into Standing Soybeans, *Edward Kuckuck, Indiana, PA*. This project will research the optimum planting dates for seeding cover crops into standing soybeans, and will evaluate the performance of the cover crop and the corn crop grown the following year. (\$558)

FNE07-613 A Vermont Farmers Breeding Club: Developing Varieties That Work For Us, *Jack Lazor, Westfield, VT*. Few grain varieties are being developed for organic farmers in the Northeast. Most grain varieties are bred in areas with climates and soils that are very different from the Northeast, are often the property of private seed companies, and are hybrids, making it impossible for farmers to save their own seed. This project will train a group of farmers in wheat breeding, selections skills, and seed-increase techniques so that north-eastern farmers can start grain breeding projects on their own farms. (\$7,950)

FNE07-623 Improving Forage Quality by Seeding Through Liquid Manure Applications, *Roger Whitney, Corrina, ME*. Northeast dairy farms often have land that erodes easily of land that is unsuited to cultivation in perennial sods. This project will look at the feasibility of improving existing stands on such land through introducing improved species, and getting higher-quality forage, by seeding during manure applications. (\$4,146)

PARTNERSHIP GRANTS are awarded for on-farm research and demonstration projects developed by agricultural professionals who work directly with farmers. Grants are capped at \$10,000 and proposals are due in November. Below are some grants that may be of interest to our readers.

ONE07-070 Fenceless Grazing, *Christopher Dutton, Vermont Technical College*. Fencing is expensive to install and maintain, but technology costs are falling and new uses emerge for existing devices. The project manager will test whether invisible fencing, commonly used with dogs, can be modified for use with young heifers by using a double-fence system to monitor its effectiveness and encourage better managed grazing. (10,000)

ONO07-076 Improving Air Quality and Dairy Profitability Through Reduced Protein Feeding, *Eugene Schurman, Pennsylvania State University*. Twelve dairy farmers will take part in this study to see if feeding less protein to lactating dairy cows will result in better herd health, lower costs, and reduced ammonia emissions. The project manager will monitor feed content, milk urea nitrogen levels, bufferfat content, overall yield and reproductive performance. (\$9,997)

(Continued on page 25)

(Continued from NESARE Grants, page 24)

RESEARCH AND EDUCATION GRANTS usually run several years with specific performance targets. Pre-proposals are due May 31st. Below are some grants that may be of interest to our readers.

LNE07-252 Learning from Farmer Innovation in Nitrogen Fixation for Improved Nutrient Management on Organic Farms, *Laurie Drinkwater, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY*. The project manager will survey the use and effectiveness of biological nitrogen fixation on working farms, work closely with farmers to evaluate their soil management techniques, and offer workshops and a regular media column to educate farmers about green manures. (\$99,108)

LNE07-257 Assessing Pasture Grasses, Legumes and Pasture Blends for Varying Soil Conditions in New England and Pennsylvania, *Stephen Herbert, UMass Amherst, Amherst, MA*. The project manager will evaluate forages, including new varieties, and conduct uniform trials in Massachusetts, Vermont, and Pennsylvania. He will also encourage more than 50 pasture producers in the evaluation process and its results. (\$211,989)

LNE07-258 Empowering Dairy Farmers to Build a Cottage Industry, *Heather House, Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture*. Over the past four years, PASA has been working with dairy farmers to explore the economics of adding value to their milk in the form of cheese, yogurt, ice cream, butter, and other products. This grant will move this effort forward with field days, intensive learning and workshops with and emphasis on testing recipes, branding and quality. (\$116,901)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS usually run several years and are designed to achieve specific outcomes. Pre-proposals are due May 31st. Below are some grants that may be of interest to our readers.

ENE07-102 Carbon Trading Provides New Market Opportunities for Agriculture, *Robert Aman, Central New York Resource Conservation and Development Project*. Farmers are positioned to sell carbon credits when they adopt certain sustainable practices, although many farmers don't understand how the credit process works. The project manager will train agricultural educators in the carbon trading value of different farm practices and the compliance issues involved. (\$112,927)

ENE07-104 Whole Farm Nutrient Planning for Organic farms, *Elisa Sanchez, Pennsylvania State*

University. Sustainable nutrient management on organic farms is challenging, and the project will offer a year-long intensive training for ten agricultural professionals focusing on developing soil, compost, and tissue analysis recommendations for organic farmers, and to evaluate three whole-farm nutrient planning tools using situations common on organic farms. (\$96,756)

ENE07-105 Building Capacity in Whole-Farm Systems and Planning using Holistic Management Framework, *Seth Wilner, University of New Hampshire*. This project builds on previous SARE projects in the Northeast and in the North Central Regions in whole-farm management. The project manager will train 24 participants to use a systems approach in their work with farmers. Study areas will include whole-farm planning, financial planning, evaluations of land and ecosystem health, monitoring, grazing planning, and a systems approach to management. (\$171,923) ♦

The Organic Farming Research Foundation Grants

The OFRF program is open to all applicants residing in Canada, Mexico and the United States. OFRF particularly encourages farmers, ranchers, researchers, and extension personnel to consider applying for funding. Farmers and ranchers often find that working with professional researchers can make it easier to design and carry out a research project, and OFRF encourages applications from such partnerships.

Proposals are considered twice a year. The deadlines and notification dates for the next granting cycles is: **Proposal due date-** July 16, 2007; **Applicants will be notified by-** Dec. 1, 2007

This request for proposals is open to any agricultural production, social, economic, or policy-related topic of concern to organic farmers and/or ranchers. OFRF supports research that is relevant to and takes place in certified organic systems. OFRF does not normally fund studies that compare conventional with organic systems as a primary objective.

OFRF has identified the following as areas of particular interest:

- Organic livestock systems;
- Economic constraints and opportunities relevant to the viability of small- and medium-scale organic farms and ranches;
- Projects that investigate the interactions between components of organic systems and that take a systems-management (rather than an in

(Continued on page 27)

New York Farmers Puzzled By Preliminary Incubation

by Liz Bawden

Trying to get a handle on those erratic PI counts gives most of us a few more gray hairs from time to time. How is it possible, producers ask, that a farm may go along with 2 or 3 thousand counts, then leap up to over a million for no apparent reason. Then, just as mysteriously, the counts drop off and are back in line again. OK, you are a farmer who tries to take care of business, and so you round up the usual suspects: you check your cooler to see that it's cooling the milk down fast enough, you make sure the washer (automatic or manual) is doing the job correctly, you take apart and clean the bulk tank valves, you take a bit more care prepping the cows, you check the hot water temperature, and so on. It's likely that it all seems to make no difference. Talk to any organic producer about PI, and the bewildered stories of frustration come forth.

But it all costs us in the premiums lost. And now in this time of milk surplus, at least one processor has decided that it is a good time to do a little "housecleaning". That is, producers were given 30 days to get their counts into line, or they are off the truck. Now it's safe to say that we are all in favor of good quality milk, and should strive for the best quality we can. But on the other hand, we can empathize with farmers whose livelihood may be seriously impacted by these lab tests which we don't completely understand. We certainly lack control over the samples, and our experience has made us feel that the test results may not be entirely trustworthy.

It's easy to simply blame the milk truck driver and the system which ferries the samples to the lab. While that certainly deserves some scrutiny, I list here some lessons a few of us learned over the years. It has been our personal experience that PI is generally associated with the cleanliness of the cooler. The places to check first are the bulk tank valve assembly, dipstick, and agitator. Your cleaners may not be doing the job. Test your water for hardness, and if it is more than 18 grains of hardness, then liquid cleaners may not be strong enough. At our farm, we have 33 grains of hardness, and must use a strong powdered cleaner. If your water heater is not up to the recommended temperature, your field inspector will

already have told you about that. But the recovery of the water heater and the water supply should be considered in the operation of the washer. For example, if you run the automatic washer when all the cows stop for a drink at the water trough as you bring them in for milking, you won't have the volume of water to make it wash properly. Our water has an extremely high iron content; this will burn out the bottom element of a electric hot water heater in 6 months. It also clogs and restricts water flow in the anti-siphoning valve that you have in the barn. If you have high amounts of sulphur in your water, it needs to be filtered, as it can cause a high PI. Black rubber milk hoses have the potential to ruin your milk quality as they degrade relatively quickly with strong cleaners.

We can all applaud studies like the one in Maine that attempt to reveal the facts. A better understanding of the cause of high PI counts, sample handling, and laboratory parameters and procedures will help us all do a better job of providing the highest quality milk for our consumers.

Liz Bawden is a NODPA Representative and farms with her husband Brian in Hammond NY ♦

Preliminary Incubation Study Funded by Horizon Organic

*By Mia Morrison, Executive Director,
Maine Organic Milk Producers*



The Maine Organic Milk Producers (MOMP) organization is working in cooperation with the Maine Department of Agriculture (MDOA) and University of Maine (UM) to conduct a study looking at Preliminary Incubation (PI) count. PI count is done by dairy processors to determine the number of cold loving bacteria or psychrotrophic bacteria in milk. These bacteria grow well at refrigerator temperatures.

The psychrotrophic bacteria that cause high PI are present in soil, on plants, and on the cow herself. This means that the source of a high count could stem from udder prep, milking system, cooling system, to even the water supply. Because of this, sourcing problems can be very frustrating. PI count can represent up to \$1.125 cwt on the milk check for the highest level of quality under some contracts, making it important to understand

(Continued on page 27)

(Continued from Horizon PI Study, page 26)

where any high counts are coming from.

Maine farmers have wondered what other variables might be important to investigate. MOMP met with Don Hoenig, state veterinarian and Gary Anderson, University of Maine to discuss these issues. MOMP decided to conduct a study in coordination with MDOA and UM to look at all the variables: farm, sample transport, lab, and time. Horizon Organic is generously funding this study that will test 24 farms for 4 weeks. Split samples will be sent to 3 different labs. The samples will also travel varying distances using different methods of transport (short distance courier, long distance courier, FedEx, and UPS). In addition, some samples will start being tested upon arrival, and again after sitting for 24 hours to look at the affects of time.

The results of this study will offer a broad brush view of where to focus further investigation. ♦

(Continued from OFRF, page 25)

put-substitution)

- approach to solving production problems.

If you have additional questions, you may write to, call, or e-mail the OFRF office, phone 831-426-6606, email jane@ofrf.org

SCOAR's National Organic Research Agenda

After several years in preparation, OFRF will soon publish its National Organic Research Agenda, a project of the Scientific Congress on Organic Agricultural Research (SCOAR). This document compiles the priority research topics identified by the organic farmers, ranchers, and researchers brought together at a series of SCOAR meetings beginning in 2001, and provides context for understanding these topics. The general subject areas covered are Soil: Microbial Life, Fertility Management, and Soil Quality; Systemic Management of Plant Pests: Weeds, Insects and Diseases; Organic Livestock and Poultry Management Systems; and Breeding and Genetics. A pre-publication draft is available online at:

http://ofrf.org/networks/scoar_products/nora2007_formatted_final.pdf

The manuscript is currently being designed and will be printed and released in its final format by mid-May 2007. For more information, contact OFRF at: phone: 831-426-6606 or info@ofrf.org. ♦

(Continued from Measuring 30% DM, page 7)

For those producers who still like to supplement their pasture with a TMR ration, here is another calculation.

Example 2: a herd of 60 cows weighing an average of 1300 lbs. They each need approximately 45.5 lbs of dry matter per day ($1300 \times .035 = 45.5$ lbs). The cows are fed a TMR ration that includes 40 lbs of haylage/cornsilage (40% dry matter) and 14 lbs of grain (90% dry matter).

Expected dry matter intake per cow: 45.5 lbs
 -minus dry matter intake from grain -12.6
 -minus dry matter intake from silage -16.0
 Total dry matter from pasture = 16.9 lbs

To determine the % dry matter from pasture: 16.9 divided by 45.5 = **37% of the daily ration = pasture**

Whether or not your certifier or processor is asking you for a pasture dry matter calculation, I recommend you work on making these determinations for your farm. Work with your nutritionist, ask your local Extension agent to help you, or contact your local organic dairy technical outreach person available through MOFGA, NOFA-VT, NOFA-NY, PCO, NOFA-Mass and NOFA-NH. It is best to know where you stand now so that you can start planning for any adjustments that may need to be implemented within the next year or so (optimistic, aren't I?). I am sure most dairy graziers will find that they are well over the 30% minimum standard, so don't be intimidated by doing the calculations for your farm; I am sure you will be pleasantly surprised.

CURRENT REGULATION AND DEFINITION:

Definition of pasture as written by the NOP in the definition section of the rule: Land used for livestock grazing that is managed to provide feed value and maintain or improve soil, water, and vegetative resources.

205.238 Livestock Health Care Standards

(a)(3) Establishment of appropriate housing, pasture conditions, and sanitation practices to minimize the occurrence and spread of diseases and parasites;

§ 205.237 Livestock feed. --

The producer of an organic livestock operation must

(Continued on page 32)

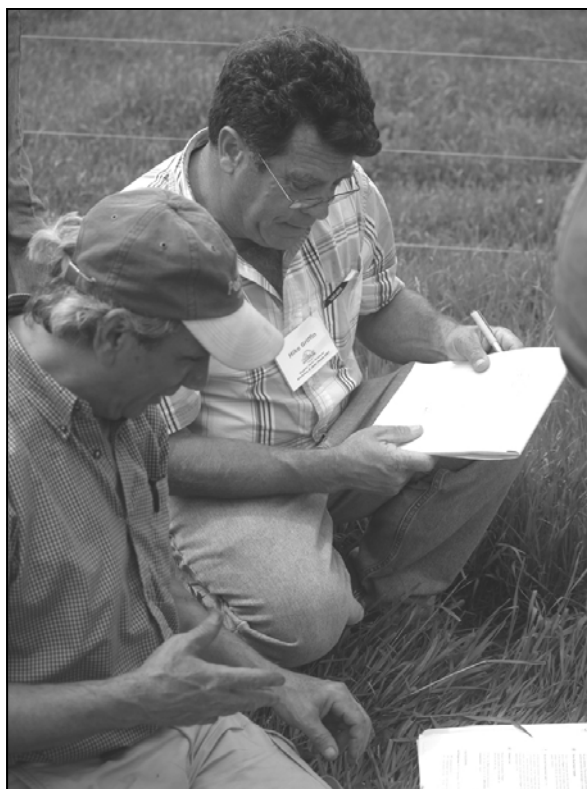
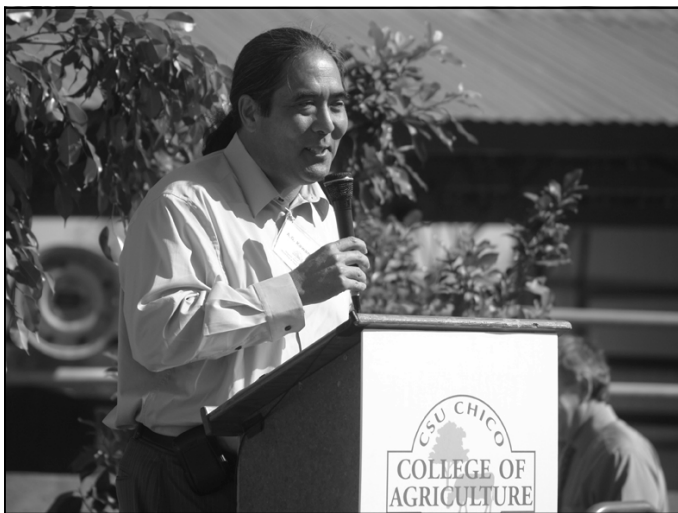
Grand Opening: California State University's New Organic Dairy Program



The Open House was the kick-off program to celebrating the opening of Chico's new organic dairy program, sponsored by California State University, Chico Agriculture Research Initiative, College of Agriculture and Organic Valley Family of Farms. The Open House featured the dedication program and provided tours to over 350 consumers including elementary kids, FFA students, students, staff and faculty from the campus and the community. Tours provided milking demonstrations, calf feeding/holistic calf programs, pasture management, organic milk production and milk quality.

Invited speakers included the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, A.G. Kawamura, Paul Zingg, President of the CSU Chico campus and Theresa Marquez, Chief Marketing Executive from OV. Each speaker focused on the importance of developing educational programs in organics to promote sustainable agriculture and to facilitate healthy eating.

Hands-on" workshops were provided detailing the importance of soil nutrition, pasture management and holistic herd health programs. Speakers included Jerry Brunetti, Agri-Dynamics, Inc., Sarah Flack, Northeast Organic Farmers Association of Vermont, and Dr. Will Winters, of Traditional Foods of Minnesota. We attracted organic producers from Washington, Oregon, and California for the 2-day program. ♦



Commentary

'Commentary' is an open forum for sharing thoughts, opinions, concerns, and whatever else inspires you. Please send your submissions, up to 1,000 words, to the Editor (see page 2 for contact information). The views expressed below are those of the author(s) and in no way represent the official views of NODPA or any of its representatives.

Private-Label Organic Milk —A Great Thing?

Organic milk for \$2.99 a half gallon proclaims the Price Chopper flier that came with Saturday's newspaper. It says "Discover the taste of pure organic milk from cows not treated with antibiotics or rBGH. Our farmers give their cows fresh air, clean water, sunshine, exercise and a vegetarian diet so you get great tasting milk." That's great isn't it? Well, it depends on your outlook.

It's not *great news* if you are looking for locally produced milk, that is. This Wild Oats brand that my local central New York grocery store will now carry is not from cows here in New York. It's not from cows milked in Pennsylvania, or Vermont, or Maine or anywhere here in the Northeast. It's not even from cows in the Midwest. It is coming from a plant nearly 1800 miles away in Platteville, Colorado, from cows milked in Texas and Colorado.

It's not *great news* if you want to support family farms and think this milk is from family farms, that is. Wild Oats brand organic milk is supplied by a company called Aurora Organic Dairy—and it's definitely not the consumer's expected vision of a family owned and operated farm. Rather it is a corporation with a growing number of multi-thousand cow organic operations, a corporation that has received over \$30 million in funding from Charlesbank Capital Partners, a private equity firm, with Harvard University's endowment fund a major client.

Aurora has had a 4200 head drylot dairy in Platteville, Colorado (but they've said numbers will be reduced there), 2900 + cows in Dublin, Texas, already or soon on line will be a 3200 cow operation in Kersey, Colorado, and one of Aurora's conventional operations in the South is reportedly in transition. The two principles in Aurora Organic are Marc Peperzak, who was the largest operator of conventional confinement dairies in the country in the mid 1990s, and Mark Retzliff, a millionaire financier with interests in organic processing

and marketing. Both had partnered previously in founding Horizon Organic, before its sale to Dean Foods, netting hundreds of millions of dollars.

It's not *great news* if you want your organic milk to be from cows who receive a significant amount of their food from pasture, that is. Last April, at the USDA Pasture Symposium, Juan Velez, Vice President of Farm Operations at Aurora, testified "*Last year we calculated, guesstimated, that our dry matter consumption for some of the lactating cows was around 5 percent in our Texas herd and between 3 and 5 percent in our Colorado herd during the lactating period.*" When staff from The Cornucopia Institute visited Aurora's Colorado operation during the grazing season in 2005 they found that only 1-2% of their 6000-8000 animals were on pasture.

It's also not *great news* if you expect that once an operation has transitioned to organic, that all of the replacement animals coming into the certified herd have been under organic management their whole lives. Cornucopia's investigation also found that Aurora "transitions" year-old conventional born and raised heifers, bringing them in as replacement animals. While organic dairy family farms from around the country have been overwhelmingly in favor of an immediate closing of the loophole that has allowed a few operations to get around the requirement that all replacement animals be organic from the last third of their gestation, Aurora has not yet been willing to give similar commitment.

The Wild Oats milk on the store shelves along with other private-label brand milk (such as Woodstock Farms and store brands for Safeway, Walmart, Target, Costco, and others), that is produced by operators that exploit the lack of clarity in the current organic rules and undermine the integrity of the organic standards, are a real threat to family farms. Kudos and recognition should be given to other retailers like Whole Foods, Hannaford Brothers, and Wegmans for sourcing their store brand organic milk from regional family farmers.

The availability of the cheaper, anonymous store brand milk is causing retailers to not be so eager to put brand name organic milk that is supplied by family farms on their shelves nor are they as likely to carry multiple brand names of organic milk any more.

The Wild Oats milk is up to a dollar or more cheaper than brand name cartons that hold family farm milk. Many competitive advantages are rolled together to allow this lower price. Store brands do not have to pay the slotting fees (which may be \$10,000 to \$15,000) to get their milk on store shelves that many retail chains are now requiring of brand name milk. Retailers often

(Continued on page 30)

(Continued from private-label organic milk, page 29)

take a lower profit margin on their store / private label brands and private label brands typically do not spend money on advertising. Aurora, being a vertically integrated company, owning everything from the cows up through the processing plant, has the economic advantages that provides. And, being a processor / handler exempts them from paying federal milk marketing order pooling costs that adds up to a large amount of money that all the other processors have to pay, that has to be passed on through to the consumer. Then of course there are the efficiencies of large scale, volume purchasing for many thousands of cows, taking advantage of weakness in the organic standards, as well as the advantage of access to large amounts of capital to fuel continued expansion.

Organic dairy farmers, processors and consumers who care about the integrity of the organic label must stick together and continue to demand that the USDA enforce the current organic regulations and ensure that the updated pasture rule, yet to be published, will require organic livestock to consume a quantifiable amount of pasture. Dairy farmers, processors and our consumers fully understand that the organic standards require the consumption of a significant amount of pasture and organic care from birth for organic calves and their mothers. We cannot allow any operators, including the politically powerful, to place ethical farmers at a competitive disadvantage.

Kathie Arnold

Truxton, NY

Organic Valley Pasture Standard

To the Organic Dairy Community

I am reaching out to the organic dairy community to clarify the pasture standards for CROPP Cooperative the supplier of the Organic Valley brand as well as many other leading brands. Our farmers have always advocated a strong enforceable pasture standard. Our dairy and Board leadership first clarified our pasture requirement starting in 1995 and have continued to strengthen that standard. We adopted the 30% dry matter in 2005 and are strong advocates for it. We have testified before NOSB and provided written input at every opportunity.

Recently we took part in a consensus building amongst a group of processors and signed on to a strong pasture standard but it did not include the 30%. That recommendation clearly said that certain of the parties (OV) advocated for a stricter standard but we all felt that establishing a consensus was necessary to show

agreement of the importance of pasture. This exercise was to unify the organic dairy but in no way did we change our pasture standards. We felt that it was important to work towards unifying the organic dairy community and that the consensus standards were very strong standards that narrow the final debate toward a very high standard.

I am enclosing our internal policy to clarify what has been and still is our pasture standard. In 2007 we will be visiting all of our dairy and egg farmers to audit their compliance with our internal standards for pasture and access to outdoors. Our farmers feel strongly that the integrity of the Organic Valley brand is critical to their beliefs and to market strength.

The pasture debate has been very damaging to the ability to work together for the good of the organic community. Now that there is agreement to the importance of pasture we believe it is important to have an open dialogue of all parties to come to a consensus. To that end the same group of processors will be sponsoring a phone conference to discuss and forge a common understanding of the proposed rule once it is released by the USDA. We are asking for reps of the many stakeholders to identify a representative or two to participate in that. Certainly the representative groups that make up the new FOOD will be invited as well as reps from the different milk handlers and procurement organizations.

It is important to see the progress made on this controversial subject and to work towards not harming the reputation of organic dairy. The integrity of organic dairy is paramount to the well being of the many family farmers and we should all be proud to have been part of sending such a clear message about the importance of pasture in organic dairy. No matter what standard the USDA comes up with, our farmers will continue to be required to live up to our own internal standards.

Cooperatively,
George Siemon,
CEO Organic Valley

CROPP COOPERATIVE PASTURE POLICY Pasture Requirement

Organics is about integrity and commitment to sustainable farming. CROPP producers sign the CROPP membership agreement and are bound to abide by any additional standards approved by the CROPP Board. The CROPP Board and the Dairy Executive Committee have decided adequate pasture is a critical organic principle within organic livestock production. The following policy is a requirement for all CROPP dairy pool

(Continued on page 31)

(Continued from Organic Valley/CROPP standards, page 30)

members. A Farm Pasture Plan must be on file for each member, demonstrating compliance with the Pasture Standards. Any members that do not satisfy the pasture standard will be enrolled in a Work Improvement Plan in order to come into compliance within one year.

Definition of Pasture

A pasture consists of a mixture of nutritious grasses, legumes and variable plant species, attached to their respective root systems. Pasture must be managed to prevent degradation of soil and water quality.

CROPP Pasture Standards

1. A lactating cow must be provided 120 days on pasture per each growing season.
2. A minimum average of 30% dry matter intake of the total lactating cow's diet must come from grazed pasture during that region's grazing season.
3. The stocking rate for pasture is a maximum of three (3) lactating cows per acre of pasture. (If you can demonstrate a higher stocking rate is sustainable on your farm, that will be acceptable.)
4. Dry cows must have a least 30 days access to pasture if that coincides with the grazing period for that region.
5. Young animals must have some introduction to pasture after six months of age. After one year of age, they must have access to pasture, coinciding with that region's grazing period.

Farm Pasture Plan Requirements

1. Ruminant livestock must have access to graze pasture during the months of the year when pasture provides edible forage, and the grazed feed must provide a **significant** portion of the feed requirements during those months but no less than a minimum average of 30% dry matter. The Farm Pasture Plan must illustrate how the producer will **optimize** the pasture component of the total feed used in the farm system. The Farm Pasture Plan must quantify how the CROPP Pasture Standards will be met.
2. The producer of ruminant livestock may be allowed temporary exemption to pasture because of:
 - a. Conditions under which the health, safety, or well-being of the animal could be jeopardized.
 - b. Inclement weather
 - c. Temporary conditions which pose a risk to soil and water quality.
3. The producer of ruminant livestock may be allowed exemption to pasture during the following stages of production:
 - a. Dairy stock under the age of 6 months
 - b. Birthing

Resources:

NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service):

offers guidelines specific to a producer's home locale. Cost-sharing may be available.

CROPP Pasture Mentor Program:

Producers will be available to serve as mentors to help those producers in need of guidance and expertise to expand their pasturing operations.

Dear George,

FOOD Farmers are very pleased with your public unveiling of Organic Valley / CROPP Cooperative's pasture standards, that all Organic Valley members' farm plan's meet the following requirement, (among many other):

"Ruminant livestock must have access to graze pasture during the months of the year when pasture provides edible forage, and the grazed feed must provide a **significant** portion of the feed requirements during those months but no less than a minimum average of 30% dry matter."

We salute Organic Valley for embracing this standard, a standard that has now long been a consensus position for the overwhelming majority of the organic community. We salute OV for recognizing the public process that has taken place in clarifying "access to pasture" and supporting the recommended wording of the NOSB and the many farmer organizations who gave input into that process.

Virtually the whole organic community is supporting required grazing for the growing season, but no less than 120 days, but you, like so many others, have also recognized the necessity of a quantifiable measurement for the consumption of pasture with your support for the 30% dry matter intake (DMI) in 2005 and for being "strong advocates for it".

Organic Valley and the other processor's support and advocacy with the NOSB on so many occasions was a key piece in getting us to where we are today. We now are in a position where, in addition to the time parameter of the growing season which can be no less than 120 days, the following have different levels of support for a minimum 30% DMI:

OV, all the producer groups WODPA, MODPA, and NODPA, and the new umbrella group FOOD Farmers are all advocating for a mandatory minimum of 30% DMI from pasture and are willing to enforce that standard.

The NOSB is on record supporting a minimum 30% DMI, Cooperative grocers across the country have requested 30% minimum DMI,

(Continued on page 32)

(Continued from *FOOD Farmers Reply*, page 31)

Organic consumer groups are insisting on a minimum 30% DMI from pasture,

A myriad number of NGO's are endorsing the same. HP Hood, Dairylea Cooperative, and Dairy Marketing Services require a minimum 30% DMI for their organic producers, but have yet to publicly announce that standard.

Horizon Organic, while promoting pasture as a source of nutrients and actively promoting it as an essential part of organic dairy nutrition in their new "Standards of Care," do not require any minimum amount of consumption of pasture.

Humboldt Dairy supports the 30% minimum DMI from pasture for the growing season..

Aurora Organic Dairy has been quite silent on the issue except for signing the 'processor letter' to USDA which did endorse a minimum of 120 days of grazing per year for organic dairy animals six months of age and older.

There is widespread recognition that the new rule will need to reflect these consensus positions. There is agreement at all levels within the organic community that this issue must be done right—otherwise the whole organic program is at risk of losing the confidence of its consumers. We are particularly pleased that you share our confidence that the 30% dry matter consumption can be measured and have instructed your field reps in how this will be done. We know from talking to certifiers in the Northeast that they are already measuring the consumption of pasture as part of their annual inspections.

Yes, discussion of this issue has brought press interest, but transparency in the debate within the organic community is a good thing. There are no headlines in transparent discussions. The organic community is dedicated to keeping standards high and it should not be the messengers that are chided, but rather we should put our own house in order first.

We totally agree with your statement that "the integrity of organic dairy is paramount to the well being of the many family farmers". FOOD Farmers recognize that Integrity, Consistency and Transparency are indeed paramount. Without them, the organic program is nothing.

As we have discussed before, we welcome being part of a dialogue conference call when the NOP issues a proposed rule. We hope that the processors will accept our previous suggestions to work together and also invite representatives from the consumer and NGO sectors as well. Without consumers willing to buy our organic products, we producers, as well as processors, have NO market. We know that the processors fully recognize that fact and would want to include both the consumers and the organizations that work so tirelessly to educate, advocate, and bring new organic farmers and consumers to the fold

in the discussion as well, as they have as much interest in the outcome of the pasture regulation as we do.

We also are encouraged by your and all the other processors, brands and milk handlers willingness to take part in the organic dairy summit meeting that Federation Of Organic Dairy (FOOD) Farmers is sponsoring. Having processors and producers at the same table discussing these and other issues can only benefit the organic community.

Thanks so much for the leadership you have taken George, when on the NOSB, and as CEO of CROPP Cooperative, for both your work in developing the 30% language presented by the NOSB and for making it come to fruition as the pasture policy of CROPP Cooperative.

Sincerely,
Federation Of Organic Dairy (FOOD) Farmers ♦

(Continued from *Measuring 30% DM*, page 27)

provide livestock with a total feed ration composed of agricultural products, including pasture and forage, that are organically produced and, if applicable, organically handled:

§ 205.239 Livestock living conditions.

(a) The producer of an organic livestock operation must establish and maintain livestock living conditions which accommodate the health and natural behavior of animals, including:

- (1) Access to the outdoors, shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air, and direct sunlight suitable to the species, its stage of production, the climate, and the environment;*
- (2) Access to pasture for ruminants;*

Lisa McCrory works for NOFA-VT as a Dairy and Livestock Technical Advisor and operates Earthwise Farm and Forest in Bethel, VT ♦



Calendar

Permaculture Design Certificate Course June 22-July 7 Advanced Course: July 8 - July 14 Greensboro, VT

Permaculture is a holistic design system for creating sustainable human environments. It offers positive solutions to the problems facing the world by using ecology as the basis for designing integrated systems for food production, housing technology and community development. The instructors, Charles and Julia Yelton will be using Green Mt Monastery as the design model to teach the principles of permaculture which can then be applied to one's own specific place. Contact: NOFA-NY for more information. <http://www.nofany.org>

Organic Dairy Grazing Workshops May 21, Enosburg Falls, VT May 23, Addison, VT June 11, Bridport, VT July 13, Brattleboro, VT

**August 1, Westfield, VT
August 20, Randolph Center, VT
September 19, Hyde Park, VT**
Workshops will cover all aspects of Rotational and Intensive Grazing -- livestock nutrition, paddock design, management strategies, animal health, soil quality and other topics of interest to livestock farmers. Workshops will be by organic dairy and non-dairy livestock farmers and facilitated by NOFA-VT's Dairy & Livestock Technical Assistance Program staff Team (Willie Gibson, Lisa McCrory, Sarah Flack, Dave Rogers). FREE for all organic and transitioning dairy & livestock farmers; others -- \$8 NOFA-VT members, \$12 non-members. Drinks and snacks provided. BYO lunch, contact NOFA-VT, 802-434-4122, info@nofavt.org

Strolling of the Heifers June 1-3, Brattleboro, VT

The Sixth Annual Strolling of the Heifers Parade and Festival includes a variety of events highlighting local foods and farms, such as all-local meals and farm tours. For more info, see: www.strollingoftheheifers.com

Role of the Horse in the Farm Organism June 2, Chestnut Ridge, NY

The Pfeiffer Center presents this event as part of its series of spring workshops. The workshop will cover the basic nature and care of the horse, harness and equipment. Participants will work with grooming, harnessing and undertake a variety of practical tasks including logging, plowing, discing, and working raised beds. For more info, see: www.pfeiffercenter.org/workshops

Alternative Energy Tour June 5, and June 9, Franklin County, VT

See wind turbines and a methane digester in action. Visit 3 farms in Franklin County that are using innovative ways to produce their own power. Hosted by the Vermont Land Trust. Registration is required. Contact: Annie Crawford, 802-262-1241, annie@vlt.org, <http://www.vlt.org>

Quality Milk and Udder Health on Organic Dairy Farms

June 8, Best Western, Waterbury, VT
This workshop is designed for certified organic, transitioning and interested dairy farmers who want to learn how to improve milk quality and effectively manage mastitis and udder health on organic dairy farms. Lunch included with registration (\$20) For more information, contact NOFA-VT, 802-434-4122, info@nofavt.org

Randolph Farms Tour June 9, Randolph, VT

Learn about the challenges of running a small to medium sized dairy farm. Visit organic and conventional dairies. Contact: Annie Crawford, 802-262-1241, annie@vlt.org, <http://www.vlt.org>

Cayuga County Grazing Group June 12, Auburn, NY.

Cayuga County Cornell Cooperative Extension Center, 248 Grant Ave., Karen Sullivan, NRCS NY Animal Scientist, will lead the discussion with a focus on grazing nutrition and using your forages wisely. For more information, call 315-255-1183.

NODPA's 7th Annual Field Days Event and Annual Producer Meeting August 17 & 18, 2007 Freund's Farm Market East Canaan, Connecticut

Contact Ed: 413-772-0444 or
email: emaltby@comcast.net
see page 1 for details

Vermont Veterinary Medical Association Summer Meeting June 21-22,

Wyndham Hotel, Burlington, VT
Speakers include Dr. Richard Ford, University of North Carolina (Vaccines, Vaccinations and Infectious Disease Update), Dr. Teresa DeFrancesco, University of North Carolina (Practical Cardiology), Dr. Joseph Bertone, Western University of Health Sciences, Pomona, CA (Equine), and Dr. Hubert Karreman of Penn Dutch Cow Care (Organic Dairy Medicine). If you have any questions or are interested in being an exhibitor at this meeting, contact Cathy Kosis at csk95@comcast.net, or 802-878-6888, www.vtvets.org

Managing Health on Organic Dairy Farms June 23, Applecheek Farm, Hyde Park, VT

A morning presentation and Q&A session with Dr. Karreman will be followed by a catered lunch and hands-on session in the barn. lunch included with registration. For more information, contact NOFA-VT, 802-434-4122, info@nofavt.org

American Forage and Grassland Council Annual Meeting June 23 - 26, State College, PA

The Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council and Penn State University will host the joint 2007 American Forage and Grassland Council. For more info, see: www.afgc.org/mc/community/eventdetails.do?eventId=109954

(Continued from Calendar, page 33)

**Annual NOFA Summer Conference
August 10 -12, Amherst, MA**

The 33rd Annual NOFA Summer Conference will take place Aug. 10-12, 2007 on the organic farmer-friendly campus of Hampshire College. Keynote speakers include Bill McKibben and Hazel Henderson. For more info, see: www.nofamass.org/conferences/s2007

**Value-Added Dairy Farm Tour
Aug 18, Norwich, NY**

Dave & Sue Evans will lead the tour of their farm & discuss the organic dairy products that are processed in their on-farm facility. Registration \$20, includes lunch. Contact: Kelly Miller ,607-433-2545, www.cadefarms.org.

**Haymaking with Horses & Mules Workshop
Sept 1-2, Northland Sheep Dairy in central NY**

Equipment demonstrations, hands-on opportunities. How to graze your working horses & mules. Cost: \$150 includes farm dinner on Sat. Limited to 15 participants. Contact: Donn Hewes, 607-849-4442, triple-tree@frontiernet.net

**Northeast Animal Power Field Days,
Trade Fair and Conference
September 29-30,
Fair-Grounds, Tunbridge, VT**

A gathering of people and resources dedicated to logging and farming with horses, mules and oxen. Promoting stewardship of forests and farm land. Featuring vendors, equipment demonstrations, workshops, teamsters' round-table, working animal competitions, local food and entertainment. Contact: Carl Russell & Lisa McCrory, 802-234-5524, lmccrory@together.net

**Value-Added Dairy Farm Tour,
Oct 13, Painted Goat Farm,
Garrattsville, NY.**

Ilyssa Berg will discuss her start-up farmstead goat cheese venture. Registration, \$20, includes lunch. Contact: Kelly Miller, 607-433-2545, www.cadefarms.org.

Net Update

Discussions from the ODAIRY Group

By Liz Bawden

The realities of record numbers of dairies coming into organic production begins to come to light. One of those realities is that the current supply of organic grain is in no way keeping pace with the number of cows coming into organic production. Interested in exploring alternatives, some farmers are looking at growing root crops such as mangels, sugar beets, and turnips.

Mangels are historically a common feed for cattle, and are still used in Europe. Bred from regular beets, they grow to a much larger size, and are normally cut or chopped before feeding. One producer recommended chopping them into corn silage at harvest time, and ensiling them together. The seed is not easy to find, but is available in small quantities from Seeds of Change, Shumway Seeds and Jung Seeds.

Turnips have a bad reputation for tainting the milk with off-flavors and are known to have a laxative effect, but producers say that in limited quantities (one producer says she limits turnips to less than 25% of the diet), the cows do quite well. One producer commented that purpletop turnips mixed with oats as the field is seeded down was a way to dilute the effects.

To subscribe to ODAIRY, follow the instructions on our Web Site, www.nodpa.com or email: ODAIRY-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

OMILK

FARMERS ONLY—join the OMILK email discussion, send a letter of introduction to: wrightwaydairy@yahoo.com.

NODPA Web Site

www.nodpa.com is the NODPA website. The website is a resource for organic dairy farmers, organic milk producers and consumers interested in organic dairy farming and products. If you want to learn about the dairy side of the National Organic Program; find a certifier, or get some advice on transitioning; checkout the NODPA web site. If you missed an article in past NODPA News, all the back issues are there and downloadable, along with numerous articles on different aspects of organic dairy production. The site has current national news on organic dairies; an organic dairy business directory; a calendar of events; numerous links to processors and other groups, plus information on how to join NODPA and subscribe to ODAIRY. ♦

NODPA Check Off Producer Milk Check Assignment Form

I, _____ (please print name on your milk check)

request that _____ (name of company that sends your milk check)

deduct the sum of :

\$0.02 per hundredweight to support the work of NODPA

\$0.05 per hundredweight to support the work of NODPA (the amount that has been deducted in the past for national milk marketing but has now been returned to you as an organic producer if you have applied for the exemption.) If you need assistance in applying for the exemption, check here _____

\$0.07 per hundredweight (the \$.05 marketing check-off plus \$0.02)

as an assignment from my milk check starting the first day of _____, 200__. The total sum will be paid monthly to NODPA. This agreement may be ended at any time by the producer by sending a written request to their milk buyer with a copy to NODPA. Milk handlers please send payments to: Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA), Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342.

Producer signature: _____ Date: _____ Producer number/ member no: _____

Number of milking cows: _____ Tel #: _____ E-mail: _____

Certifying Agency: _____

Farm Address: _____

Become a Subscribing Member!

By becoming a subscribing member you will receive NODPA News and help support the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance. NODPA depends on your membership contributions and donations. If you enjoy this newsletter, visit our web page, and benefit from the education and farmer representation that NODPA has been providing, please show your support by making a generous contribution to our efforts.

Note that if you sign up for the NODPA Milk Check- Off, you will be automatically signed up as a NODPA News subscriber.

___\$35 to cover NODPA news ___ \$300 to become a Friend ___ \$500 to become a Sponsor member

___\$100 to become a supporter of NODPA ___\$1,000 to become a Patron ___ \$2,000+ to become a Benefactor

Name: _____ Farm Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____ Are you a certified organic dairy producer? Yes No

Number of milking cows: _____ Milk buyer: _____

Are you transitioning to organic? Yes No If Yes – proposed date of certification _____

Mail this form with a check payable to NODPA to: Ed Maltby, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342. Thank you.

**Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
(NODPA)**

c/o Ed Maltby
30 Keets Rd.
Deerfield, MA 01342

**Prsrt Std
US Postage Paid**

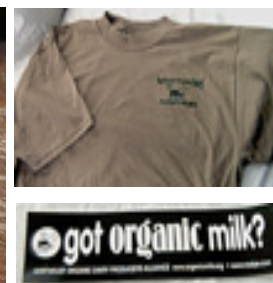
Classified Ads

WANTED

- Seeking 60 certified or certifiable bred heifers preferably jersey or jersey x holstien for new dairy looking to startup for organic production in Western New York. Additionally, looking to purchase all forage for first year, 300 bales each of certified hay and baleage. Prefer timothy / legume mixes but will take whats available as long as quality is fairly consistant. John or Theresa Hart, Ischua NY, 716-557-2313, jrhwny@ogh.org
- We are looking at relocating to the Northeast. We are looking for a 30-50 cow organic dairy. Would appreciate any leads received for a farm Presently certified organic, would possibly move our cows or buy yours. Prefer NY, VT, NH, ME area. Bruce Drinkman, bdrinkman@hotmail.com, phone: 715-265-4631

FOR SALE

- 100 head of holstein jersey cross organic cows. Ken Beerwort 450-263-0503 or beervern@hotmail.com



Get Your NODPA Gear Today!

Hat = \$15.50 **T-shirt** = \$13.50
Bumper Sticker = \$1.25 each (or)
25 for \$19.75

Shipping Included

Make check payable to: NODPA.
Send to: NODPA, c/o Ed Maltby
30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342