NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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AUGUST 13 & 14, KINZERS, PENNSYLVANIA

NODPA 9th Annual Field Days

Practical and Efficient Organic Dairy Farming Practices in Hard Economic Times

This year's Field Days, which will be held at Roman Stoltzfoos' Spring Wood Organic Farm, promises to be full of learning opportunities, networking time and planning for the future, with plenty of hand-on, practical strategies to increase the profitability of your operation. Kicking things off on Thursday afternoon, Roman and Dwight Stoltzfoos will lead a panel discussion on the benefits of hedgerows followed by a pasture walk that will incorporate information stations to focus on plant identification, fence line and water systems, pasture management and forage quality. See article by Jerry Brunetti on page 10. Experts will be available to discuss the relevant topics and there will be grass demonstration plots courtesy of King's Agri-Seed—if the weather cooperates!

There will be plenty of time for catching up with your fellow producers, supporters, resource people and friends during the evening social hour and trade show with a delicious home cooked Chicken Barbeque dinner right before NODPA's Annual Meeting which is open to everyone. In this year of dramatic changes for organic dairy, the producer only meeting will start at around 8:00pm and it will be a great opportunity to air your frustrations and problems, without worrying about how it will affect your contract, quota or pay-price.

Friday's early workshops will include a discussion on economically balancing rations and affordable ways to keep your herd healthy. See article by Hue Karreman on page 16. Our keynote speaker, James Landis, will lead the final two workshops. Mr. Landis, along with his son and two sons-in-law are currently milking 1200 cows on 4 different farms in Georgia. Mr. Landis will set the stage by looking at the beliefs that drive us, and then focus on counting the cost to product 100 pounds of milk. James hascreated a cost/cwt spreadsheet program that he uses to help farmers analyze the profitability of their own dairy farms. After a hearty lunch, James will focus on the heart of the dairy: swift, simple, pleasant milking; mob handling, controlling feed costs; raising heifers on pasture and last, but not least, turning youngsters into adults in farming. Roman and Dwight Stoltzfoos have worked closely with James Landis and will join him in leading a tour of their dairy to bring Mr. Landis' strategies to life. See James Landis article on page 18.

Details on page 20

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From The NODPA President

Hello everyone.

Here are a few words being bandied about during the recent weeks; ready? Economic downturn, recession, depression (definition = four consecutive quarters of recession), economic stimulus, oversupply, spring flush, reduced sales, building inventory, too much inventory, slowed growth, no growth, negative growth, reduced profits, no profit, loss, mismanagement, short-sighted management, poor management, corporate mentality, coop mentality, cult mentality, cut-throat business practices, quota, temporary quota, permanent quota, lowered MAP, lowered base, increased trucking (strange, now that diesel is about half what it was last year), fall seasonality production incentives, terminated contracts, terminated routes, terminated states, Humbolt Dairy, fraud, MILC payments, CWT program, NOP non-compliance issues, NOP changes, Kathleen Merrigan, Barbara Robinson, Richard Mathews, change in administration, drought in the west, wet in the east, too hot, too cold, global warming, farmer strikes in Europe, reduced methane production from cattle research, and on and on.

Interesting times in the organic milk industry. Remember when about all we talked about was the "pasture policy", Arthur Harvey, and the"replacement issue"?

Henry Perkins, NODPA President
Albion, Maine

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From The NODPA DESK

Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

To paraphrase from the Tale of Two Cities – It is the greatest opportunity for change and the worst mess ever in organic dairy!

As the reality of the organic dairy supply and demand in 2009 has sunk in, and everyone has taken measures to deal with an oversupply in a shrinking market, we are faced with financial hardship by all organic dairy producers and farm life or death / stay organic or not situations and decisions for those who have received termination notices. While the milk companies can be criticized for not planning for a 10-15% drop in growth of sales, no one could have anticipated such a dramatic drop in demand which some are projecting will result in a drop in sales of 15% over 2008.

However tempting it may be, and normal for those familiar with conventional dairy, the solution for the problem cannot be entirely on the backs of producers. Corporations are responsible for their employees, shareholders and maintaining their profitability for the future. Cooperatives sometime have the added burden of communities that rely on it staying in business. Producers have families to support, debt to service, land to maintain and improve and always play a very valuable role in their local community. But we don't need to "throw the baby out with the bathwater" because of this crisis, denying the basic tenets of organic; transparency and trust, and running to our separate corners.

Those producers that carefully planned for the future based on the stable pricing that was one of the benefits of transitioning to organic, have had to tear up those projections and go back to a seat-of-the-pants approach.

Producers are confused!

Two of the milk company's new programs are so vague about their final paycheck that there can be no accurate forecasting. Hood/Kemp/DMS and Horizon have changed their policies on implementing and policing their quality programs; are interpreting their confidentiality clauses more strictly; and are abandoning non-economic routes that they set up only a few years ago. Some Organic Valley producers are surprised at the rapid introduction of a new quota program rather than the implementation of well established policies already in place to deal with a surplus. The new quota program is not clearly defined, introducing a new "active" base when they already had a base they purchased when they joined the cooperative and with many areas that have not yet been standardized.

The organic milk market is now commodity based, following the conventional example of growing volume while sacrificing value in order to lower price to gain market share. Milk companies are now dealing with producers as if it were a conventional market by cutting un-economic routes that are far away from UHT processing plants; citing economic conditions beyond their control to end contracts with producer advocates; and tightening up on milk quality testing and policing. These are not sustainable solutions.

NODPA was formed in response to the first threat of lowering the pay price. So how do we move to the new paradigm where there is no longer a stable pay price and demand for organic dairy is in temporary decline? We need to develop better strategies to address these challenges as the future of organic certification requirements and market pricing is increasingly dominated by corporations and consumer groups. We are now nearly 8 years into the USDA organic certification and NODPA has been a leader in representing producers on market and policy issue, but where do we go from here? We provided great leadership together with the FOOD Farmers by providing comment and direction on the proposed rule for the access to pasture, but how do we best make use of the new culture at the USDA where the deputy Secretary of the USDA is now stressing the need for enforcement and consistently applied organic standards? At the producer's meeting at the Field Days, we will be analyzing the need to strengthen organic producer's participation in shaping state and federal policies that affect the future of organic dairy. We will prioritize how best to provide a national voice to ensure that that everyone involved in the organic dairy supply chain, from field to package, is entitled to a living wage, a safe workplace and respectful treatment. Please come to help us prioritize.

NODPA Field Days are here!

Want a break from the doom and despair of waiting for the next letter in the mail from your milk company as they devise more ways to make your life less stable and more difficult? Come visit the beautiful Stoltzfoos family farm in Lancaster County PA for the 2009 NODPA Field Days on August 13 and 14, where you can learn, listen, eat well, visit with friends and colleagues and perhaps have a few rants.

If the cost is a problem to attend, NODPA does have some money for scholarships for producers who want to attend the Field Days. ◆

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

The misguided science behind rBGH and climate change

By Samuel Fromartz

Climate change is clearly the issue of our time, with the potential to impact every aspect of our lives. But with the flood of information, the most specious kind of "science" thrives in this atmosphere, creating its own kind of intellectually polluting greenhouse gas emissions.

I'm talking about the recent study which purports to show that genetically modified bovine growth hormone, or rBGH, cuts down on greenhouse gas emissions because it increases the efficiency of cows.

To my reading, this study was a solution in search of a problem – which is how rBGH as a whole can be summed up. It's a solution that consumers clearly don't want. It's sinking, despite the best efforts of its lobbyists from limiting any kind of identifying labels on milk. Indeed, the most recent issue came to a head in Kansas, where then-Gov. Catherine Sibillius thankfully vetoed legislation to ban labeling information.

The only reason to ban such labels is to deny transparency to consumers and to protect the fading market.

One researcher on odairy recently got into a spirited argument about why this drug is so useful. She claimed it reduces greenhouse gas emissions, because the drug requires fewer cows to produce more milk. It's interesting that this researcher took the time to post the findings on odairy since her papers explicitly argue that small and organic farmers are just the sort of inefficient operations that increase greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).

Better to cram all those cows into CAFOs. In fact, the fewer the better, since concentration, efficiency and synthetic drug injections all go hand in hand of higher milk production and less emissions, or so the researcher argues.

The curious thing about this claim is that the Food and Drug Administration considered it a decade ago and dismissed it. Indeed, the FDA's analysis of the impact of rBGH use on greenhouse gas emissions found that emissions would either increase slightly or decrease slightly, but "the magnitude of the changes will be extremely small and insignificant compared to total worldwide emissions of carbon dioxide and methane," according to a recent article by Food and Water Watch.

The researcher's argument rested on the assumption that cows produce the vast majority of the dairy industry's GHG, so if you could get the cow numbers down and milk production up (with rBGH) then you could cut those emissions. But milk projection is directly related to feed intake, and if feed increases, so do emissions.

She dismissed diet as a non-issue, but other studies have clearly shown that ruminent diet clearly effect cow's emissions. A recent letter by the National Organic Coalition, summing up a number of these studies, found:

- that about half of the grain and oilseeds grown in the United States are fed to livestock, and conventional grain-fed beef requires twice as many energy inputs as grass-fed beef. Scientists have suggested that reducing feed grains is the single best way to cut GHG emissions in animal agriculture.
- Diet, from beneficial fatty acids and pasture, can also reduce GHG in cows. In general, studies have found that such additions can reduce methane emissions by about 20%," NOC's letter said. Indeed, farmers are experimenting with diets rich in alfalfa, flax and grasses to reduce emissions, as several recent articles attest.

But you won't find that type of diet in CAFOs, since these cows never see pasture. And of course, once they are in the CAFO, the manure is siphoned off to lagoons (that hopefully don't leak into groundwater and streams). But these concentrated ponds too leach far more GHG than your typical dried cow dung on a pasture. As the NOC letter states:

> *The EPA has determined that when manures are stored or treated in systems that promote anaerobic conditions, like liquid storage systems commonly found in CAFOs, the decomposition of manure produces great amounts of methane, unlike when manure is handled as a solid or deposited on pasture, range or paddock lands. Manures spread appropriately on pastures and paddocks produce minimal amounts of methane.*

How much methane emissions – a far more potent gas than CO2 - arise from these sources? "In 2007, methane emissions from manure management were 45% higher than in 1990, and increased by 2.5% annually throughout this period. The EPA notes that the majority of this increase was from swine and dairy cow manure, where emissions increased 51 and 60 percent, respectively," according to Meredith Niles of the Center for Food Safety. This is the result of "efficient" CAFOs.

A final point to consider: pasture itself is recognized as a vast sink for carbon in this country, meaning the plants take carbon out of the air and deposit it in the ground. Indeed, perennial pasture holds far more carbon than cultivated land, according to a report by the Congressional Budget Office. Rather than polluting, the animals fertilize this carbon sink with manure. According to the Congressional Budget Office:

When farm products like corn and soybeans are given a decent douse of energy-intensive chemical fertilizers and pesticides and shipped hundreds if not thousands of miles to CAFOs in California and Arizona to feed cows, the emissions add up.

Clearly farmers will face big issues due to climate change – in the type of crops that can be grown, in potential water scarcity or climatic events like storms, in pest and disease pressures that thrive in warmer climates, and the type of perennial grasses or weeds that thrive with higher temperatures.

These are very real issues that farmers should consider, taking responsible steps to reduce emissions of dairy cows, through modifications in diet, through higher pasture intake and through thoughtful regeneration of waste products.

But what farmers don't need is a "solution" like rBGH that's already been written off. Especially when the argument explicitly calls for those same farmers to submit to the CAFO mentality. Essentially the researcher's mode of thinking is "get big or get out," but this time because he equates bigness with efficiency and reduced emissions. Curious how the solution is always the same, even as the rationale changes. ◆

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic pay price and supply control

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The facts are simple if very unpalatable:

- We have a surplus of organic milk of between 10-12% as management had planned supply for at least a 10-15% growth over 2008
- Sale of fluid, packaged organic milk is projected to increase by no more than 5% over 2008 sales (probably mostly in store brand sales), down from previous year's 20% + annual growth
- Sales of organic, manufactured product is down, and inventories of organic powder, butter and cheese are at all time highs with no surplus storage available
- While the core consumer is still buying organic fluid milk, the economy has not rebounded enough to increase sales of organic dairy manufactured products and retail prices have not dropped giving no incentive for consumers to increase purchases.
- Do not plan for the situation to end within 6 months

The milk companies have responded in different ways to this situation. Many of their responses raise more questions than solutions and lack the necessary and traditional transparency of a sustainable organic dairy industry.

HP Hood/Kemps/Stonyfield brand

HP Hood (Hood) lowered their price by $1 in February and asked for a voluntary 10-15% cut in production. They have been canceling contracts and sending 180 day notice letters of contract termination because of quality concerns, uneconomic routes and "the softening economy" (this reason has been used when they have canceled contracts with outspoken producers). Producers who have been given prior notice of poor quality and received probationary notices have been given 5 days notice before dropping them. Hood is asking their producers to sign a new commitment letter with Dairy Marketing Services (DMS) and Hood without any defined pay price. The pay price will be decided on a monthly basis by Hood with no stated criteria for how they will reach those decisions. Producers have a deadline of July 1st

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Climate Policy for Agriculture that Works:

Ensuring that America's Organic Farmers are Part of the Solution

By Meredith Niles
Cool Foods Campaign Coordinator
Center for Food Safety

Not since Earl Butz's famous "hedgerow to hedgerow" comment of the 1970s have America's farmers been at such a turning point. Food and farming policy in the United States is largely determined by the Farm Bill, behemoth legislation that comes around once every five years. Yet, the current climate legislation—The American Clean Energy and Security Act (ACES)—offers an unprecedented opportunity to rethink the way America farms.

Since the start of ACES (March 2009), agriculture interests have had an unspoken, yet powerful voice in the bill. Ag was explicitly exempted from the "capped" sector, which meant that it was always intended to receive offset benefits in ACES. But the question remains whether agricultural offsets will be awarded to the types of practices and systems that are scientifically proven to actually reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and sequester carbon. It's the quality—not the quantity—of offsets that will determine how effective the legislation is at reducing GHG emissions.

An increasing amount of peer-reviewed science demonstrates the true ability of organic practices and systems to not only sequester more carbon than conventional and no-till agriculture (yes, even no-till, the industry's exalted climate change solution), but to inherently produce fewer GHG emissions overall. This is a point I can't emphasize enough-climate legislation can not simply hope to sequester its way out of a looming environmental crisis. Unless ACES makes actual and verified reductions in GHG emissions it will be ineffective. And one of the best agricultural solutions that have the science to back up such reductions is organic agriculture, with agroecological practices including abstaining from synthetic fertilizer and pesticide use, cover cropping, pasture-based animal production, incorporation of compost and manures into soils, and prevention of bare fields.

So what does the science say? The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization concluded "[w]ith lower energy inputs, organic systems contribute less to GHG emissions and have a greater potential to sequester carbon in biomass than conventional systems." Research published by Pelletier et al. last year in Environmental Management found that organic cropping systems required half the fossil fuel inputs and generated three-fourths the GHG emissions of conventional agriculture. Additional studies share similar results, largely because organic agriculture abstains from using synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. If we are really aiming for "energy independence" why aren't we directing our farm policies to organic practices?

Let's direct our attention to another issue that dairy producers know better than anyone in this country- manure. There have been a lot of questions floating around as to why Americans should care about livestock poop, particularly in the context of climate change and GHG emissions. While it is little discussed, it is actually quite a significant contributor to GHG emissions. First and foremost- animal manure and livestock produce methane and nitrous oxide, which are about 23 and 300 times respectively stronger than carbon dioxide. According to the EPA GHG Inventory, manure is the 5th largest source of methane and the 4th largest source of nitrous oxide in the U.S. It results in more GHG emissions per year than all cement production and more than twice as many emissions as waste incineration and natural gas systems in the U.S.

"…not all manure is created equal. The EPA has determined that when manures are stored or treated in liquid storage systems commonly found on factory farms, the decomposition of manure produces great amounts of methane, unlike when manure is handled as a solid or deposited on pasture, range or paddock lands."

It should also be mentioned that enteric fermentation-gases produced from livestock- is the number one source of methane emissions in the U.S. Combined, manure and enteric fermentation produce about as many GHG emissions as the entire commercial sector's burning of fossil fuel in the United States. The United Nations estimates that animal production contributes nearly one fifth of all global GHG emissions, making it not only a significant source of emissions but a significant opportunity for reductions and mitigation.

Yet, not all manure is created equal. The EPA has determined that when manures are stored or treated in liquid storage systems commonly found on factory farms, the decomposition of manure produces great amounts of methane, unlike when manure is handled as a solid or deposited on pasture, range or paddock lands. Manures spread appropriately on pastures and paddocks produce minimal amounts of methane. Research has also documented that manure stores on conventional farms emitted about twenty-five percent more methane gas than organic farms.

Still more scientific studies are finding that organic pasture raised animals offer a variety of climate benefits. Research by Flessa et. al. (2002) published in Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment suggested that transitioning to pasture agriculture is the single best way to cut GHG emissions in animal production. Additional studies (Boadi et.al., 2004 and DeRamus et. al., 2003) determined that feeding livestock on pasture compared to feedlot diets usually consisting of corn and soy reduced methane emissions about 20%. I may be preaching to the choir here, but I think you get it- feeding your animals on pasture reduces manure enteric fermentation emissions. This is a climate solution that thus far has remained little discussed in ACES or most other climate change legislation.

We are at a turning point—and you, America's progressive and organic farmers—are at the heart of it. Perhaps you have not thought about climate change before, or prefer to keep your distance from the political dealings of Washington. But farming, and in fact even eating, in America is no longer an isolated act- it is fundamentally political. Climate change legislation has the potential to completely change the way you farm, the way you receive payments and how America eats.

At the heart of feeding a country safe and healthy food and ensuring the environmental protection of our planet are America's organic farmers. Yet, progressive and effective climate change legislation is no longer progressive when it perpetuates and rewards industrial agriculture that has been the main source of agricultural emissions for decades. Failure to include organic practices and certified organic producers in ACES, or any other climate change bill for that matter, will set back our goal of reducing GHGs in the present and prevent America's farmers from economically transitioning to ecological farming in the future.

As the model for what climate-friendly animal production can look like, I encourage you all to do something you may not have done before- get political. Make calls, stay informed, and contact your Congress person. They want to hear from America's farmers, but if they aren't hearing from our organic and progressive farmers, they won't understand the real role that you can play in climate change mitigation. You are farmers, but you are also a powerful voice in the climate debate—speak up and let your voices be heard. ◆

Vilsack on NAIS proposed appropriation cut

June 18, 2009 by Julie Harker

The House Ag Appropriations Subcommittee last week cut off all spending for USDA's animal identification system (NAIS), saying the program does not have enough participants to be effective. This week, the House Appropriations Committee has started marking up its 2010 spending bill for USDA. Ag Secretary Tom Vilsack talked to reporters on Wednesday, "We have suggested to the farmers and ranchers that we've been talking to about this issue that there were some concerns on Capitol Hill about the efficiency and the effectiveness of the existing system. I think the action of the appropriations subcommittee reinforces that notion." Vilsack says it's not a closed issue, "There's obviously a long way in the appropriations process to go and we still, frankly, have a number of listening sessions." Vilsack says the listening sessions have produced a lot of opinions about animal id and a lot of ideas, "And it would be my hope that we would be able to come up from the listening sessions a set of suggestions that might improve participation."

Nationwide, participation in the now-voluntary NAIS program is only 35 percent. There's not much support at the listening sessions for a government animal identification system, let alone a mandatory one.

The 11th session since May is being held today in Riverside, California. There are 3 more left - in Raleigh, North Carolina; Jasper, Florida; and, on June 30th, in La Vista, Nebraska.

CHANGE@USDA: The National Organic Program has failed its Congressional mandate to protect ethical organic farmers and consumers. The growth of "organic" factory farms and unsupervised imports from China is unacceptable. Send the Obama administration the message we want *change* at the NOP by visiting: www.cornucopia.org/changeUSDA

CORNUCOPIA INSTITUTE

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Dairy producers protest milk prices

About 150 turn out for Iowa meeting

By LARRY KERSHNER, For the Messenger

POSTED: May 31, 2009, MANCHESTER, IA - About 150 people, most of them dairy producers, gathered Saturday at the Manchester Livestock Auction building to protest current milk prices, which has declined 45 percent over the past five months.

Saturday's speakers said that if the U.S. Department of Agriculture fails to set a base price for milk, then the U.S. will lose 25 percent of its dairymen.

On hand were area and regional dairy producers and suppliers, as well as producers from New York, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Illinois, and representatives of national and state agriculture organizations.

Event organizer Jerry Harvey, of Russell, in Lucas County, said he is not a politically oriented person.

"I am a frustrated farmer, like most of the other guys out here," he said.

Harvey said that most independent dairymen have been borrowing $4,000 to $5,000 monthly to cover operating costs.

"We did that just until this thing turns around," he said. "But it's not turning around. It keeps going on. All of us have cut back on feed, which lowers our production, and we've culled our low producers. We are told to keep cutting production, but that's hard to do when your income is already cut in half."

Harvey said he had restructured all of his debt last month to try and get closer to a break-even point "and I still came up $3,000 short." He said his situation is typical among dairy producers throughout the country.

Saturday's gathering was held to call for passage of Senate Bill 889, introduced this year by Sen. Arlen Specter, D-Pa., and Sen. Bob Casey D-Pa., calling for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to set milk prices based on the cost of production.

On hand Saturday was the author of the bill, Arden Tewksbury, of Meshoppen, Pa., who is manager of ProAg, an organization based in Amarillo, Texas, with an office in Des Moines. Tewksbury said the bill simply calls for the price of milk being closely aligned with the cost of production.

The bill was originally introduced into the Senate by Specter and Casey in 2007, but was not moved out of committee by the Agriculture Committee chairman, Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa. The bill was recently reintroduced into the Senate. According to Tewksbury, Harkin and other senators have already said the bill doesn't stand a chance against the lobbying of "Big Milk."

"If this bill had been passed and in place," Tewksbury said, "producers would have received $25 per hundredweight" when production costs were at $24/cwt.

Dairyman Harvey said they producers right now need $16/cwt to
He accused corporate dairy operations of rigging the pricing system

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COMMENTARY

Nancy and Gary Hershberg,

The Maine Organic Milk Producers would like to at this time, let you know our feelings regarding the recent actions taken by Hood Dairy, sending termination notices to all the Washington and Aroostook county organic milk producers,and then a short time later sending termination notices to Mark McKusick and Richard Lary.

These farmers all signed contracts with Hood because they were led to believe that Hood meant to stay and expand in Maine. Many of these farmers spent much time,effort, and money to go through the transittion process that it takes to become certified organic, having been led to believe their efforts would be supported into the future.

The reason given for sending termination notices to Aroostock and Washington county producers was an unprofitable route. Hood then sent Richard Lary and Mark McKusick, two farmers that have been active in promoting an improved lot for family farmers, termination letters. The reason cited was an oversupply of milk. We suspect that this may not be correct. Requests for a meeting between Hood and it's Maine organic milk producers have been rejected by Hood. This has led the producers to question Hood's honesty and integrity.

We wish no malice toward you and the good name of Stonyfield Farm, but the membership roundly condemns Hood. If there were any way to completely separate Hood/Stonyfield Farm Milk from the Stonyfield Yogurt label,we would, but it is not us who is tarnishing your good name. Are we just supposed to quietly accept what Hood /Stonyfield Milk has done to our fellow farmers? Are we not allowed to protest what we feel is an unjust ,heavy-handed treatment of two producers who's only "crime" has been that they have been advocates for a better economic situation for the small family farmer? We believe that we have a right to protest the actions of Hood/Stonyfield Farm Milk and we also feel that the rest of the organic community deseves the right to know how we feel.

We do appreciate the fact that you offered to facilitate a meeting between Hood/ Stonyfield Farm Milk and the farmers from Maine who have been so unjustly treated,but Hood/Stonyfield Farm Milk has rejected every overture made to them by our members to sit down and discuss the situation.

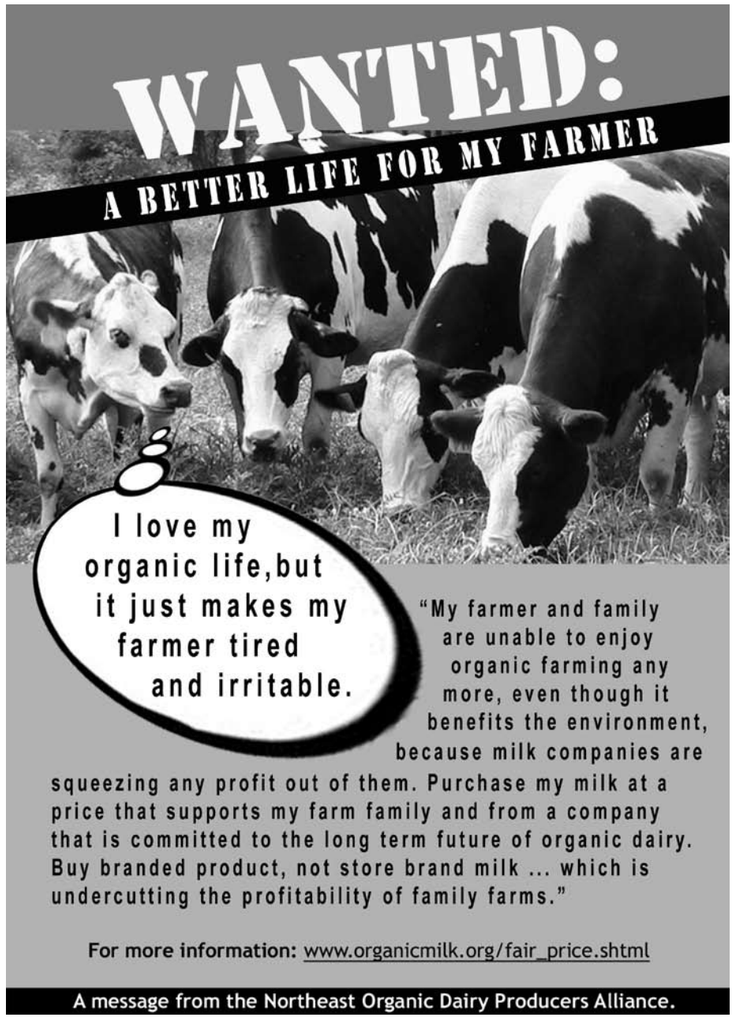
As a final note,which we feel bears repeating, the last thing we want to do is to cause any harm to the name of Stonyfield Yogurt,but we are not going to sit quietly by in silence as we watch our friends and neighbors be treated so badly.

Thank you,
MAINE ORGANIC MILK PRODUCERS

NRCS EQIP Organic Initiative Website

The Natural Resource Conservation Service has a new website for the EQIP Organic Initiative. The site explains the eligibility requirements, and provides guidance on how to participate and resources on organic production. In addition, there is information for persons interested in becoming Technical Service Providers to assist participants in meeting the requirements of the program.

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip/organic/



ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Plant Biodiversity

Livestock Farmacy and Pantry

By Jerry Brunetti

With feed costs being painfully high, while organic milk prices remain in a ditch, farmers and ranchers need to take a hard look at other ways to improve productivity besides "buying" extra milk production or buying organic substitutions for pharmaceuticals to address parasites, mastitis, scours, pneumonia, etc.

The farm needs to be the primary, if not the sole source of input for food and medicine to grazing animals. "Easier said than done" you might say. The reason why so many graziers hit the wall, in my opinion, is because they become seduced by the sales pitches of companies who still want to sell a lot of off-farm inputs based upon the Green Revolution paradigm that you can justify "buying" your milk or meat production; predicated upon affordable fossil fuels, affordable grain, affordable medicines and veterinary care.

Yet, while spending two weeks on grazing (dairy, beef, sheep) farms in New Zealand this past March, what I witnessed were successful practices of "minimalism" at a break-even price for milk of about $5 per cwt. In 2007-8, New Zealand endured a severe drought. Some farms I traveled upon (organic I might add) enjoyed a recovery rate of 110% from the drought one year later. The conventional farms there, hooked on monocultures of ryegrass, urea & super phosphate were at a 65% recovery rate, in spite of spending large sums of money to re-seed and fertilize, while their low input organic neighbors virtually spent nothing; or if they did, it was on the basics such as lime, free choice mineral licks and growing an annual "succotash" mix of sunflowers, peas, turnips or "Swedes" to graze and wrap bale.

Jerry Brunetti's vast experience with farming, animal nutrition and his own health has led him to explore and lecture about the links between healthy soil, truly nutritious food and profitable, sustainable farming. He is founder of Agri-Dynamics, a company that offers holistic livestock remedies and feed supplements.

Virtually nothing was expended on animal health except for that incidental flare-up which was reconciled by homeopathy or botanicals. Being in the holistic livestock remedy business for 30 years really makes your head turn when you see how much was done with so little from the "outside."

The one practice that encouraged me was seeing the hedgerows growing around the perimeter fences. In those hedgerows were willows, poplars, fuijoa (a semi-tropical guava-like fruit shrub), flax, which looked like giant yucca or "Spanish Bayonet." Flax was grown for its fibrous content to make rope, canvas, and cloth in the same vein that hemp was once grown in early America to produce similar manufactured goods. The native Maori use the very thick reddish gel extracted from the crown of flax as a universal healing agent. I was advised by a dairyman host that he often witnesses his cows and even calves digging up the crown and sucking this gel out of the plant. Also in the hedgerows were fruit trees (!) such as apples and pears for man and beast alike. Comfrey was included in the hedgerow, as well as dispersed through the paddock, planted amongst the salad bar of at least a dozen to two dozen species of grasses, legumes and forbs, (including what we typically call "weeds"). American hedgerows could readily consist of light canopy trees such as willow, poplar, mulberry, thornless honey locust, stone fruits (not cherry), thornless blackberries, grapes, black walnut (parasites), shrubs like viburnum, elder, some evergreens (pine/fir) for terpenes, perennials like mints, comfrey, docks, nettle, yarrow, elecampane, horehound, echinacea, melissa, and actually many of the numerous medicinal botanicals.

When we realize that the planet is clothed in a couple of hundred thousand plant species and in our cleverness to manage the need for utmost quantity we have reduced our selection to a mere handful of crops to feed ourselves (including a handful of forages to feed our grazing animals), it is no wonder that we have become dependent, even addicted to the "miraculous" yet costly and deleterious side effects of rescue chemistry: fossil fuel fertilizers, pesticides, anti-biotics, parasiticides (and their organic counterparts!). We've viewed our livestock and ourselves as isolated organisms, rather than recognizing them and us as "super organisms" or more accurately as complex "ecosystems" that are self organizing, cooperating, self sacrificing and constantly communicating with each other.

Though Jerry Brunetti will not be able to join us for the Field Days, the topic of grazing hedgerows and the benefits of diversified pastures will be covered. See page 20 for more.

A big focus on "Food as Medicine" discussions are around those powerful compounds that plants synthesize called plant secondary metabolites (PSM's), which are produced by plants to protect themselves from the extremes of weather, ultra violet radiation, insects, diseases and excessive grazing. These PSM's become a major component in the healthy metabolism and immunity of animals and humans that consume them. So far, science has isolated over 80,000 of these compounds. Some of the more popular ones we frequently hear about are resveratrol (grapes), lutein (kale and egg yolk), lycopene (tomato), di-indole methane (brassicas), EGCG (green tea), etc. The fact is all green plants produce PSM's and in large quantity. Grazing animals take them in and concentrate them in fatty tissue because they are fat soluble compounds.

When livestock consume dozens of species of plants there is a synergism involved that allows animals to increase the efficiency of digestion as well as the elimination of toxins, both of those inherent in the feeds (all plants contain both nutrients and toxins) and those by-products of metabolism. Considering that 70-80% of the immune system is seated in the gut, this poses to be a remarkable contribution to an animal's ability to ward of pathogens and parasites before they become opportunistic.

As Dr. Fred Provenza points out in the research he's done at Utah State University, "Ruminants thus discriminate the post-ingestive effects of forages with secondary compounds and complementarities among forages with diverse secondary compounds are likely not only to increase forage intake, but to improve the nutrition, production and health of the animals as well." (See "Value of Plant Diversity for Diet Mixing and Sequencing" from Range Management, Feb. 2009).

Back in 2000, one of the hottest summers on record in Pennsylvania, I searched for nutritional information on "weeds" and woody plants that could compare their nutritional make-up to conventional forages as per criteria in the National Research Council. I could find none, other than N-P-K content of annual weeds that competed for nutrients with annual crops. So, I conducted my own study, sampling two dozen, non-legume perennial plants consisting of forbs, brambles, vines and trees and comparing such with a comprehensive analysis of quality alfalfa.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

NY Branded Milk!

An Interview With Dean Sparks of Empire Organics

Interview conducted by Liz Bawden

Amidst the worry and upheavals in the organic dairy industry, a new brand was launched this spring. Enter Empire Organics, the organic milk from a group of New York farms packaged and sold in New York. Responding to consumer desires to support local farms and minimize the carbon footprint of their food, their products can be found in over 100 retailers. And it's growing.

Empire Organics has been the passion and project of Dan France and Dean Sparks for over 7 years. We had a chance to talk with Dean about their new entrant and his insight into the realities of the organic dairy industry.

Q: Please tell us a bit about the beginning -- the niche you saw emerging, the gaps that needed filling, unexpected hurdles, your passion for high-quality organic food.

A: Dan and I spent about 7 years doing the homework about organic farming, organic food, and all things in between. We did some distribution of local products at one time. I took a job as the Grocery Manager at Green Star Cooperative Market in Ithaca, NY for a couple of years. We learned about brokers, turnovers, slotting fees, and retail headaches. We studied. Dan has been milking 70 cows organically since 1996, so he certainly brought the farmer perspective to the table.

The one constant was the retailers wanted to support local, organic products. This was true from Buffalo to New York City. Everywhere we went, consumers and retailers told us over and over that a local brand is exactly what they wanted. We just had to figure out how to get it to them. In addition, we wanted high quality. Dan and I learned to enjoy good food, and we still believe that quality has to be the benchmark of any brand.

The distribution piece was complicated, but for us the most difficult task was finding a dairy processor to work with us. Most dairy processors that have contracted work for the major brands (Horizon, HP Hood and OV) were required to sign exclusivity agreements, so they are not able to process for anyone else. Finally, after many years, we joined forces with an Upstate Niagara Cooperative to process our fresh organic milk. That ball started rolling April 1, 2009 and it hasn't slowed down since!!!

Q: What are the products you are supplying now?

A: Currently we do Nymilk in gallons and half gallons and in three fat levels (whole, 2% and skim). We also launched Nycheese in May with 4 varieties of 8 ounce retail-ready cheese (raw milk cheddar, monterey jack, pepper jack, and colby).

Q: What products are in the pipeline for future development?

A: We have an organic farmer raising 4,000 hens for Nyeggs to launch in September, and Nyogurt will also be rolled out this fall. We have expedited our schedule in order to help us use all the milk that we possibly can... we know that farmers are losing markets now and they have only two choices ... go conventional or go out of business ... and we don't like those choices. Developing and innovating is the thing to do in a tough economy. The more farms we can save the better.

Q: How do you source your milk? How many farms (or how many cows) ship their milk to you or do you buy on the "spot-market"?

A: There is a cooperative of 22 farms involved in the project now. Most are located between Rochester and Buffalo.

Q: We hear much about the competition between the "Big 3" (referring to Horizon, Hood, and Organic Valley) over market share in the supermarkets -- what has been your experience in introducing another brand of organic milk?

A: Well, this is a loaded question! Here's what we KNOW: things are not NEARLY as bad as people think they are (in our business) and retailers are clamoring for good quality local food that they can source in abundance. Being both local and organic gives us a leg up. Many of the national brands are shipped across the country and travel thousands of miles from farm to shelf. Our products

continued on next page

minimize the carbon footprint and assure consumers that they are supporting small family farms in New York State. Nycheese is competing against an organic cheese brand in Wisconsin; this really helps us gain some traction.

Q: Your website states that you have taken a stand to hold your payprice to farmers for at least 2 years, even though most other organic milk buyers have cut the price and are reducing milk through reduction quotas or cutting off farms. A Lancaster Farmer article states your pay price to farmers is $32. Can you confirm this and comment on how you are able to weather the economic storm without passing it on to your farmers?

A: The cooperative is offering a $27 base price, and with volume and quality premiums they can earn $32/cwt. We feel very strongly that this price will continue to hold steady throughout the economic downturn. One of the benefits we have is low overhead. Dan and I work out of our homes and have no employees.

Q: Roughly how many locations offer your products for sale in NY?

A: At present, we have about 100 retail outlets carrying our products, but it grows everyday. In addition, we have some restaurants, cafes and other establishments using our products. It's very exciting.

Q: This is a rough time for many dairy farmers, seeing the stability of the organic market begin to erode. What are your thoughts for the future of the industry?

A: We see it very differently. Corrections in supply will be made, and they will be painful, but certainly the organic industry will survive and continue to grow. We see consumers who are willing to make adjustments in their spending WAY before they adjust their food choices. Once they buy organic and believe in it, they will drive a lesser car or sacrifice in other areas of their lives in order to ensure they can continue to buy and support organic farmers and the products that they make. We see this more so in young married adults who are doing all they can to make sure their children eat healthier organic food on a regular basis.

We still see retail prices on milk holding very, very well; certainly in New York. The market in the Northeast is being robbed by private label import brands from the West. We see private label milk in many retail chains that are plant coded from Colorado, Arizona, etc. We know that the proposed pasture rule would assist in limiting this issue, but we cannot afford to wait. We need legislative action to invoke the federal market pool payment for all processors shipping finished fluid product into the Northeast. Organic farmers need to work together to alert their politicos to begin to legislate against this nonsense. It is really frustrating to see shelves and shelves full of organic milk that came to New York via tractor trailer from out West while farmers in the Northeast continue to lose markets.

The surplus of organic milk certainly was somewhat due to industry leader's inability to see the slowing in the 20% annual growth we had grown so accustomed to enjoy. To suggest that dairy industry gurus were supposed to see the economic recession coming is a little far fetched. No one saw it coming. There are, however, some things we can do immediately to increase usage of Northeast organic fluid milk. We need to demand that action be taken against

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

NY Branded Milk!

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Aurora Dairy and others that are milking huge herds and shipping finished products into the Northeast and skirting their responsibility to pay into the pool. This may seem like a small issue, but it gives them a significant advantage in retail pricing, and creates a false sense that buying a local grocery store chain organic milk must be supporting local farms near the store. It simply is not true.

Most farmers in the Northeast do not realize that their organic fluid surplus could and should be utilized in the private label business. The plant capacity exists in the Northeast. The contracts exist. The fluid milk exists. What needs to happen is that exclusivity agreements need to be reviewed and discarded in advance of any quota systems being implimented. We get calls every day from retail chains looking to move their organic milk production into the Northeast. Someone should figure out how to capture that business, even if it means swallowing their pride a little bit. It should be about saving farms, not saving face.

Q: Do you have any advice for a farmer who may want to enter the value-added side of the business?

A: This "overnight success" was seven years in the making! For farmers to assume they can immediately enter the natural/organic food channel and be a huge success may be a mistake. These things take time, money, and more effort than you ever thought you had. We have invested tens of thousands of hours in developing relationships with retailers, distributors, and consumers. This is real work, and there is no "get rich quick" scheme. You have to do your homework, understand your market, and develop products that can meet the needs of all those involved in the chain. Cornell has spent millions (maybe even billions) trying to work with farmers and retailers to get value added working, and they have come up mostly empty....this is really a grass roots effort, in that you need to spend quality time with your potential customers to truly appreciate what they are looking for. Then you have to go out there and get it made in the quality and volume that makes sense to satisfy their demands. Sometimes it just takes a couple of farmers to get things done!

We see opportunity for farms to diversify their production in order to increase their bottom line. Adding a flock of organic birds, for example, brings an additional revenue stream to the farm. Nyeggs are just the beginning, and we see some value added opportunity in those type of projects. Even some direct marketing at Farmers Markets might be of some value, especially in the pasture raised meat arena. We see a lot of demand for these type of things. ◆

For more information on Empire Organics, visit their website at www.getnymilk.com, or conact Dean Sparks at: Office 607-656-4142, email: dean@getnymilk.com

COMMENTARY

The Passing Wind

I was out in the pasture Saturday morning calling my beef cows to join me in moving to the next paddock. It's best to assemble the team of moms at the gate so the calves don't get separated. Paddock shifts can be extremely stressful if you leave babies behind. The boss cow and I usually have a few minutes together as this gathering of the herd unfolds.

I was admiring how slick she had become after just a few weeks of munching grass---when it happened. She arched her back and dropped a 30 cent nutrient shower of green material to the earth. My fellow graziers liken this action to passing it through a screen door. "Whew, that was a good one bossy," I said. The rest of the girls, seeing me near their opening to breakfast, came running, belching and seemed to find joy in relieving themselves. It was the epitome of a flatulence fest or basically cows being cows. I too, had some pent-up green house gases so I followed Forrest Gump's analogy of "I had to go, so, well, I went." A guy just being a guy, I suppose.

I opened the gate to the pasture utopia and watched the cows disperse into the succulent forage as the calves frolicked about, and wondered how this beautiful scene could be construed as a national tragedy. And there's nothing I can do about it. It's Mother Nature's way ya know, animals eating this grass. It's like peas and carrots. I'll take a cow on pasture over a car's exhaust any day. Here I am giving animals their natural diet and environment, covering up our precious topsoil, sequestering carbon in the root zone, feeding a nation and also receiving blame for gas emissions. I'm in a quandary of what I should do, feed my community or manipulate the rumen bugs.

Have no fear the gaseous CEO's are here. I read with interest in this paper, the research going on by U.S Dairy and Dairy Management Inc.'s Innovation Center on how we humans want to make the "Cow of the Future", to solve our industry's greenhouse gas emission problems. Talk about passing wind for any regenerative farming future. Humans are great aren't they, let's keep blaming the cows, feed them a myriad of feeds in confinement, tinker with their intestinal tracts and then justify to the consumer that this is sustainable. If it was, maybe our farm wouldn't be one of the last holdouts in our town.

I am very suspicious indeed, of words like diet modification, targeting, engineering, production efficiencies and the University of Alberta's research in genetic selection for methane for my bovine buddies. Holy cow Bossy, pretty soon you'll have your own internal Glade Air Freshener. I have been around long enough to get a sense that these processes smell like inputs farmers will have to buy. Is this research really needed from the dairyman's checkoff dollars? At a time when 15 cents per hundred is needed at the farm to, oh, I don't know, maybe pay for family health insurance.

Haven't we messed with our foundation mothers long enough? How many more additives and feeding strategies do we need to give the perfect forage machine, to compensate for our modern farming practices. Have we made our animals the scapegoats, in our quest for a cheap food system and cleaner air? Can we admit there may be an alternative to fooling with the inside of a cow?

This is where grass-based farming methods have taken root by allowing animals to feed themselves, feed the farm family and also the underground livestock. This natural grassland system has worked for thousands of years, way before we arrived to modernize it. The secret to the methane debacle is in the soil and a farming system that keeps it covered. Does anyone remember the Bison roaming over the vast grassland prairie? This was our foundation and strength that we still rely on today. Remember the Lord doesn't farm without livestock.

Being a simple man, I can't come to grips with the researcher's notion that God's grazing animals are such environmental heathens. It just doesn't add up for me that an animal eating fresh grass and delivering earthworm food back to the soil has become such a grievous act of gas exchange.

I admit this issue of hot air perplexes me at a time when our economy is riddled with debt made from decisions made out of this thin air. Shouldn't we be investing our dollars in the next generation of real green collar jobs, (farmers), local food systems and soil conservation instead of perpetuating the idea of same, but different. Instead of blaming the cows for all the greenhouse gases, take a look in the bathroom mirror after you have ingested Grandma Brown's beans and admit gas is a natural thing.

Troy Bishop, New York
www.thegrasswhisperer.com
Published in Lancaster Farming 5/30/09

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Lameness in Organic Dairy Cattle

By Hubert J Karreman, VMD

Lameness is an issue which can cripple animals if not tended to properly. In organic dairy systems lameness will affect the animals' ability to walk to and from pasture as well as the amount of time they graze while out on pasture. In many instances the animal becomes lame on laneways or in the barnyard. This article will address the reasons and the principles of potential treatments for lame cows on organic farms. Most lameness is due to a problem in the hoof, but not always.

Lameness not in the hoof

First let's talk about the less common lameness which usually does not involve an infectious process. Such lameness may be due to physical trauma such as ground hog holes or arthritis. It is necessary to carefully watch the cow walk to know if the hoof is involved or if the problem is higher up in the leg. Basically, if the cow plants full weight on the foot when walking, the problem is not likely to be in the hoof. If it is an older cow and you can hear a clicking sound up high near the hip, you likely have old age degeneration and arthritis. I do find this with organic herds more than in conventional herds simply because animals tend to live longer in organic herds.

Footrot - due to puncture of interdigital growth

Short stride limbs usually also indicate a joint problem higher in the limb. Swellings at the hock, if not due to a cut, will often be benign and not hinder a cow. These may be there for very long periods of time. Swellings at the hock which all of a sudden occur can be due to a cut, even a tiny one, which will create an infection in the joint. These can be extremely difficult to treat effectively without antibiotics since there is not good general circulation to that area for the immune system to come to the rescue.

Generalities

Before moving onto more common causes of lameness, some generalities need to be stated. (1) Contagious and environmental causes can lead to infections in the hoof. (2) Lameness in the front limbs is usually more debilitating to an animal than lameness in the rear limbs. (3) The ruminant hoof has two toes (digits), an inside (medial) and an outside (lateral). On the front limb, ~95% of hoof lameness will be in the inside (medial) toe and ~95% of lameness involving the rear limb will be in the outside (lateral) toe. Knowing this will help you focus in easier on where the problem may be.

Quick approaches to lameness

Most farmers would rather squirt a liquid treatment on a cow's hoof during milking to avoid taking the time to lift an individual leg to inspect the hoof. Unfortunately a quick squirt of something will only work if early on during a problem, prior to any dried scab or crud covering over the actively infected part. Foot baths in general are preventive (not curative), can be very sloppy to work with and can lead to soil which is maxed out for copper when using copper sulphate. I have always recommended a box of dry

hydrated lime for animals to walk through as a good preventive and not much of a mess at all. Just remember that if a simple squirt or an antiseptic foot box is not clearing up a lame cow, you really should lift the hoof to identify and address the problem.

Positioning the hoof

Lifting a cow's hind limb is fairly simple if you have a rail to tie her to and a beam above her to lift the leg towards. I like to use 6 loops of baling twine made into the form of a slip knot and then tied just above the hock. I then throw a come-along over the beam and attach the hook (near the lever jack) to the slip knot and then crank the hock up, ending at a line level to the bottom of the vulva. For a front limb, I place a cow collar under the "armpit" of the cow and attach the come-along to that. A front limb needs to be lifted no higher than 6-12" off the ground. The collar will immobilize the cow somewhat. For either a front or a rear limb, make sure the cow is tied close to a rail so she cannot back up or otherwise move around much.

Examining the hoof

Remembering that the inside toe of the front limb and the outside toe of the rear limb are more prone to problems, start scraping away the appropriate toe with a well sharpened hoof knife or wash the entire hoof in a pail of water. There are a few key things to look for on initial inspection. First, know that with a normal shaped hoof all outer edges of the toes would land perfectly upon a flat surface (like a board). Any hoof growth that would hinder that should be pared away as excess hoof growth can indicate that she has not been nearing weight on that area and not keeping it worn down normally.

A hoof overgrowth on the bottom of the hoof is usually the site of an abscess. Paring that swelling away will likely reveal an abscess area, which will hopefully be opened up and allowed to drain. With cows, an abscess needs to be opened up to the point where you cannot slip your finger between the hoof and the more internal nail bed. Any black somewhat shiny lines should also be pared away as these often lead towards an abscess. Abscesses that are near the front point of the toe usually make an animal lame very quickly. Unfortunately, most cows will be lame for a lot longer than noticed since they can place weight on the other toe of the same limb. Therefore once a cow ordinarily shows lameness, she has been lame longer than suspected. Abscesses usually are due to stepping on stones either in deep muck or when the lane ways are hard and there is no "give". Occasionally gravel can be located and extracted from an abscess.

Strawberry heel (hairy heel wart) always occurs at the hoof-hairline junction on any limb with any toe. If it's not at the hoof hairline junction, it's not strawberry heel. Foot rot always occurs in the soft area between the toes, no where else. Foot rot also occurs when a growth between the toes becomes infected by a sharp stone. In these instances, the growth needs to be cut out prior to the following three treatment steps. Regardless if the problem is strawberry heel, foot rot or an abscess, the following three steps need to be taken: (1) scrub the area vigorously so there is some bleeding, (2) cleanse the area with hydrogen peroxide or iodine tincture and (3) use a thick paste made of Betadine® and white table sugar to apply to the area. Repeat in 3 days. Having an area bleed somewhat is good in that new circulation will come to an otherwise diseased area and it means you will have gotten rid of any barrier so the medicine can penetrate the area better.

There can be odd problems as well. But only by lifting the hoof in a timely manner will you maximize your cow's ability to walk back and forth to pasture and effectively graze. ◆

See Dr. Karreman Live At The 2009 NODPA Field Days in Pennsylvania

Dr Karreman will be one of our featured speakers at the 2009 NODPA Field Days. For more information, turn to page 20 in this newsletter!

He has been practicing almost exclusively with organic dairy cows for the past 14 years. He has been invited to give nearly 100 presentations about organic health care across the US, Canada and Korea to farmers and veterinarians alike. He can be reached at 717-768-7088 or

penndutch@earthlink.net.

Counting the Costs That Count on Your Farm

by James G. Landis

I don't know what drives you out of bed in the morning. Could it be a love for cows? A habit you've gotten into? A desire to see the sunrise and feel the crisp morning air? A fear of the coming heat later in the day? A vicious cycle of never-ending work that you dread? A way of life you love and a challenge you can't resist!

Regardless of what your motives for dairying are, I suspect that somewhere, if it's not obvious, lurks the desire to be financially rewarded for your efforts. Somewhere in the recesses of your subconscious mind you harbor the realization that the costs of producing milk on your farm must not exceed the income from the sale of the milk. Somewhere in the past or present prowls the fear that you may go broke or that the children will not want to be a part of this difficult venture.

Yet so often dairymen don't know how to determine the business condition of their own farm. They look under the bed for a ghost. They study the sky and pray that it will rain or that it will stop raining. They look at the DHIA records and notice the pounds of milk produced per cow.

They talk about the number of cows they're milking. They talk about the mailbox milk price. They wonder if the banker will give them a larger loan. Dairymen discuss what to do when the milk check does not cover the feed bill and make the monthly payment at the bank. None of these things have much to do with measuring the efficiency of your dairy operation. None of them give you a clue about changes you can make on your dairy to improve the productivity and profits.

You can do little to change the milk price or the rain clouds. But you can control your costs. Every dairymen can and should know what it costs to produce 100# of milk on his farm. If he knows this figure, he is also in a position to take action. He can then study the changes necessary to lower his cost of production and thus increase his profits.

Once a farmer knows how to compute what it costs him to produce a Cwt. (hundred weight) of milk, he will change his focus from things he can't change to things he can control; the things he can do something about. The manager becomes the master of his dairy, the maker of his own fate.

Finding the cost to produce a Cwt. of milk on your farm is not that complicated. Here are the rules that guide us.

1. Separate living expenses from farm expenses.
2. Use figures from a full calendar year of operation.
3. Use actual figures from records, not guesstimates.
4. Do not use calculated or computed numbers such as DHIA figures.
5. Separate Operating Costs from Capital Use Costs.
6. Take inventory of crops, feed, and livestock.
7. Adjust costs for inventory change.

At the field days, I will pass out work sheets so you can calculate the cost of producing a Cwt. of milk on your farm. In session, I will give a more detailed explanation of how Springwood Dairy computes their cost/Cwt. following the above rules.

Probably few of you will have enough of your own figures at the field days to calculate an accurate cost/Cwt. But if you will bring the following figures for your farm to the meeting, perhaps you can gain some quick insights into the efficiency of your dairy.

1. The number of Cwt.s milk sold in the last year.
2. The total dollars spent for purchased feed.
3. The man-years used to operate dairy. This can be given in fractions for children or part-time workers.

See you at the field days on August 13,14 at Gap, PA. Bring your calculator along and we'll count the costs that count on your dairy. ◆

James Landis will be the keynote speaker at this year's NODPA Field Days. To learn more about Mr. Landis and the Field Days, go to page 20 of this newsletter.

COMMENTARY

Why the Panic Over $26 Milk?

(taken from conversations on Odairy Listserv)

Trying to explain in three sentences why most organic dairy farmers are in somewhat of a panic with $26 milk isn't possible. Let me offer you a scenario that you can pass on to your friend that may help explain the concern.

I invite him to start up an organic dairy farm, but he must abide by the following stipulations, in no particular order:

- first and foremost, he must follow the letter and intent of the National Rule. Pasture and outdoor access must be maximized. Stress on animals must be minimized, and they should be able to exhibit their natural behavior as much as possible. Cows may be milked no more than 2X per day.
- employees may only work 40 hours per week, and they must be paid a living wage, which would equate the average income for all workers of any type in the region he farms. Any more than 40 hours per week would require time & a half, and holidays would require double the pay per hour. Vacations would start out at 1 week per year after a year of employment, and then gain 1 vacation day for every year of service thereafter. Employees would be given 5 sick days per year and 3 personal days per year, with pay.
- employeess must be provided complete health care coverage, including eye and dental care, along with a generous retirement package. They should be able to live a middle class life at the very least (savings account, put kids through college, etc.), and even earn enough to start up their own farm or help one of their children get started.
- he must own the farm, inlcuding all buildings and equipment, and enough land to support all his animals, even in a poor crop year.
- -any borrowing must be at commercial rates, and any improvements to the farmstead must be paid for by income the farm generates. No government grants nor low interest loans for any reason.
- all animal replacements must be raised on the farm, and all feed must be grown on the farm's land; no imported nor purchased feed whatsoever. An exception can be made if he decides to start his farm on land not suitable for tillage, but one that does grow excellent pasture and hay: grains may be bought onto the farm, but not forage.
- equipment used by the farm must be brand new; no used machinery, milking equipment, vehicles, etc. Machinery must be replaced on set schedule so that the latest technol-

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INDUSTRY NEWS

NODPA 9th Annual Field Days

August 13 & 14 in Kinzer, PA

THE SCHEDULE

Thursday, August 13

Noon-1 pm: Registration at Spring Wood Organic Farm, 1143 Gap Road, Kinzers, PA 17535

1-2 pm: Panel on the Benefits of Hedgerows and orientation to the pasture walk at Roman Stoltzfoos' farm:

- Roman Stoltzfoos, host and organic dairy farmer; Jim Gardiner, organic dairy farmer
- Lisa McCrory, NODPA News and Web Editor and organic farmer and Sarah Flack, NOFA-VT Organic Dairy and Livestock Advisor

In addition to hearing about hedgerows from Roman and others, Lisa and Sarah will describe how the pasture walk will be somewhat different: having educational stations in the fields.

2-4:00 pm: Pasture Walk with focus on hedgerows, forage quality, pasture management and more. Educational stations:

- Benefits of Hedgerows-Roman Stoltzfoos
- Native Plant Identification- Kathy Soder, Animal Scientist, USDA-ARS
- Fence Lines and Water Systems-Sarah Flack
- Basics of Pasture Management-Lisa McCrory
- Forage Quality- Tim Fritz, Agronomist and President, King's Agri-Seeds; Dwight Stoltzfoos, host and organic dairy farmer

4:30- 10 pm: Dinner and NODPA's Annual Meeting at Spring Wood Organic Farm

- 4:30- 6:00 pm: Social Hour and Trade Show with light refreshments and beverages
- 6:00-7:30 pm: Chicken Barbeque with fresh local corn, potatoes, salads, finished off with homemade pie and Stoltzfoos' delicious gelato (Italian Ice Cream)

  7:30 pm: **NODPA's Annual Meeting:**
  - Welcome from Henry Perkins, NODPA President
  - NODPA Year in Review – Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director
  - Reports from the regions and FOOD Farmers update
  - Producer-Only Meeting follows

Friday, August 14

7:30-9:00 am: Registration, coffee and light breakfast

9-10 am: Balancing Rations on Pasture: Discussion on economically balancing rations in today's economy

- Kathy Soder, Animal Scientist, USDA-ARS Pasture Systems and Watershed Management Research Unit, University Park, PA. Kathy's research focuses on the nutrition and grazing behavior of ruminants.
- Ken Muckenfuss, KOW Consulting Assoc., dairy nutritionist
- Sarah Flack, moderator, NOFA-VT Organic Dairy and Livestock Advisor

10-10:15 am: Coffee and Milk Break

10:15-11:15 am: Preventative Herd Health Care: Practical and Economical Ways to KeepYour Herd Healthy.

- Dr. Hue Karreman, VMD, Penn Dutch Cow Care, Lancaster, PA
- Jeff Mattocks, Fertrell, animal nutritionist
- Sarah Flack, moderator

11:30 am-12:30 pm: Keynote: The Beliefs That Drive Us and **Counting The Cost to Produce One Hundred Pounds of Milk**

James Landis will begin by talking about the beliefs that drive us. Next, he will focus on: separating production expenses from personal expenses; the difference between Capital Use costs and Operating Expenses; taking inventory; adjusting for inventory change; using actual figures rather than calculating figures.

12:30-1:30 pm: Make-Your-Own Sandwich Lunch Buffet and Door Prize Drawing: Fresh sandwich meats, cheeses, breads and salads, topped off with fresh fruit and homemade cookies.

1:30-2:30 pm: Striving for an Efficient Dairy

In James Landis' afternoon session, he will focus on: the heart of the dairy: swift, simple, pleasant milking; mob handling; controlling feed costs; raising heifers on pasture; turning youngsters into adults.

2:30-4:30 pm: James Landis will lead a tour of the Stoltzfoos' dairy operation to see how Roman and Dwight have applied Landis' practical information to their farm enterprises.

Keynote Speaker: James Landis

Raised on dairy farms in eastern Pennsylvania, Virginia and South Carolina, James Landis and his family have owned dairy farms in Georgia since 1968. Along with his son and 2 sons-in-law, James is currently milking 1200 cows on 4 different farms in Georgia, with three of their seven children having chosen to be involved in dairying. Mr. Landis notes that dairying can be a way of life that fosters a deeply religious love for the soil, plants and animals, and for our fellow human beings, indeed for all living things.

After keeping years of cost/cwt records for their own dairy, the Landis' developed a reliable base from which to evaluate where they are and where they want to go. James has created a cost/cwt spreadsheet program that he uses to assist farmers analyze the efficiency of their own dairy farms. He has observed dairying practices across the USA, and in 8 countries, and has used this experience to help farmers in seven states to design and purchase milking systems direct for a New Zealand manufacturer. Based on his work with Doug Parker, there are now simple, efficient milking systems in place in 9 states.

Directions to Spring Wood Organic Farm

1143 Gap Road, Kinzers, PA 17535

From Lancaster PA, start out going East on Lincoln Highway/US-30; turn right onto 41-S/ Newport Pike; at stop sign (short distance), turn left onto Mine Road. Turn onto Gap Road, your first left. Travel 1.5 miles on Gap Road and the farm is on the left at 1143 Gap Road.

Accommodations

The Lancaster PA region has a variety of accommodations, and a quick internet search will put you in touch with a wide range of options. Those interested in camping at Roman Stoltzfoos' farm should contact him directly.

REGISTRATION

NODPA's 9th ANNUAL FIELD DAYS & PRODUCER MEETING & DINNER

Cost		Qty.	Total
	Field Days: Thursday & Friday		
Free	Organic dairy & transitioning producers & families		
$35	All who aren't organic dairy producers		
$10	Thursday afternoon events only		
	Meals		
$20	Thurs. dinner (under 12, $10)		
Free	Transitioning farm families, Thursday evening dinner		
$15	Friday breakfast (7:30-9am) (under 12, $8)		
$15	Friday lunch (under 12, $8)		
$35	NODPA News (6 issues)		
	Total amount enclosed:		

NODPA has a few scholarships available to assist producers with the cost of attending Field Days. Call 413-772-0444 for info.

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Make checks payable to NODPA. Mail: NODPA c/o Ed Maltby, 30 Keets Rd., Deerfield, MA 01342.
Email: ednodpa@comcast.net
Phone: 413-772-0444; Fax: 866-554-9483
Pay by credit card. Circle type: Master Card • Visa

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Expiration date: _____ Security Code: _____

Online payment: www.nodpa.com/2009_fielddays.shtml

SPONSORS

Horizon Organic
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LOFCO
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NOFA New York
NOFA Vermont
Organic Dairy Farmers Cooperative
Renaissance Nutrition
River Valley Fencing
Udder Comfort

FOOD & PRODUCT DONATIONS

Buffalo Molasses
Horizon Organic
Organic Cow
Organic Valley
MOSES
Natural By Nature
Neptune's Harvest
Udder Comfort

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Plant Biodiversity

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dred thousand plant species and in our cleverness to manage the need for utmost quantity we have reduced our selection to a mere handful of crops to feed ourselves (including a handful of forages to feed our grazing animals), it is no wonder that we have become dependent, even addicted to the "miraculous" yet costly and deleterious side effects of rescue chemistry: fossil fuel fertilizers, pesticides, anti-biotics, parasiticides (and their organic counterparts!). We've viewed our livestock and ourselves as isolated organisms, rather than recognizing them and us as "super organisms" or more accurately as complex "ecosystems" that are self organizing, cooperating, self sacrificing and constantly communicating with each other.

A big focus on "Food as Medicine" discussions are around those powerful compounds that plants synthesize called plant secondary metabolites (PSM's), which are produced by plants to protect themselves from the extremes of weather, ultra violet radiation, insects, diseases and excessive grazing. These PSM's become a major component in the healthy metabolism and immunity of animals and humans that consume them. So far, science has isolated over 80,000 of these compounds. Some of the more popular ones we frequently hear about are resveratrol (grapes), lutein (kale and egg yolk), lycopene (tomato), di-indole methane (brassicas), EGCG (green tea), etc. The fact is all green plants produce PSM's and in large quantity. Grazing animals take them in and concentrate them in fatty tissue because they are fat soluble compounds.

When livestock consume dozens of species of plants there is a synergism involved that allows animals to increase the efficiency of digestion as well as the elimination of toxins, both of those inherent in the feeds (all plants contain both nutrients and toxins) and those by-products of metabolism. Considering that 70-80% of the immune system is seated in the gut, this poses to be a remarkable contribution to an animal's ability to ward of pathogens and parasites before they become opportunistic.

As Dr. Fred Provenza points out in the research he's done at Utah State University, "Ruminants thus discriminate the post-ingestive effects of forages with secondary compounds and complementarities among forages with diverse secondary compounds are likely not only to increase forage intake, but to improve the nutrition, production and health of the animals as well." (See "Value of Plant Diversity for Diet Mixing and Sequencing" from Range Management, Feb. 2009).

Back in 2000, one of the hottest summers on record in Pennsylvania, I searched for nutritional information on "weeds" and woody plants that could compare their nutritional make-up to conventional forages as per criteria in the National Research Council. I could find none, other than N-P-K content of annual weeds that competed for nutrients with annual crops. So, I conducted my own study, sampling two dozen, non-legume perennial plants consisting of forbs, brambles, vines and trees and comparing such with a comprehensive analysis of quality alfalfa.

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KIWI WILLOW ANALYSIS (see page 22 for details of this study)

	Dry Basis	As Rec'd		Dry Basis	As Rec'd
% MOISTURE		21.7	% PHOSPHORUS	0.41	0.32
% DRY MATTER		78.3	% POTASSIUM	1.53	1.20
% PROTEIN	20.8	16.3	% MAGNESIUM	0.16	0.13
% AVAILABLE PROTEIN	20.8	16.3	IRON PPM	151	119
% DIGESTIBLE PROTEIN	15.8	12.4	COPPER PPM	11	9
% ACID DETERGENT FIBER	32.9	25.7	ZINC PPM	49	38
% NEUTRAL DET. FIBER	40.4	31.7	MANGANESE PPM	29	23
RFV	146		% FAT	3.1	2.5
%TDN	63.5	49.8	% ASH	7.4	5.8
ME (MCAL/LB)	1.043	0.817	% SUGAR	10.8	8.4
EST. NET ENERGY (T/CWT)	53.9	42.3	RFQ	142	
NE/LACT (MCAL/LB)	0.653	0.512	% TDN: Univ. Wis, UW	62.3	48.8
NE/MAINT (MCAL/LB)	0.648	0.508	NE/LACT (MCAL/LB) UW	0.639	0.501
NE/GAIN (MCAL/LB)	0.383	0.300	MILK LBS./TON OF DM	2.839	
% NDFD 48 Hr., %NDF	39.2	30.7	% IVTD	74.2	58.2
% CALCIUM	1.42	1.11	NSCa	28.2	22.1

4,500 Cuttings/Ha 1,800 Cuttings/Acre 43,000 SF/AC + 1800 = (1) per 25 square feet
1.5 meter pollard height

Mean Faecal Egg Counts (FEC) as eggs/g of faeces for undrenched lambs on the three forage treatments

Date	Pasture	Pasture/browse block	Browse block
5 January	411	140	214
2 February	446	455	965
2 March	616	453	207
15 March	1270	891	534
Drenched lambs:			
Upper	437	267	305
Lower	143	154	59

- FEC remained very low in all the drenched groups
- FEC progressively increased in undrenched lambs on pasture, especiallly later in the experiment
- For undrenched lambs with full access to browse blocks, the FEC increased early February and then declined
- At the experiment end, FEC of undrenched browse block lambs was similar to that in drenched lambs on pasture.
- FEC for undrenched lambs in the pasture/browse block treatment was often between that of undrenched lambs on control pasture and those with full access to browse blocks.

Liveweight Gain (LWG; g/day) and final dag score (units)

Attribute		Pasture	Pasture/browse block	Browse block
LWG				
7 Dec - 2 Feb	Drenched	220	200	200
	Undrenched	200	200	190
7 Dec - 15 March	Drenched	160	130	190
	Undrenched	110	110	160
Final Liveweight	Drenched	43.9	40.6	46.4
15 March	Undrenched	39.2	39.0	43.5
Dag Score	Drenched	1.33	1.20	1.13
	Undrenched	1.80	1.40	1.40

- LWG was approximagtely 200 g/day early in the experiment and similar for all six groups.
- Total LWG tended to be increased by drenching and by full access to browse blocks
- Total LWG and final liveweight were similar for full access/undrenched lambs and control pasture/drenched lambs.
- Initial dag score was 1.2 and increased markedly in undrenched pasture-fed lambs. Drenching and full access to browse blocks reduced dag score.
- Considering all the results, the undrenched lambs grazing browse blocks performed similarly to drenched lambs.

These charts are on my website for review and I was astounded at how nutrient dense these plants were, despite growing upon poor soils without any lime or fertilizer (see www.agri-dynamics.com).

Since I'm a fan of willows (first pollen produced for bees in springtime), I found some really compelling research from New Zealand where ranchers on the leeward side of the North Island run out of forages during summer and have successfully supplemented a lot of dry matter intake with "fodder trees" consisting of willows (Salix kinuyanagi, Salix matsudana, Salix humbotiana, Salix tangoio, all originally developed in Japan) and poplars (Kawa, Toa, Flevo, Crows nest, Neronese) for cattle, sheep and deer. These trees not only supply high quality feed, but shade and shelter as well as conserving soil. They also perform well on low fertility soils, are high in protein, low

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

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in soluble protein, high in digestibility and macro/micro elements.

I stumbled upon an American "descendent" of Japanese kiwi willows and was really encouraged as to how much protein, energy, especially dNDF, and digestibility (RFQ and IVTDN) was in this plant. **See chart on page 22.**

The kiwi's found that willows are also a good choice for wet, rush infested areas and can be an excellent anti-helminthic for sheep and goats, in that undrenched lambs grazing browse blocks performed similarly to drenched lambs. Additionally, kiwi research proved willow and poplar browse eliminated ryegrass staggers and facial eczema, a serious hide ailment caused by zinc deficiencies.

In one experiment, lambs were raised on pasture alone; pasture with one of 3 rotations into a browse block consisting of 2,400 willows planted per acre (or 56 trees per 1,000 square feet); and browse block alone. As the two tables indicate the undrenched lambs grazing browse blocks performed as well to drenched lambs grazing pasture.

One of the reasons for the remarkable impact these trees had upon parasite control is their high content of a PSM called tannins, one of the most ubiquitous of PSM's. Tannins are also responsible for converting highly soluble protein into a by-pass (slow release) protein, digested in the lower gut and reducing the amount of Blood Urea Nitrogen (BUN) and Milk Urea Nitrogen (MUN) which contributes to compromised immunity, weight loss, reproductive failure and even death.

The trees are typically pollarded, that is they are cut at about 4′-6′ in height, allowing it to bush out with more foliage accessible to grazing animals. For more kiwi info, check out www.hortresearch.co.nz/wprc (or) www.hortresearch.co.nz/index/page 549.

Another fan of forage diversity is Kathy Voth (www.livestockforlandscapes.com) who has been "teaching" stock to eat noxious weeds by again increasing the diversity (thus nutrition) of their diet allowing them to extract nutrients while metabolizing and eliminating toxins. She recently pointed out a Wisconsin experiment where cattle ("grazing" animals) demonstrated a preference to woody plants (browse) over grasses, following their primary preference to forbs. You can download the article at www.cias.wisc.edu/wicst/pubs/oaksavarticle.htm. All in all, it appears that we've been marginalizing really important practices that the wild populations of ungulates have depended upon for millennia.

The solutions to our dilemma of trying to get around the wall we've hit relative to being monoculture farmers, organic or conventional, is to recognize we need holistic system approaches to dealing with our challenges. This would include focusing on grass based livestock genetics, providing enough biodiverse feed on the farm so that livestock can "learn" to eat them and perhaps more importantly "teach" their herd mates to consume them through Mama, beginning in the womb to the fetus, Mama to neonate, sibling-to-sibling, etc. The more diversity one has the less dependent you are on the lime and fertilizer truck (and remember I'm a "soils" guy!). That's because primitive plants have discovered the knack over eons of time to effectively and efficiently extract and mobilize nutrients. Domesticated plants need to be fed (I guess they're not "hunter-gatherers" but are more like "country squires").

Don't forget to include (if you can make it work) multi-species graziers: more kinds of manure/microbes, gut microbes, different kinds of parasites that can't colonize every host, thus interrupting the parasite's cycle. Encourage wildlife, especially birds and bats, reptiles and amphibians. Groundhogs dig holes, bringing up subsoil, a great mineral lick for livestock. Use riparian corridors and woodlots appropriately. You'll remove invasives, encourage natives and develop a symbiosis between the ecto-fungal dominated forest leaf litter and tree roots and the endo-fungal and bacterial dominated grassland. Create wetlands, swales and ponds to invite more water to both come to the farm and stay there as well. As the organic matter increases, the farm becomes a water magnet and the soil substrate becomes a coral reef of life for producers, prey and recyclers.

Your farm thus becomes an eco-system organism with the predominant outside-of-the-farm resources being free sunlight, CO_2, N_2 and H_2O. Now, you can string up the hammock and experience that "less is more." ◆

INDUSTRY NEWS

USDA Announces Equivalency Agreement on Organics with Canada

On Wednesday, July 17, Deputy Secretary Merrigan announced an agreement with Canada that establishes equivalency between USDA's National Organic Program standards and the Canada Organic Product Regulation standards, which go into effect on June 30. Under this agreement, organic-certified growers and processors in the US do not have to become certified separately under Canadian standards to sell products as organic in Canada, and the same applies to Canadian growers and processors selling in the US. Deputy Secretary Merrigan hailed the agreement as an "important first step towards global harmonization of organic standards," as well as an important step in expanding export markets for organic farmers and processors.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION: FEATURED FARM

Hails Family Farm: Processing, Local Sales ... & Wholesale

Talk about a diversified operation. Paul and Joyce Hail of Wyalusing, PA have a grade A processing plant on farm, make cheese, butter, yogurt and cream cheese, run a small CSA, and sell to local and national markets.

By Lisa McCrory

The Hails Family Farm is not your typical organic dairy farm, but maybe we will see more farms following a similar model as the organic dairy industry continues to adjust. The Hails Family Farm is a 450 acre diversified farm where 52 is owned and the rest is rented. Paul and Joyce grow many products on their farm; from dairy to meat to vegetable crops, and play the role of producer, processor and marketer. They have a 40 cow dairy herd consisting of Ayrshires, Normande, NZ Jersey/NZ Holstein crosses, Brown Swiss and Jerseys, and they grow an acre of organic produce, which is sold to a small CSA membership, farmers market and other local customers. Located on the farm is one of only 40 Grade A milk processing plants in the United states. They make butter, yogurt, cream cheese, grade A fluid milk, and a number of Monterey Jack cheeses (horse radish, garlic/pepper, etc). They process milk two times a week and the rest of their fluid milk is sold to Horizon Organic; that is, they will be doing that until their contract is up July 1, 2009.

Paul and Joyce have 4 children who have been or continue to be an integral part of the farm operation. Zachary (20) is living on his own with a career with a career as a Farm Refrigeration Specialistd, Caitlin (19) is in college, Cara (17) in charge of milking cows and Jacob (15) is the 'all-around guy' on the farm. Paul is in charge of cropping and overall herd management and Joyce is in charge of the calves and home schooling their kids. Another important person working on the farm (Paul says they wouldn't be able to do it without her) is Julie Matsen. She is in charge of the processing plant including packaging and inventory.

Transition to organic dairy

The farmland has been certified organic since 2000 by GOA. Their transition costs were minimal because the land was certifiable already and the cow herd grew slowly. They started with 8 cows and a bunch of calves and were using a simple walk-through milking parlor. Because they processed some of their milk for their own product, most of the processors were not interested in picking up their milk. Horizon was the only one interested and they started shipping milk to Horizon in 2002.

Forages and Pasture System

The cows' feed program is grass-based, meaning that their main diet is hay, baleage and corn silage. From April to October the cows are 100% grass fed with minerals from Fertrell. In the winter the ration varies depending on the crop year. Ultimately, the cows get 5 lbs of grain with forages offered as the main course. This winter they may try oats and molasses for a concentrate and they will probably be without corn silage as the spring has been too wet to get the corn planted.

Most of the forages are grown on the farm and harvested as hay, silage or baleage, and 80 acres is used for their intensive grazing system. Paul puts in some baleage using small grains (oats, some barley, triticale, clover). He gets his seed from American Organics out of Illinois. Their winter sacrifice areas are typically planted to oats, festolium and peas.

Milking every 16 hours

Cows are milked every 16 hours year round; even at freshening. The benefits to this is they have more down time for family, milk solids go up a little, and they are able reduce their energy inputs by 14 milkings a month. They have a fall freshening herd with June and July being their slowest time. This schedule works best for their milk market demands as milk sales go down a lot in the summer. This also gives them more time to get their crops in and Paul finds that it is better for his cows to gain condition on the spring pasture rather than making milk that he cannot market.

Genetics/Breeding

Cows and heifers are bred primarily with AI, followed by a clean up bull. This year they used a Dutch Belt bull for clean up breeding. Artificial Insemination happens from September to Christmas and the clean up bull gets put to work from December to January. Paul likes to breed for size, good legs, good udders, AA casein milk and dual purpose qualities. The challenge with AI on a 16 hour milking-schedule is you are not watching them enough; sometimes they will use breeding patches and have their vet come for pregnancy checks.

Calf Rearing

Calves have been raised in hutches over the years, but on a 16 hour milking/chore schedule, this does not work very well for them. This year they decided to try raising the calves on their moms for the first 8-12 weeks. After that, they will transition them to stantions for 8-12 weeks and after that, they will move to a heifer lot. Paul has over 20 cows due to freshen from mid July to September, and is looking forward to seeing how this new system works.

Once a cow has freshened, they like to keep mom and heifer in a pen for a day or two to make sure that the calf is strong and the two have bonded. They feed a lot of yogurt to their calves if they get sick, using their drinkable yogurt product.

Calves in the past were fed 6 quarts of milk a day and the volume increased as they got older. Now that the calves are on their moms, they are certain that the calves will drink more milk and will learn how to graze right away.

Finding Market for 2/3 of their milk

Recently Horizon dropped them, exercising the 180 day notice. Their first reason was quality, as the Hails had a Staph aureus problem last December (since resolved) and the other reason was inconsistent volume of milk available at pick-ups. During the 180 day time period Paul was in discussion with Horizon about a guaranteed volume pick-up, discussing a guarantee of 2/3 of his milk volume to go on the truck. The milk quality has returned to under 150,000 SCC the Hails were hopeful that everything would work out. In early June, Paul received a call from Horizon telling him that they were not going to renew. Paul felt like they were leading him on; probably waiting to see how the market was doing. Nonetheless, the Hails now have a lot of organic milk that needs a home; whether they ramp up their personal markets, decrease their herd, or find another processor willing to work with them, change is in the air for this farm. ◆

www.hailsfamilyfarm.com

COMMENTARY

Why The Free Market Is No Long Functioning Properly For Dairy

by Francis Thicke
Manchester Dairy Rally
May 30, 2009

Milk prices paid to dairy farmers have fallen by nearly half this past year, but the price of milk on the grocery store shelf has changed little, if at all. For years dairy farmers have been repeatedly and increasingly squeezed by cycles of this same marketplace phenomenon. Economists call this "asymmetric pricing."

Asymmetric pricing in the dairy sector occurs through the following mechanism: when prices rise for dairy farmers, prices rise in grocery stores; when prices fall for dairy farmers, prices remain the same or fall proportionally less in grocery stores. As a result of this cycle occurring repeatedly, dairy farmers are receiving an increasingly smaller portion of the dollars consumers spend on dairy products.

Why has the supply-demand relationship of the marketplace broken down in the dairy sector? Why is the free market no longer functioning properly?

During recent years, the dairy marketplace has become increasingly concentrated, to the point that monopoly power now appears to play a role in setting dairy prices. Economic literature indicates that if four (or fewer) firms control 40% of a market, that market no longer functions as a competitive market. Today, just one firm purchases 34% of the milk produced by U.S. dairy farmers. That firm, Dairy Farmers of America (DFA), also has marketing agreements with other dairy purchasers, leading industry analysts to estimate that DFA by itself indirectly controls over 40% of the commodity milk market.

Dairy processing and wholesaling has become similarly concentrated. Dean Foods has acquired more than 100 dairy manufacturing plants over the past 15 years as it led the consolidation of dairy processing and wholesaling. Dean's products are sold under more than 50 regional brands and a wide array of private labels of grocery chains. It is not publicly known exactly what share of the processing and wholesale market Dean controls, but some industry analysts put it at 40%. Ironically, as dairy farmers are being paid well below their cost of production, Dean Foods reported record profits last quarter.

These two industry giants, Dean Foods and DFA, work together and have marketing agreements for purchase of raw milk from farmers (DFA) and processing and wholesaling of dairy products (Dean) all across the U.S. To add to this growing monopoly power within dairy marketing, the retail food industry has undergone major consolidation in recent years, resulting in a few large grocery chains controlling the majority of retail sales of U.S. dairy products.

What can be done? For one, the federal government needs to enforce antitrust laws. We need Teddy Roosevelt-style action to bring back competitive markets.

Also, it is time for dairy farmers to step up and take back control of their cooperatives, so cooperatives again work for the benefit of farmers. For example, why does DFA have 12 licenses to import dairy products into the U.S., including a license to import butter substitute? How is that helping DFA's farmer members?

Recent massive imports of dairy products are contributing to the havoc within dairy markets. According to recent data, the equivalent of 20,000 semi tanker trucks full of skim milk were imported into the U.S. during one month's time in the form of milk casein and milk protein concentrates (MPC). It has been reported that much of the imported MPDC has not been subject to FDA safety testing. After the contamination we saw in Chinese dairy products, this is more than an academic concern.

These massive imports drive down prices paid to U.S. dairy farmers. Why are U.S. dairy cooperatives importing milk products to the detriment of U.S. dairy farmers?

Dairy farmers are in crisis and cannot long stay in business under today's market conditions. Small and mid-sized dairy farms, with limited capital, are particularly vulnerable. These farm businesses buy locally and contribute greatly to the economies of rural America. America needs to keep its family dairy farms.

http://www.lavidalocavore.org/diary/1826/iowa-ag-sec-candidate-speaks-out-about-dairy

Making the Most of Your Milk Check

What Dairy Farmers Need to Know About Assignments

By Jill E. Krueger, Farmers legal Action Group

In these troubled times many producers may have to resort to having part of every milk check paid directly to their creditors through something known as an assignment. An assignment exists when one party transfers its interest in a right or property to another party. Dairy producers often assign a part of their right to receive payment for the milk they produce to their creditors. This booklet explains the legal meaning of assignments for producers and gives options to be considered before agreeing to an assignment. It also discusses producers' choices if they give a milk check assignment and then a change in circumstances leaves them without enough money for living and operating expenses and bankruptcy may be a better option for producers and their families. To view the booklet, plus other publications about contracts, especially contracts where extra conditions above organic certification, go to: http://www.nodpa.com/resources_biz.shtml

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Pay Price & Supply Control

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to sign and some producers have been told their base will drop by at least $3/cwt depending on how their milk is utilized. The letter does tie Hood to accepting all the producer's organic milk but prohibits the sale of organic milk to anybody else (no chance of any raw milk sales without prior consent of DMS) and says that DMS will not pay the producer until they receive money from Hood. The new commitment letter tightens the minimum quality standards and cancels the following: the annual cost-of-farming adjustment, the winter grain program, the market premium program, and the new entrant sign-up and transition program. The letter requires that a bulk tank unit must meet grade A standard, otherwise Hood will not make any payments until the unit is authorized, without any clear explanation of what that means. They have also introduced a confidentiality clause to all their contracts (the ones including DMS didn't have one before). They are honoring existing transition contracts and payments. Hood and Stonyfield have refused to meet with producers and/or their lawyers to discuss solutions to the pay price situation.

Horizon Organic

Horizon dropped $1 from its MAP in May and sent out letters explaining their situation and asking for a voluntary 5% cut in production. Their contracts will continue to have confidentiality clauses; tightening up on quality; and they have stopped the "long program" but extended the "short program" as an incentive for producing winter milk. They have reduced production at their company owned farm in Idaho by approximately 50% and have started a range of natural dairy products to help balance their surplus. It is unlikely that any contracts will be longer than a year, especially if quality is questionable or the route is "uneconomic." It is unlikely that Horizon will agree to any herd expansion. Other changes to contracts have been made to address animal welfare issues on the farm and to give the company the ability to terminate the contract when, after an investigation, a producer receives a notice of revocation of their organic certification rather than waiting for the certification to be revoked after an appeal. There have been no arbitrary cuts of producers; approximately 10 contracts have been ended across the whole country. As Horizon renews contracts they will obviously favor those producers who are well located near to processing plants, have consistently good quality milk tests and have good relationship with the company. Horizon is honoring their contracts with transitioning producers and continuing to pay the transitioning bonus.

Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative

Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative (OV) has dropped it's pay price by $1 in February and another $1 from May to July reinstating the dollar for August milk. They have introduced a quota program to start July 1 2009 which is scheduled to end on January 31, 2010, unless extended by the Board of Directors. In the week before it is to be introduced, there are still many details about the program that are not clear. It is not clear what "future market conditions" will determine whether the program will be extended.' If it is extended OV will use the 2009 active base to determine future production levels. The permanency of the program will impact whether producers will need to appeal their active base to protect future production. There is also concern that if the active base is re-figured each year based on a three year history, then the active base will slowly erode. As producers for OV are committed to market all of their product with OV, OV is requesting that producers not sell product through other markets, so no raw milk sales.There is a lack of clarity around how transparent the process of granting appeals will be and whether the reasoning for granting an appeal will be posted for other producer owners to see. The appeal form asks for information on the quality of the milk, recent reasons for expansion, the number of cows and acreage, and shifts in production.

Over-quota milk will have a $15 pay deduction from the producers' mailbox price. The "mailbox price" is defined as the net price received by dairy farmers for milk, including all payments received for milk sold and deducting costs associated with marketing the milk. Historically, milk that OV could not sell organic has been redirected to the conventional market and the same holds true today. OV will be taking any surplus milk and "reblending" it; therefore being a cooperative, they have no FMMO restrictions on how much they pay producers. OV's letter to producers clearly states that if too many producers appeal it will have an adverse effect on everyone.. Similarly to the other companies, OV continues to implement cost-savings measures throughout the business on an on-going basis. To quote an OV producer "we are solving problems as we move forward."

What to do when confronted by these contractual decisions?

- When the market rebounds remember how your milk company treated you!!
- Re-read your contract and show any new contract or commitment letter to your lawyer before signing (your lawyer is bound by confidentiality so it doesn't break any confidentiality agreement).
- Your personal situation and fear for your future may cause you to sign an agreement that is not to your liking, many producers are. If you make the decision to sign a contract, you can privately record what process you followed with the company and the reasons why you don't like the contract/agreement. You might want to get someone to notarize or witness it.
- This information should be stored with the rest of your recordkeeping.
- Why take the time to record this information? There might be future opportunities to address concerns about whether the negotiated contract was a result of negotiation between equals and conducted in good faith or imposed because of unequal power in the marketplace. It might also be useful as a reference in future dealing with the milk companies and/or the Federal government.◆

COMMENTARY

Why the Panic Over $26 Milk?

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ogy and safety advances may be utilized. The saftey of employees must be paramount; any dangerous work or repairs will be hired out to local professionals at the going rate.

- he may work as many hours per week as he desires on his farm; after all, most business owners do. But his children must treated as children, and not be allowed to work like adults until they are adults, and then they must be treated and compensated accordingly. Also, all his living expenses must be generated by the farm; no off-farm income.
- his farm's milk (or other products - diversification is encouraged) may be marketed in any manner he chooses, either direct to consumers or via a processor, or a combination thereof.
- any additional expansion must abide by the above rules.

Comparing conventional to organic under these terms may enable your friend to understand the differences between the two production models. Organic agriculture should represent a different, more socially responsible and long term sustainable business model. The points I've listed parallel other nonagricultural businesses to a large extent; why should organic dairy farms be expected to operate any differently?

If your friend thinks an organic dairy will cash flow with $26 milk while following these rules, he's in for a surprise. I doubt $35 milk would allow all these parameters to be met completely. What would? Parity price. The only other option would be to not meet the organic agriculture standards, and operate an industrial scale confinement operation.

I think what conventional dairy farmers are being paid is a crime, but to point to their situation as the reason that organic dairy farmers should just be thankful we aren't paid like the conventional dairy farmers are doesn't make sense to me. We seem to be headed in that direction. When you factor in the reality that the price of organic dairy products in stores hasn't dropped at all, everyone should be concerned, even those who think they are immune to having financial difficulties.

Sincerely, Kevin Engelbert, Nichols, NY

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Dairy producers protest milk prices

continued from page 8

break even, and are now receiving $10/cwt.

Another Iowa speaker, Francis Thicke, of Fairfield, who operates an organic dairy and has filed to run for Iowa secretary of agriculture in the next state election cycle, said the free market in milk has disappeared since companies like Dean Foods in Horsham, Pa., and Dairy Farmers of America, the country's largest dairy cooperative, that includes Hiland Dairy and Roberts Dairy, together control 40 percent of the country's milk production.

"When this happens," said Thicke, "the free market is lost." In addition, he said DFA has 12 import licenses.

"Why does a cooperative, that is supposed to help farmers, need to import milk?" Thicke asked.

He answered his own question saying that by bringing in foreign milk, the quantity can be used to show an over production of supply and thereby bring down the domestic price of milk.

Thicke described the current price of milk as an asymmetrical scale. If producers get more for their milk, the cost rises in the grocery store. But when the price to producers falls, the cost of milk in stores comes down slightly, if at all.

"Then when producers get more again, the cost of milk goes up with it and it gets very uneven," Thicke said.

Chris Petersen, of Clear Lake, Iowa president of the National Farmers Union, said "I've read about the suicides and the financial pain and enough is enough. Farmers need a price for their products and consumers need a good product."

He accused corporate dairy operations of rigging the pricing system against independent producers. "This isn't capitalism," Petersen told Saturday's gathering. "It's corporate socialism."

John Crabtree, representing the Center for Rural Affairs, based in Lyons, Neb., encouraged those listening to contact U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to implement a base price to keep dairy operations in business.

Contact Larry Kershner at (515) 573-2141 or by e-mail at kersh@farm-news.com.

Organic Valley's Farmers Advocating for Organics (FAFO)

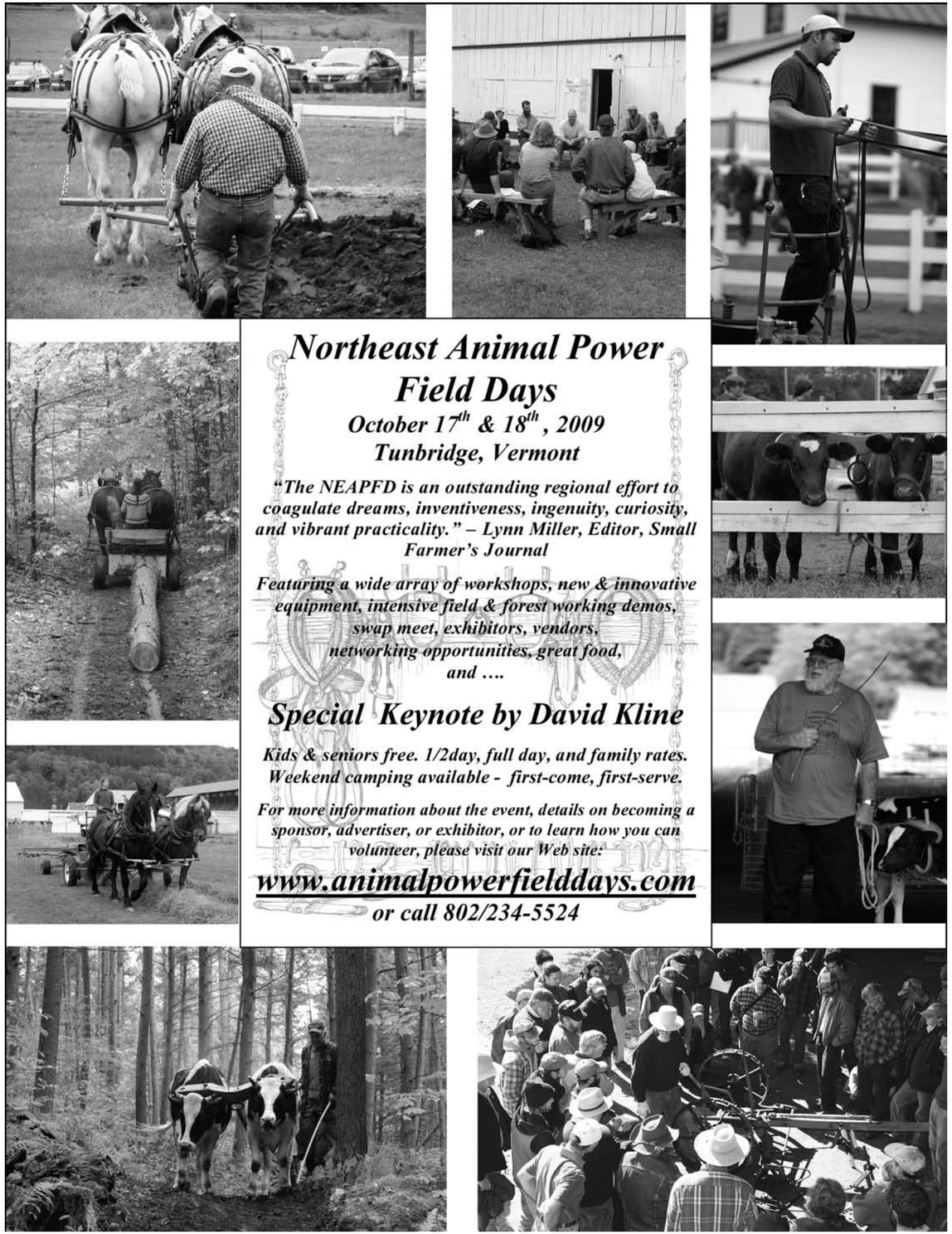
An Open Grant Fund from Organic Valley

A competitive grant making fund open to all applicants seeking funding for project or programs that are oriented towards protecting, safeguarding, and advancing the organic marketplace through research, education and/or advocacy. FAFO is a voluntary fund contributed to only by Organic Valley and Organic Prairie farmer-members. Once gathered, FAFO funds are distributed by a nine-member farmer committee. The FAFO Committee is interested in hearing from individuals, universities, public/private schools, NGOs, farmers and consumers who are interested in securing funds for their organic specific projects.

For more information on application criteria or contact information, please visit:

www.organicvalley.coop/farmerfund

or call Organic Valley at: 888-444-6455.



RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Research initiated to study cattle health problems facing organic dairy industry in Vermont

This is the first in a series of NODPA articles describing research efforts underway in Vermont to meet the needs of Organic Dairy Producers.

There has been little research conducted measuring health and disease of dairy cattle managed under organic production systems in North America. Researchers from Cornell University and the University of Wisconsin have provided data that suggest the prevalence of some diseases may be lower on organic farms when compared with conventional farms. However, differences in management practices between the organic and conventional herds in these studies were significant suggesting that comparisons of disease prevalence between organic and conventional management systems may do little to advance disease control practices on organic farms. Alternatively, quantifying the prevalence of disease and exploring the association between specific disease control practices and disease prevalence on organic dairy farms may help identify key management practices for improving animal health on organic dairies.

Our research laboratory in the Department of Animal Science at the University of Vermont has initiated studies targeting 2 health issues reported to impact organic dairy cattle. In one set of studies, we have begun enrolling organic dairy farms in Vermont to quantify rates of subclinical mastitis and examine mastitis control practices associated with contagious mastitis and bulk tank milk quality. Previous studies conducted in Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands found that subclinical mastitis was a primary concern on organic dairy farms. Recent work conducted at the University of Wisconsin showed more subclinical infections caused by Staphylococcus aureus and Streptococcus agalactiae on organic dairy farms compared with conventional farms. These two bacterial species are typically classified as 'contagious' mastitis pathogens, to indicate the primary source of new infections is from other infected cows in a herd. Conventional herds in the Wisconsin study had higher proportions of quarters infected with coliform, coagulase negative Staphylococci, and non-agalactiae Streptococci bacteria compared to organic herds. These groups of bacteria are classically described as "environmental" organisms, to indicate the primary source of new infections is from the cow's environment. Results of the few studies conducted in North America suggest that mastitis epidemiology of US organic dairy herds may differ from that of organic herds in Europe. Our current research hypothesis is that contagious mastitis pathogens are the dominate cause of chronic subclinical mastitis in organic dairy herds in Vermont, and that organic dairy herds would benefit from improved mastitis control practices targeting contagious pathogens.

Researchers at Cornell University have adapted the NMC (National Mastitis Council) Ten Point Plan as the "Eight Steps to Better Udder Health" for udder health management on organic dairies (see http://www.extension.org/article/18645). The NMC 10 point plan is an adaptation of the original 5-Point Plan developed in the 1960's by researches at the National Institute for Research in Dairying (NIRD) in the United Kingdom. Interestingly, the 5-Point plan was most successful in controlling mastitis caused by contagious pathogens. The mastitis control practices missing in the 'Eight-Steps to Better Udder Health' involve the use of antibiotics for treatment of clinical cases and as dry cow therapy. It can be argued that the inclusion of dry cow therapy in the NMC Ten-Point or NIRD 5-Point plans is a key component of successful contagious mastitis pathogen control. Dry cow therapy provides the benefit of eliminating existing infections at the end of lactation and preventing new infections at dry-off, a time of high risk for developing mastitis. A major benefit of dry cow therapy in conventional herds is the elimination of existing infections. By eliminating an infection at the end of one lactation, the cow will no longer be a source of infection for her herd-mates in her next lactation. Dry cow therapy helps reduce the 'force of infection' in a herd. The combination of thorough post milking teat disinfection (post dipping) and dry cow therapy is the foundation of the 5-Point plan for contagious mastitis control. These observations suggest that organic dairy producers might benefit from alternative practices that would help eliminate existing chronic subclinical infections from cows either during lactation or during the dry period.

The objective of our mastitis control research is to quantify the extent of subclinical mastitis caused by contagious mastitis pathogens in organic dairy herds in Vermont, and to describe the association between mastitis control practices, the levels of subclincial mastitis caused by contagious mastitis pathogens and bulk tank milk quality on organic dairy farms.

In a separate set of studies we are examining the prevalence of lungworm infections to determine if this is a significant problem in organic dairy herds in Vermont. Anecdotal reports have suggested lungworm might be a problem for some dairy herds, especially impacting replacement heifer growth. These studies will begin this summer and continue into the following year where we plan to develop recommendations for control in herds that have experienced either clinical or subclinical lungworm outbreaks in the past.

We are interested in identifying organic dairy herds in Vermont that would be willing to participate in these studies. If you are interested in participating, please contact John Barlow DVM PhD at 802-656-1395, or email john.barlow@uvm.edu.

Next issue we will provide some preliminary results obtained from the mastitis research. ◆

COMMENTARY

Know your rights when you are visited by a governmental regulator

David G. Cox, Falls Church, Virginia

One of the biggest concerns a dairy farmer has selling raw dairy, milk, yogurt, keifer, butter, cheese, skim milk, or cream, is the arrival of a governmental regulator at the front door or gate or driveway. That regulator could be there alone or he/she could be there with droves of other regulators. What is a humble dairy farmer trying to make a living feeding people to do? Should I cooperate? Should I insist on a warrant? Should I get a camera and follow around? These and other questions may race through the mind of the farmer during a visit by a regulator and it is good to know what your rights are beforehand so that if you are presented with this situation you will have a better idea of what to do.

The Constitution of the United States (and all State constitutions as well) guarantees every citizen and their private property the freedom from being searched and seized unless the regulator first gets a search warrant. This freedom is not to be taken lightly. If a regulator shows up at your farm without a warrant, they cannot legally enter your property without your permission. Thus, if a regulator does enter your property without either a warrant or without your permission, they are trespassing and you have the right to escort them off your property. In this situation, it is better to call your local Sheriff's department and have them escort the regulator off your property.

When a regulator shows up at your place without a warrant and wants to conduct an inspection, there are several things you need to know. First, do you want to cooperate with the regulator or do you want to force them to get a warrant? In most States, if you force a regulator to get a warrant after initially denying them entry to your farm, you will be forced to pay the costs of them obtaining the warrant. Second, is it in your best interests to cooperate or to play hardball? This depends on the relationship you have with your regulator. Have the two of you had a cordial relationship in the past? Do you trust your regulator? Has your regulator been honest with you? Has your regulator informed you the reason for the visit is a routine inspection (as opposed to an "investigation")? Have you been in compliance with the law since the last regulator visit? If you can answer yes to all these questions then it is probably better to cooperate and not insist on a warrant.

If the regulator has a warrant, however, that is a different story. When a regulator shows up with a warrant it means that the regulator has gone to a judge (outside of your presence, of course, without you being able to challenge what the regulator has to say) and has convinced the judge that "probable cause" exists to believe that you are either somehow violating the law or are committing a crime. If the judge is convinced by the regulator's story, a warrant will issue and the regulator is free to search your property and is also free to "seize" or take your private property.

However, a warrant must be narrowly tailored and it must describe with "particularity" what can be searched and what can be seized. If the item to be seized is not described in the warrant, it cannot be taken. If the area to be searched is not described in the warrant, it cannot be searched. Therefore, when presented with a warrant, it is essential that you do the following:

1. demand a copy of the warrant (the regulator has to give it to you)
2. read the warrant
3. identify what can be searched and what can be seized
4. follow the regulator around during the search
5. if you have one, contact your attorney

While the warrant is being executed, the regulator will usually be accompanied by several of his/her colleagues. Some regulators may be taking notes, some may be taking photos, and some may even be collecting samples of your products. If this type of behavior is specified in the warrant, it is legal for the regulators to do so. If the warrant does not describe this type of behavior, then they cannot do it. By the way, if the regulators do take anything that belongs to you, they have to itemize it on an "inventory" and they are required by law to provide you with a copy of the inventory.

Also keep in mind that while the warrant is being executed you are legally entitled to follow the regulators around as long as you do not "hinder, thwart, obstruct or delay" the search. This means you can take photographs of the regulators, you can videotape them, and you can take notes of what is going on. You are even allowed to talk to them and ask them questions (but they do not have to respond to you). By collecting evidence in this way, you can document whether the warrant was properly executed.

Remember that regulators are not some omniscient powerful force in the universe but instead are individuals with limitations on their authority. You have the right to stand up to them and you have the right to exercise your rights. The bottom line: do what is best for you and do not be intimidated by the regulators.

David G. Cox is Of Counsel to the Columbus, Ohio law firm of Lane, Alton and Horst LLC and is General Counsel to the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund based in Falls Church, Virginia. The opinions in this article are solely the authors and it is not intended to be construed as legal advice.

About The Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund: The Fund defends the rights and broadens the freedoms of sustainable farmers, and protects consumer access to local, nutrient-dense foods. Concerned citizens can support the Fund by joining at www.farmto-consumer.org or by contacting the Fund at 703-208-FARM (3276). The Fund's sister organization, the Farm-to-Consumer Foundation (www.farmtoconsumerfoundation.org), works to promote consumer access to local, nutrient-dense food and support farmers engaged in sustainable farm stewardship. ◆

NET UPDATE

Recent Discussions On ODairy

By Liz Bawden

The dark undercurrent of many discussion threads brought the feeling that the organic stability we have enjoyed is being eroded. OV farmers received their production quotas in early June. HP Hood's farmers expressed their fears regarding the new pay price policies, which will have unknown effects on farmers' bottom lines. . And some other farmers revealed to the group that they have recently received termination notices from Horizon/Dean Foods. These are painful times for those producers that have lost their market, and many others expressed their support.

Several farmers discussed different methods they preferred to use to measure individual somatic cell counts for farms not using DHI services. One farmer loved the DeLaval somatic cell machine, and credits it with helping him to maintain a low SCC. Another producer routinely uses a strip cup, CMT kit, and a quarter milker to remove milk from the line that tests high. Color indicator cards were used by one producer with some success, but she felt that she was missing some cows. One producer raved about their Mas-D-Tec, which measures conductivity of the milk, but another producer thought it was too expensive, and the numbers did not match with the SCC counts from their lab tests. Another producer loved the Porta-Check, although she mentioned that the strips must be purchased, and can be out-dated if not used quickly enough.

A farmer had a cow with an early case of coliform mastitis. A veterinarian suggested that if it is caught early enough, it does not have to mean the end of the line for that animal. He proposed the following treatment: give 250-300cc hyperimmume plasma (BoviSera or PolySerum) under the skin, 5cc Immunoboost, 90cc Phytobiotic (garlic, ginseng, goldenseal, barberry, Oregon graperoot mix or some other strong antibacterial botanical mix), 200-500cc Vitamin C with calcium and hypertonic saline. Banamine may be added to the IV to make the animal more comfortable. Do this once as soon as possible. Then follow up with a strong plant-based antibacterial tincture 15cc orally three times a day. Strip the affected quarter frequently and apply a lotion containing peppermint oil. For herds with a history of coliform mastitis, it was recommended to use J Vac one week prior to dry off, following the directions after that.

A farmer had a cow that was overdue. Another producer suggested putting the milker on her, as he has found that it will stimulate the cow to have the calf.

A long discussion began when a researcher made some broad statements that her research indicated that high-producing cows under conventional, high-production models were more environmentally sound than smaller, organic operations that did not push for production. There was a great discussion, and some wonderful points were put forward by several respondents. Most pointed out how studies critical of organic farming often have inaccurate assumptions at the outset.

A producer asked for suggestions with a calf scours problem. Another farmer suggested a protocol including feeding electolytes at noon (she used 4 oz Pectilyte from Bio-Vet in 2 qts warm water with some vitamin powder and 10cc Neema-Tox from Agri-Dynamics). She suggested the use of a microbial paste, and depending on the severity, administering Agri-Dynamics Super Start Calf bolus, 30cc Impro Environ 2 & 3, 6cc Vitamin B, 15cc Vitamin C, 6cc Vitamin ADE, or 3cc Immunoboost.

Some farmers discussed the merits of different fly sprays. Most were familiar with Crystal Creek's No-Fly; several felt that the oil-based formulation worked better than the water-based one. Ecotrol (purchased from a distributor called Ivesco) was suggested by a producer, Ecto-Phyte (from Agri-Dynamics) by another producer. A recipe for a homemade spray mixed citronella with vinegar, water, and oil. ◆

Web Sponsorship Advertising Now Available on NODPA.COM

At the request of advertisers, NODPA is now exploring the placement of web sponsorship advertising on selected pages of the NODPA web site.

The ads will be displayed on the 10 pages of the web site which receive the most traffic. There are around 3,000 visits to the NODPA site each month, and there are between 2.5 and 3 pages per visit.

Each ad will link to another page on the web site where a longer message of up to 200 words can be displayed.

The cost of our sponsorship ads: $125 per month for display-ready ads. Those without display-ready ads will be charged $50.

Be one of the first to take advantage of this opportunity to reach a committed farming membership while supporting an organization that courageously advocates for organic farmers.

Go to the following web page for more information:

http://www.nodpa.com/web_ads.shtml

Subscribing to ODairy:

ODairy is a vibrant list serv for organic diary farmers, educators and industry representatives ... who actively participate with questions, advice, shared stories, and discussions of issues critical to the organic dairy industry.

To sign up for the Odairy listserv, go to:

http://www.nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml

Calendar

July 17-18, 2009
Minnesota Grazefest 2009
Carlton County, NE Minnesota
Keynote Speaker: Greg Judy, grazier and featured writer in The Stockman Grass Farmer. For more information and to register online, go to www.sfa-mn.org or call (320) 226-6318.

July 20, 2009
Organic Grazing and Dairy
Kewaskum, WI
Join a group of grazing specialists as well as farmers Tim and Melissa Dobberphul as we tour their organic pastures and discuss how management intensive grazing has become an integral part of this successful organic operationCall 715-778-5775 or email jessica@mosesorganic.org

July 20, 2009
Pasture Walk: Developing the Right Mechanics
Choiniere Family Farm, Highgate Center
Guy Choiniere has been developing the mechanics of his pasture program- putting in lanes and extending the water system, to expand his pasture base and increase pasture quality. For more information: 802-434-4122, info@nofavt.org. http://www.nofavt.org

July 21-23, 2009
Wisconsin Farm Technology Days
Waterloo, WI
This three-day outdoor event will showcase the latest improvements in production agriculture.

Call (920) 478-3852 for more information or go to: www.wifarmtechnologydays.com

July 23, 2009
On-farm Grain Production
Beidler Family Farm, Randolph Center , VT
The Beidlers have planted Japanese Millet to both graze and hay for their dairy herd. They have also planted spring and fall cereal grains as alternative forages for grazing.

Contact: NOFA-VT, Phone: 802-434-4122, info@nofavt.org.

July 25-26, 2009
6th Annual Kickapoo Country Fair
La Farge, WI
Featuring organic farm tours, farmers and farm animals, sustainability workshops, hiking, Butter Churn and more. www.organicvalley.coop/kickapoo for more information or call Organic Valley at: 888-444-4465

July 29, 2009
Introduction to Farming with Horses
Fair Winds Farm, Brattleboro,VT
If you want to know the pros and cons of farming with horses and some economic and environmental considerations, then come to this workshop. Contact: NOFA-VT, Phone: 802-434-4122, info@nofavt.org

August 7 – 9, 2009
Northeast Organic Farming Association 35th Annual Summer Conference 2009
University of Massachusetts at Amherst, MA
To register visit www.nofasummerconference.org. For more information contact the NOFA Summer Conference office at (978) 355-2853 or nofa@nofamass.org.

August 12, 2009
PASA Dairy Farm Field Day in Pennsylvania
Milky Way Farm - Troy, Bradford County, PA, 10:00am—3:00pm
Three generations are doing their part on this innovative 4th generation family farm, home of PASA Board President Kim Seeley. On their way to becoming a full-fledged creamery, Milky Way Farm has transitioned from selling excess fluid milk to turning it into chocolate milk, heavy cream, butter, cheese, and ice cream for added value. Contact PASA for more information: 814-349-9856.

Thursday August 13 at Noon to Friday August 14th at 5:00 pm
NODPA's 9th annual Field Days Event and Annual Producer Meeting
Spring Wood Organic Farm, Kinzers, Pennsylvania 17535
See page 1, 20 and 21 for more information. Contact Ed Maltby: 413-772-0444 or emaltby@comcast.net.

August 18, 2009
Midwestern Bio-Ag Annual Field Day
Lone Rock, WI
presentations on organic and biological farming including dairying, crops, forages, pastures; field walk with Gary Zimmer www.midwesternbioag.com or call 800-327-6012.

August 25-28, 2009
First IFOAM Conference on Organic Animal and Plant Breeding--Breeding Diversity
Santa Fe, New Mexico
IFOAM and Seeds of Change will jointly host the Breeding Diversity conference to bring together experiences and views from a wide range of perspectives on organic breeding.

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Classified Ads

Feed and Seed

NOFA-NY Certified organic mixed grass hay, small square and 4X4 net wrapped round bales available.
Email: candjorganicfarm@gmail.com
Phone: (585) 593-4020.
Location: Allegany County, NY

Cattle For Sale

Two certified organic Milking Shorthorn x Jersey heifers, born 4/23/08 and 3/17/08-- daughter and grand-daughter of our best milker. Also for sale, organic Dutch Belted x Jersey, born 5/5/07. 100% grass fed. Located in northern Vermont- call Cedar and Jen, Lathe Farm (802) 586-2401 or email daisy@lathefarm.com

11 heifers, 3 dry cows, 5 milkers, 2 steers. yearling to bred heifers, milkers 35-60 lbs, SCC less than 200,000 DHIA records available. steers 10-18 months, need to downsize $350 - $1800 Call Sam at Martin Farm 802 433 6232 Williamstown VT

Organic grass based dairy herd for sale. Jerseys and Jersey crosses.This herd includes bred heifers, yearlings, calves, milking cows, cows due to calve this summer and some fall calving cows. All are certified organic by VOF (Vermont Organic Farmers) 802-782-9110

Other

KOW ASSOCIATE specializing in rotational grazing and organic dairy consultation, over 15 years of grazing and organic dairy farming experience, willing to work with farmers in DE, PA, MD, NJ, and NY. Contact Arden Landis, Mohnton, PA, Phone 717-484-0038 or c2graze@dejazzd.net

Semi-retired nurse/farmer seeks partner for small organic vegetable/flower/herb farm. Contact Jan Boyd at (603) 356-2028.

Land For Sale

297 acre NICS certified organic dairy farm for sale. 62 free stalls, single 8 parlor with OTO, two machine sheds (one built this year), TMR, manure structure, rotational grazing paddocks, four silos, 2 story house with 5 bedrooms. Creek through property. Comes with a full line of equipment and cattle. Farm has received numerous milk quality awards and received the 2006 Water Quality Leadership Award for Eau Claire County. For more information please call or visit www.bahnub.com #F903. Contact: Bonny Glodowski, snobunny@triwest.net, phone: 715-695-3668. Location: Strum, WI.

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 : *(choose one below)*

__ $0.02/cwt to support the work of NODPA

__ $0.05/cwt 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/cwt (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 #/member #: _____ # of milking cows: _____
Farm Address: _____

Become a Subscribing NODPA Member!

By becoming a subscribing member you will receive NODPA News and help support the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance. NODPA depends on your 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.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

From the MODPA President

Darlene Coehoorn, Rosendale, Wisconsin

As I write this, the summer heat has struck in the Midwest – milk volumes are falling-it seems my cows have heard about the quota and /or that I am contemplating hamburger for some of them as the replacement market for cows is nonexistent. It seems so foreign to me to think that after 9 years on the truck with last on first off policy in place that I would have to be thinking of how to shrink my production to live within a cap imposed by management and yet stretch my shrinking milk check to cover increasing costs. Nothing like being stuck in the middle again. I wonder how deep the cuts within management level personnel of all the processors are going or have gone? It seems that I haven't increased my production or changed my production to bring on or escalate this problem, but as a dairy producer, we are being asked to bear the full brunt of what would be called mis-management on the part of the processors – unless of course their goal is cheap "walmart style" organic milk.

It seems the whole industry is pitching to us farmers as if we are standing at the plate without a bat. The only hopes we have are that they hit us with a pitch or, out of sympathy, give us a walk. We need to get some bargaining power back on our side. The best option now is to control production and engage our consumers. I am urging you to sell no organic milk without an organic premium. Do what you can to control costs and realize the true value of your production. This may mean learning how to feed milk to larger animals, crops or an alternative market option. If all else fails, pour it down a rat hole as a last resort. I encourage you to think outside the box and come up with a scenario that will enable you to cash flow your farm and do no further damage to the organic premium for all farms.

I also encourage you to take as much time as possible to enjoy life, health and family. I am getting up an hour earlier 2 days a week to push my milking schedule so I can baby-sit my granddaughter – this is the highlight of my week watching her grow and learn and knowing that what we do as farmers has a direct impact on the quality of food and life for the next generation- WHAT A BLESSING WE ALL ARE!!!!!! Take *time to enjoy and give thanks for life's Blessings.*

About MODPA

The Midwest Organic Dairy Producer Alliance (MODPA) represents organic dairy producers in WI, MN, ND, SD, IA, NE, KS, MO, IL, IN, OH, & MI with the mission "to promote communication and networking for the betterment of all Midwest organic dairy producers and enhance a sustainable farmgate price." Objectives are:

1. To ensure a fair and sustainable farm gate price.
2. Keep family farms viable for future generations.
3. Promote ethical, ecological and humane farming practices.
4. Networking among producers of all organic commodities.
5. Promote public policy, research and education in support of organic agriculture.

MODPA Board

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zimbadairy@tband.net
Phone: 989-872-2680

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Phone and Fax: 419-895-1182

Become a Member of MODPA!

Member dues are $35 per year, for which you receive our newsletter and become part of our team working for the best interests of all organic dairies.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____
Email:_____
Certified Organic Dairy? Yes No # of cows: _____
Transitioning: _____

I wish to support MODPA (check whatever applies):

___ By becoming a state rep or director.

___ By supporting MODPA with a %/cwt check-off.

___ By providing a donation to support the work of MODPA. $_____ enclosed.

Please send this form to: Bruce Drinkman, MODPA Treasurer, 3253 150th Ave, Glenwood City, WI 54013

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA)
c/o Ed Maltby
30 Keets Road
Deerfield, MA 01342

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CALENDAR

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August 26, 2009
University of Wisconsin Organic Farming Field Day
Arlington, WI
Topics include: Organic no-till soybean and corn production, sweet corn variety trials, corn root worm management, fertility management in sweet corn, potato, and green bean, and the influence of fertility management on insect feeding in corn, soybean, and alfalfa plus a full organic livestock management including organic herd health, managed intensive grazing, and pasture management. Contact Erin Silva at emsilva@wisc.edu or by calling (608) 890-1503.

August 26, 2009
Enterprise Analysis: Assessing a New Business
Stony Pond Farm, Fairfield, VT
Tyler Webb, owner/operator of Stony Pond Farm, and Willie Gibson will demonstrate an Enterprise Analysis from Tyler's new veal operation using actual numbers.

Contact: NOFA-VT,Phone: 802-434-4122, info@nofavt.org

September 21, 2009
Growing Grains on an Organic Dairy
Elysian Fields, Shoreham, VT
Joe Hescock will talk about his cropping system revolving around corn and soybean production, along with how he is integrating it into his dairy operation, where he milks over 200 cows. Contact: NOFA-VT, Phone: 802-434-4122, info@nofavt.org