

# NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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## Report On NODPA's Annual Field Days

*Practical Education & Peer Learning on Roman Stoltzfoos' Farm in Lancaster, County, PA*

The 9th Annual NODPA Field Days lived up to the promise of its beautiful location at the Stoltzfoos' Spring Wood Organic Farm and the theme of "Practical and Efficient Organic Dairy Farming Practices in Hard Economic Times."

Holding a field day in the summer is always unpredictable, depending so much on the weather and the growing season for both attendance and participant comfort. We lucked out this year with the massive tent that the Stoltzfoos family used for their wedding and family reunion and weather that, while hot and humid, was blessed with enough breeze to be comfortable. Attendance was good on Thursday with about 100 folks and Friday attendance was in excess of 140 which stretched the available food for lunch.

The support of our sponsors, Horizon Organic, Organic Cow, Lakeview Organic Grain, Natural By Nature, Organic Valley, PA Certified Organic, and PA Association for Sustainable Agriculture made it possible to

*continued on page 9*

## NODPA Needs Your Support

*NODPA: An effective national voice for organic dairy farmers.*

It has been 8½ years since NODPA was first formed as a result of a dramatic drop in pay price. Reuniting once again at Spring Wood Organic Farm, the location for the original NODPA Field Days, was a wonderful reunion for many and a wonderful first experience for others. Over these 8 plus years, NODPA has grown into an organization that has demonstrated its tremendous ability to:

1. Be a national voice for organic dairy producer by demanding a sustainable pay price and strengthening the National Organic Program Rules especially around Access to Pasture and Livestock Replacements where NODPA lead and coordinated a national response to the proposed regulations.
2. Collaborate with regional and national organizations like the National Organic Coalition, Organic Trade Association and National Coalition for Sustainable Agriculture in making a voice for producers in Washington DC and make positive changes for organic dairy producers.
3. Keep producers informed of important issues within the organic industry and

*continued on page 16*

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From The NODPA President

It's the first of September and time for me to come up with another "message from the NODPA President". Seems like I just did one a few days ago. Man, time sure does fly by.

I just got back from the annual NODPA Field Days in Pennsylvania at Roman Stolfoos's, where the first one was held nine years ago. Times are different now. Back then nobody knew one another; NODPA was just in it's formative stages. I don't remember the complete list of speakers, but I do remember that Sally Fallon, Hue Karreman, Jerry Brunetti, Lisa McCrory and Kevin Brussel of OFARM were part of the agenda. I'm sure there were others, but I just can't remember. This is where I first met Kathie Arnold, one of the people whom I have a great deal of respect for. It's always good to see people that you usually only relate to over the phone

Hats off to Roman and Lucy for hosting this event. Their place looks better now than what I remembered it looked like nine years ago, not that it didn't look good then. Ice cream was good. Nice to drive into

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a barnyard with not a hint of the typical dairy farm odor.

Special thanks goes to Nora Owens for doing the bulk of the organizing. Thank you to all the sponsors for their donations, and the speakers, who as far as I know got no compensation. Times are tough in the dairy business these days, both conventional and organic.

The bright spot for me was the opportunity to hand out tokens of appreciation to two people who have given much over the years to further the organic milk industry; Dr. Hubert Karreman and Kevin Engelbert. Dr. Karreman's frequent posts on Odairy have helped many, not to mention the books he's written and seminars that he's conducted all over the country. Kevin and his wife Lisa hosted the NODPA Field Days a few years ago, and Kevin has, from time to time contributed very insightful and moving comments on Odairy as well as the NODPA Newsletter.Too bad he couldn't make it this year. Both Dr. Karreman and Kevin Engelbert are currently serving time on the NOSB Board and we have sincerely appreciated the time and quality of their efforts.

I better stop now. Sorry about ditching you Lisa.

Henry Perkins, NODPA President  
Albion, Maine

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From The NODPA DESK  
September 2009

Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

As I write this in the first few days of September, fall is creeping in with early frost warnings after a long wet summer. The 2009 "grazing season" (this phase is from FOOD Farmers comments on the Access to Pasture Rule and will hopefully be an integral part of the definition of access to pasture in the Final Rule) has been very mixed and the opportunities to conserve forage have been few. Reminds me very much of when I was farming in Wales, UK, where a sunny day is when there is only a steady drizzle of rain!

Change is happening at the National Organic Program (NOP) as it becomes a separate department under the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) with its own director who will be announced in the next few weeks. Long-term employee and one-time head of NOP, Richard Mathews will be retiring from the USDA on September 30. Richard has recently recovered from a serious illness and has been back at his desk over the last few months working long hours in finishing the Access to Pasture Final Rule. He has always promised that he would stay until the pasture rule was finished and we know him to be a man of his word so we can anticipate the rule moving to the internal (USDA and Office of Management and Budget) review process within the next few weeks. We wish Richard good health and a productive and relaxing retirement, although I reckon we will hear from him again in the near future as he has always been a strong advocate for organic integrity and has proposed many great solutions to NOP problems.

Due to the work of the National Organic Coalition, National Sustainable Agricultural Coalition and the Organic Trade Association there are other areas of progress which include:

- The door will close on current and future abuse of the standards with the expected publication and immediate implementation of the Access to Pasture Final Rule, as will the Origin of Livestock Proposed Rule now being worked on. Ensuring there is an adequate land base for large herds will level the playing field and help with sustainable growth.
- The recently announced stringent audit and continued oversight by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) of the NOP is a great indicator of future commitment to a level playing field and consistent implementation of the organic regulations.

NODPA is committed, as it has been in the past, to working with all milk companies to develop a transparent and sustainable system of managing supply that will give a fair return to all sectors of organic dairy and ensure a profit for organic dairy farm families ... .

- The current administration's commitment to organic and the increased status of the NOP within USDA will help ensure timely enforcement and adequate resources for NOP operations.
- Increased training for inspectors and certifiers, plus an expansion of NOP's accreditation process, will hopefully negate any "certifier shopping" that is prevalent amongst those producers who are intent on bending the rules.

While there is hope and optimism at the USDA, there is a continuing bleak future for organic dairy producers. I receive many phone calls from producers who are looking for answers and solutions to the problems of a surplus that will probably continue until the fall of 2010. Worst hit are the recently transitioned younger farm families who are still recovering from the cost of transitioning and have debt that they cannot cash flow with current prices and supply control imposed by milk companies. The biggest disappointment is the loss of a stable pay price and the betrayal of trust that has been an essential factor in relationships with milk processors. Organic milk buyers are using tactics more common in conventional dairy or reminiscent of the treatment of poultry and hog farmers in the south whose contractual agreements were routinely ignored by the large corporations and cooperatives.

There are no quick solutions to the current situation where we have a surplus in supply without an adequate infrastructure to balance excess organic milk except by selling on the conventional market. This situation will not be solved by any one milk company or manufacturer as solutions need to be industry-wide to be effective and fair to producers. It will not be solved by closing down every dairy over 2,000 milking cows (we'd suddenly find a lot of dairies at 1,999 cows!) as that will still not resolve future problems of supply management and guaranteeing a fair price for producers. Some have suggested setting up an alternative label to the USDA organic seal which again will only duplicate the problem since no matter what label there is, there will need to be a transparent process for deciding pay price that is linked to costs of production and a fair return to producers, without taking into account the challenges in launching a new label.

NODPA is committed, as it has been in the past, to working with all milk companies to develop a transparent and sustainable system of managing supply that will give a fair return to all sectors of organic dairy and ensures a profit for organic dairy farm families that will restore confidence in organic dairy for the next generation of producers. In future editions of NODPA News we will be examining many different ideas that have been successful in other parts of the world and perhaps we can use this crisis as an opportunity for long term change. ♦



COMMENTARY

There Is No Right Way To Become A Farmer ...

Pat Skogen, an organic dairy farmer in Wisconsin, tells her story of coming late and unexpectedly to farming.

By Pat Skogen

*This essay was submitted by Pat Skogen to the Wisconsin Farmer’s Union (WFOU). As a result, Pat was awarded one of two Legislative Fly-In Scholarships and will travel to Washington D.C. September 13 – 16, 2009 where she will be joining 15 WFOU farmer-members to speak to legislators on Capitol Hill about concerns for all farmers. Pat and her husband Ralph have a 100-acre rotationally grazed organic dairy farm, certified by MOSA. They are a purchased feed operation and milk 27 cows.*

Some are born into a family farm; some marry into it, some start it on their own. Some plan their whole life around becoming a farmer; others grow into it over a lifetime, and some, like me, discover new dimensions in a way of life that had been in the background until midlife and then becomes reality almost by accident. There is not one right way to be a farmer-but there is commonality--a streak of independence; an appreciation of the land, respect for the animals who share it with us and the community of like-minded people who support and sustain us; a responsibility to nurture, feed and sustain our community.

My name is Pat Skogen. My husband, Ralph Reeson, and our children, Ken and Autumn, started Reeson Family Farm outside Loganville in October 2001, but the story of our farm began much earlier. I was raised with ponies and horses which my father, Selmer Skogen, bred, raised, trained, traded, drove in parades, statewide pulling contests, plowing contests and wagon rides. By the time I went to college, I’d been Santa Claus at a tree farm, back-up reinsman for a 20-pony hitch, run away with numerous times, bucked off and gotten back on, won blue ribbons and come in last. I baled and mowed a lot of hay. I did not like chickens and was afraid of cows. I’m over it now.

Teaching special education students was my chosen career for 27 years. I taught in Beloit, Dodgeville, Oregon and in Wyoming and at Beloit College. I have a Masters Degree in teaching students with Learning Disabilities and Emotional and Behavioral Disorders. Most of my research and work was with students who have dyslexia, attention deficit disorder and mood disorders. I continue to follow the exciting new research in brain chemistry and learning. When I say that I am deeply concerned about the nutrition of our nation’s children, my experience is based on public education, with lunch ladies, 15-minute

lunch times, two high school classes in food science and preparation, brain hydration, and food additives’ effects on kids. My experience dovetails with research and the growing movement to reinstate local, fresh foods in school menus. However, I think we need to go further. We now have a generation raised on fast, processed, “easy” food. They don’t know how to cook and many of their parents don’t, either. “Home Ec” has been “Food Science” or “Consumer Living” for 30 years now-a career elective. When I have recipe cards at the farmers market, or give extra vegetables to WIC mothers, I keep in mind that I am teaching nutrition, preservation, cooking and food safety as I farm.

When I met Ralph in the late 80s, I was teaching full-time, but living, learning and working at Folklore Village Farm near Dodgeville. I hosted a guesthouse and helped maintain over 30 flower and vegetable gardens with founder Jane Farwell. I danced, sang and led Saturday night potlucks. I helped preserve and cook all kinds of ethnic foods for festival weekends. I absorbed Jane’s philosophy of rural recreation - that any event is made by the people who form a community at that time and place, and that each one is integral to that community. It would not be the same if any one had not been there. When I speak of my concern for rural communities, of the loss of rural businesses, churches, 4-H, WFOU, softball games and socials, pancake feeds and spaghetti suppers, I am passing on Jane’s concern, not just a fear for the profitability of my own farm. The loss of a farm affects a community. Every highway bypass, CAFO and Walmart affects a community.

I am not saying they should be banned, but that we-the collective WE-should be mindful. Just as test scores do not fully analyze all a child’s learning or a teacher’s accountability, so a water test, feasibility study, profitability analysis or geological survey do not convey the full impact of change on a rural community when a family farm fails.

When I speak of the unique traits of a family farm, I think of Ralph. The eldest son of 14, he learned to milk cows by hand so his dad could go to work as a carpenter. When we met, he was the “go-to relief milker” for several farms, dreaming of how he would run a farm if he had one. He kept sneaking these baby calves in on me even though we

lived in town. “Beef in the freezer!” he’d say, as we spent Saturdays at Farm & Fleet or hauling hay. By 2001, we had 5 cows being milked at various friend’s or family’s farms, 15 heifers and steers at a rented pasture, and were selling beef halves to siblings and friends that paid for our processing and feed. I put my foot down. “Sell them or buy a farm!” (Here I am imagining buying new furniture and siding for the Victorian house we had gutted and renovated in Ridgeway.)

Because of Hwy 18-151 becoming a four-lane from Madison to Dubuque and Prairie du Chien, land prices had skyrocketed from \$1000 to \$3000 per acre around Dodgeville. We searched south to the state line and east to Evansville. Instead, we found a 100 acre farm 40 miles north that we could afford. We began selling milk to Foremost Farms in April 2002 with the goal of transitioning to organic certification in 5 years. Philosophy aside, we simply couldn’t

**Our nation has the opportunity to engage debate on the future of our farmland. Once lost, it will not return. Once the soil is depleted, it will take years of organic matter—not chemicals—to produce food. ...Food sovereignty and the responsibility and willingness to pay for it is a national priority now and the debate must begin now, before we lose our farms.**

afford any inputs or machinery. That was our business plan. A huge amount of learning later, I appreciate the breadth and depth of knowledge any farmer carries in their head. Anyone who stereotypes a farmer as ignorant, backward or uncomplicated is simply uninformed. When I speak of respect due family farmers and the knowledge they bridge from past to future, I speak as one who is thankful for the knowledge I brought to farming, and aware that any person farming today is dependant on those close to the land, not the government, university or boardroom alone, for success. They work harder and know more about many things than anyone I met in academia and should be able to earn an honest living wage for their families.

It has taken me a few years to consolidate and articulate my opposition to large, corporate farms. Again, I have Ralph to thank. The man knows how to milk cows. He set a personal quality goal of keeping his SCC below 100,000 for a year. Many months it has been below 50,000. While I still look to see if milk is going up the plastic tube from the milker, he can touch the cow and know she is done. He knows when she is developing mastitis and has his own informal experiments on the effectiveness of calves sucking as a treatment. After watching him, you cannot tell me a robotic parlor, low-paid employees or digital printouts can milk a cow better than those curved, callused hands. As he was a master concrete finisher making a good wage, he is now a master milker and should be paid accordingly. A man who knows his craft. When farmers have lost their



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farms, who will pass those skills on? My daughter is learning them, but will too many of her teenage years be spent in poverty for her to choose to continue? As I write this, our organic milk price has gone from 27.50 to 23.50, but when there is “too much” organic cheese, our milk is comingled with conventionally farmed milk for \$12.00/cwt. That’s better than \$9.60/cwt, but a long way from cost of organic production, or conventional production. Quality over quantity should be rewarded.

That’s my story. I have a headful of statistics and I’m sure I will add more. I firmly believe in Farmer’s Union promotion of education, cooperation and citizen action. As we look for ways to increase the efficiency and scope of our farm, we struggle earning a living, let alone adding value to our products. A second job? Farming

is a full-time, overtime job. It does not fit neatly in a risk management plan. Those who take the biggest risk in this market-providing safe food for our citizens-despite factors outside their control, deserve just compensation. They deserve universal health care for the risks they take every day on a farm. They deserve the opportunity to sell their goods without undue regulation needed in corporate food production. Nationwide e coli outbreaks have not come from family farms. Family farms should have incentives to co-op and market their goods. They need affordable access to the internet to stay current in the small amount of time they have available. To preserve the integrity of our food supply, legislators and government agencies need to support family farms that have the stewardship of the land in their backyard, not corporate farms that have their boardroom, stockholders and lobbyists in their back pocket. If only corporations own farmland and markets, we will only be able to eat corporate food.

Our nation has the opportunity to engage debate on the future of our farmland. Once lost, it will not return. Once the soil is depleted, it will take years of organic matter—not chemicals --to produce food. We need to face many challenges worldwide, but the amount and safety of our food should not be one of them. Food sovereignty and the responsibility and willingness to pay for it is a national priority now and the debate must begin now, before we lose our farms. ♦

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

# Pasture Stations At The NODPA Fielddays

What was learned at the five pasture stations set up at Roman Stoltzfoos' farm in Lancaster County, PA.

This year at the NODPA Field Days, we decided to do something a little different and provide some stations in the pasture where topics could be presented and discussed. At Spring Wood Organic Farm there is a lot going on, so the biggest challenge was reducing the number of possible subjects to just five. The station subjects were:

- 1) Summer Annual Forage Plots, 2) Benefits of Hedgerows, 3) Native Plant Identification, 4) Fence Lines and Water Systems and 4) Basics of Pasture Management.

Attendees were able to visit up to 4 stations over a 2-hour period as the stations would repeat their presentation every half hour. Below is a summary of what was covered:



## Summer Annual Forage Plots and Discussion at Spring Wood Farm

With Tim Fritz and Dave Wilson of Kings AgriSeeds

Summer annual strips were seeded on Spring Wood Farm to demonstrate to benefits and differences of various summer annual forages for grazing.

Plots compared and displayed were:

1. Three sudan grasses,
2. Five BMR sorghum sudans,
3. Forage millet,
4. Forage millet and a forage brassica
5. Five forage brassicas
6. Forage brassicas and BMR sorghum sudan

In addition, brassicas were added to some areas of BMR sorghum sudan. Even though 2009 was a very productive cool season grass year, Dwight Stoltzfoos felt that the summer annuals benefited his grazing program as they relieved the grazing pressure on the perennial pastures which resulted in increased rest period and better summer forage quality.

Due to an abnormally cool and wet season, weeds were very heavy in the

brassicas. It seemed as though the combination of forage brassicas and the Millet and the BMR sorghum sudan were the most productive in this wet year. Sorghum sudans and Sudan grasses prefer drier and warmer years. Brassicas grow well in both cool and hot weather and prefer a year that is not very dry. The bottom line is that brassicas are an excellent low cost addition to summer annual grasses. They can also be seeded with oats in cooler climates along with spring and fall plantings in warmer climates.

The group also discussed harvesting summer annuals for stored forages. All the crops with the exception of the brassicas work very well as a stored forage.

Several producers commented on various successes that they have had feeding BMR sorghum sudans grasses to their herd in the winter months.

## Benefits of Hedgerows

By Roman Stoltzfoos

There seemed to be significant interest in the why's and how's of fencerows and their benefits. Roman explained that there were different reasons for wanting border strips along fencerows. Some are protecting animals or using buffer strips to protect certified organic land from contamination and or having what was called and edge affect that gives beneficial insects and animals a place to winter. Also sometimes you may want to have a beautiful backgrounding plant that will encourage songbirds to proliferate and feel at home.

Jim Gardner explained the synergism of different plants growing together and some of the advantages to the animals and the soil.

Charles Hegburg dealt with the economic advantages of hedgerows. Animals can benefit from plants growing there like willows and berries. Also pecans, pinenuts, or blueberries could be grown along a hedgerow, providing a supplemental income stream to the farm.

## Native Plant Identification

By Sarah Goslee, USDA-ARS Pasture Systems and Watershed Management Research Unit

Do you know how many species of plants are in your pasture? Two? Ten? Fifty? And can you identify most or all of them? My group has spent many years looking at what plants grow in pastures, and



where. In a regional survey of pastures on 44 grazing farms from West Virginia to Maine, we found that pastures were quite diverse, with 9 to 73 species per pasture. The average number of plant species was 32. Across all the farms, we identified 310 different species. These species provide forage, habitat for insects, birds and mammals, erosion control, and more.

The plant identification station at the NODPA field days was in a pasture that contained 32 species: 12 grasses, 2 legumes, and 18 non-leguminous forbs (anything that's neither a grass nor a legume). Like most pastures, the dominant species were forage grasses, including orchardgrass,

Kentucky bluegrass, and tall fescue. Red and especially white clover were the most common legumes in this field, and across the Northeast. A few species, like dandelion, plantains, and quackgrass, were found on every farm we visited. Most farms also had thistles, jimsonweed, or other noxious species. These plants are unpalatable or poisonous, can be invasive, and may require special attention and control.

There is variety even within a pasture. Disturbed areas around gates or waterers often have species like plantains and crabgrass that quickly appear in bare areas. These fast-growing species can help reduce soil erosion. Different species also show up in damp areas, where many forage species won't do as well. Here you might find reed canary grass and smartweeds. Plants species also vary based on the time of the year. Chickweed is a spring species, while crabgrass and foxtail don't show up until midsummer.

If you would like to learn more about identifying forage grasses and legumes, there are many resources available through extension and NRCS, both online and in print. Some of these publications also include common weeds, but none include the whole range of species that might be in your pasture. I often use Newcomb's Wildflower Guide by Lawrence Newcomb. Many of the plants that grow along roadsides and bloom attractively in the summer or autumn can be found in your pastures, and in this book. It is well-illustrated, easy to use, and inexpensive, and is a useful resource for anyone interested in what's growing in their pastures and hedgerows. More comprehensive plant identification manuals are available, but they can be

*continued on page 13*



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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### New Organic Milk Sought ... Or NOT The Word From The Field

We used to publish a list of milk companies who were looking for more milk. As none of companies are willing or able to sign up new producers we thought it might be useful to provide an update on what the milk companies are doing to support their member-owners, partners or farmer "heroes." It's too soon to assess the long term effects of the changes on procurement, with initial reactions being very varied. When supply is again short, producers will remember how their milk company treated them during this surplus.

#### Organic Valley (OV)

Some OV producers are very content with the quota system while others have seen up to \$400 taken out of the milk check based on monthly sales of only 25,000 lbs. Over one third of Organic Valley producers appealed their new base and we don't know at this time how many were granted a variance and on what criteria. Hopefully this will be made public to ensure a transparent and fair process is followed. The quota system is hitting the newly transitioned producers the hardest, especially those younger farm families who took on debt to cover transition costs. There is discontent among many producers about OV's enforcement on its restriction on producers selling small amounts of raw milk or using it on the farm rather than getting the equivalent of \$10 per cwt. Rumors abound that OV is working with some state agencies to help enforce their restriction and dropping producers who inform them of their intent to use some of their milk on their own farm

#### HP Hood/Stonyfield milk brand (Hood)

Hood producers in the NE received \$25 - \$25.50 per cwt for July milk which is a cut for most but not as dramatic as some expected. The month by month pay price determination increases stress and uncertainty with no opportunity to plan for the immediate future, much like living from pay check to pay check. Many family farms have been given 180 day notices which are now starting

to take effect with contracts ending. There are reports that Hood is now targeting those producers who did not immediately sign the contract amendment that changed their pay price dramatically and giving them 180 day notices to end their contracts. Expecting farm families to make decisions that affect their profitability and future family life without any negotiation and time to consult a lawyer is unfair and would be illegal if applied to other contractual situations. Don't expect any cost of living increase or any bonus plans, except for volume incentives for producers near to processing plants. Nobody seems to know how Hood is planning for any future procurement or dedicated supply and many are wondering if they will complete the move to purchasing all organic milk from a Dairy Marketing Services organic pool and not have any direct contracts with producers.

#### Horizon

Horizon is maintaining its pay price but some producers are still waiting for contracts, wondering what the final wording will be. There is a wide variation in the terms and conditions that Horizon is offering producers depending on their past history and anticipated future with Horizon. As with the other companies, Horizon is favoring producers who are "good partners" and do not voice criticism of Horizon publically. It is unlikely that Horizon will agree to any herd expansion and producers should always ensure that they have a market for their milk before expanding. 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. New contracts will continue to have confidentiality clauses; tightening up on quality; and, as contracts are renewed, they will stop the "long program" and, for some producers, extend the "short program" as an incentive for producing winter milk.

#### Upstate Niagara

We hear only good things about Upstate who are reportedly allowing some of their producers to expand their production. We haven't heard of any farms being dropped or pay price being reduced for their roughly 25 organic farms. ♦

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

# NODPA 9th Annual Field Days Wrap-Up

*continued from page 1*

keep costs down for producers, enable NODPA to offer free registration to all producers, whether organic or not, and support NODPA's year round activities. Our supporters Don Faulkner and Family, Dairy Marketing Services, Agri-Dynamics, LOFCO, Fertrell, NOFA- NY & NOFA-NY Certified Organic, Organic Dairy Farming Cooperative, Udder Comfort, MOFGA, Renaissance Nutrition, Lancaster Ag Products, American Organic Seed, Holistec and Animal Medic, River Valley Fencing, NOFA-Vermont, King's Agri-Seed, MOSES as always are essential to the success of Field Days with their financial support and product donations.

Roman, Lucy, Dwight and the whole Stoltzfoos family (immediate and extended) were great hosts. They supported us at every juncture: from planning to set up to breaking down the chairs and tables when the event was over.

At various times leading up to Field Days, Roman must have wondered about his sanity in volunteering his farm to host the event. With a large wedding, followed by a family reunion and the normal pressures and responsibilities of farming in these difficult times, Roman and his family were incredibly generous.

On behalf of NODPA and all who attended, we thank Roman, Lucy and their family for their continued generosity and commitment to organic dairy producers.

## And Now For The Wrap-Up ...

The 2009 NODPA Field Days was held at one of the oldest organic dairy farms in Pennsylvania, Spring Wood Organic Farm, and offered many opportunities for practical education and peer learning. Roman and Dwight Stoltzfoos helped us kick off the event with a slightly different format for a farm tour with different stations around the farm highlighting diverse aspects of their operation and organic dairy production. With academic and practitioner experts at all the stations it was judged as a great success by participants and something that can be repeated at future Field Days. Reports from the different stations are summarized later in the newsletter.

NODPA's annual dinner and meeting was held Thursday evening after an extended time for visiting the tradeshow and networking. The dinner of barbecued chicken was excellent and the company was exceptional enhanced by the bucolic surroundings of Spring Wood Farm. A shortened annual meeting followed with a welcome by NODPA Board President, Henry Perkins, who thanked the generous sponsors and presented awards to Dr. Hubert Karreman and Kevin Englebert in appreciation for their many years of dedication and work on the National Organic Standards Board. Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director, gave a short NODPA Annual Report and then asked all non-producers to leave to allow for producers to discuss matters critical to their families and farming. A report of the producer-only meeting is on page 12 of the newsletter.

Friday morning was bright and beautiful with no forecast of rain and the promise of a great day. Attendance was swelled by many producers that decided to attend just for the day and the workshop sessions started promptly at 9:00 am with interactive question and answer sessions. The intensity and information

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*Dr. Hubert Karreman with a Barbara Mohr print he received, along with a plaque expressing NODPA's appreciation for all his hard work.*



*Sarah Flack fielding questions for the morning sessions.*

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Field Days Wrap-Up

*continued from page 9*

exchange of these sessions could be two or three separate articles and I wished we had recorded them for future use. Below is a brief summary of what transpired under the excellent moderation and control of Sarah Flack.

Making Great Rations

The first session was titled Making Great Rations: Economical and Efficient Use of Inputs with Kathy Soder, USDA, ARS and Ken Muckenfuss, KOW Consulting Association, dairy nutrition.

Kathy Soder presented first with some general information on productive pastures and how cows graze with plenty of examples from her research and work with producers.

Questions and answers included:

- How does an empty stomach impact how the cow is grazing? If hungry, the cow takes the cream of the crop with a wide sweeping bite and a cow with a full stomach will graze deeper into the sward.
- How much protein supplementation is needed on pasture? Research shows that cows will choose the forage that will balance their protein if it is available. (cows went to the legume pasture – craving more protein when fed a 10% protein grain and went to the grass sward if they are fed 18-20% protein grain).



*Kathy Soder spoke on making great rations.*

- If you want the cows to clean up a particular type of forage how can you manage what you feed in the barn? We need to do more research on the sugar content in the pasture and why feed value varies at different times of the day to supplement the feed accordingly.
- How to determine when a pasture is ready to graze? General rule of thumb is 6-10 inches tall and leave it when it is 3-4 inches tall to maximize the regrowth potential of the pasture. If we graze it shorter it will deplete the plant's

*continued on page 20*



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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Diet Selection and Grazing Behavior

*by Kathy Soder, USDA-ARS, University Park, PA*

When we turn cows out into a new paddock, we're really presenting them with a wide variety of choices, not unlike our own trips to a food buffet. While we may have planted 2, 3 or more forage species in the pasture, in reality, there could be well more than 20 plant species from which to choose. Granted, many of these species may be considered 'weeds', but many weed species are as or more nutritious than many of our 'desirable' forage species. And cows know it. But how do they know?

Cows learn in a variety of ways. First, they learn from their dams. Hmm, think of the implications of raising calves from birth in individual hutches. What are they learning about grazing behavior in solitary confinement, away from any education they may have received from their dam? For these reasons and others, some graziers are starting to raise calves on pasture, whether it be mob fed milk on pasture, or raised with a 'nurse' cow which might the biological dam, or an adopted 'nurse' cow. Not only do these calves benefit from the exercise, but they also learn a lot about social behavior, including how to graze, which will serve them well when they become productive members of your milking herd.

Cows learn from peers, and this can be an important aspect of grazing management if, for example, you are trying to get newly purchased cows acclimated to your farm/forages. Putting some of your 'native' cows in with them can help them adjust quicker (as long as biosecurity concerns can be addressed). If you turn a new group of young heifers out on pasture for the first time after being raised in the barn, put a few older animals in with them to 'teach them the ropes'.

Cows also learn by trial and error, just like us. If a cow consumes a novel (new to her) plant and becomes ill after consuming it, she will likely avoid that plant, and in addition, teach her offspring to avoid that plant. This has been experimentally proven, even in feeds such as alfalfa or corn that are 'safe' for cows. If the feed is

novel (the cow has never seen it before), and she becomes ill (artificially induced illness in research) after consuming that novel feed, even if only once, she will avoid that feed. That is known as post-ingestive feedback. We experience post-ingestive feedback all the time....think about the positive post-ingestive feedback we receive from the consumption of chocolate, sugar, or alcoholic beverages. However, if you've ever become violently ill after eating a certain food, even if you know that food didn't make you sick, the sight or smell of that food will usually not be appetizing for some time. That is post-ingestive feedback.

In addition to learned behavior, we as farm managers can influence grazing behavior of cows based on our management decisions. Research in England showed that cows (and sheep) prefer clover in the morning, and grass in the afternoon. While the exact reason for this has yet to be determined, several theories include: 1) cows are 'hungrier' in the morning and can consume clover at a faster rate than grass to fill them up quicker; 2) clover is more palatable (it 'tastes' better) than grass; and 3) clover has more nutrients per bite than grass. If the above are true, why do cows bother switching to grass later in the day? Again, theories include: 1) cows may feel a bit of bloat from clover consumption which can be mediated by consuming a higher fiber feed (grass); 2) the sugar content of grasses tends to be greater in the afternoon, perhaps making it more palatable; 3) grasses tend to stay in the rumen longer and also stimulate more cud chewing, which may be an important factor during the night, when cows typically aren't grazing as much.

Work at our USDA-ARS lab showed that 'ruminal fill', or how 'hungry' the cow is, can affect grazing behavior. We experimentally emptied rumens of cows, then re-filled them with either 0%, 33%, 66%, or 100% of the rumen contents. We then offered the cows

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Producer-Only Meeting Summary at the 2009 NODPA Field Days

The producer-only meeting at the NODPA Field Days traditionally suffers from “agenda creep” as it is the last event of a long day and this year was no different. Despite a much abbreviated NODPA business meeting the producer-only gathering didn’t start until 8:00 pm – luckily there were no mosquitoes or black flies to aggravate the participants, just the continuing uncertainty about the future of organic dairy.

In the tradition of this meeting all participants agreed that no processors would be targeted for specific criticism and all producers could express their opinions without fear of reprisal.

Henry Perkins asked for any criticisms of NODPA’s positions or actions over the last year and there was none. There was praise for NODPA’s work in coordinating the response to the Proposed Rule on Access to Pasture and the role that FOOD Farmers played in providing a national voice for organic dairy producers. With a fresh attitude towards organics at USDA, producers welcomed the promise of the new administration and hoped that there would

be actual change, although a few more cynical participants shared their opinion that change at USDA is not possible. Some wondered why NODPA wasn’t involved in more legal actions but accepted the explanation that NODPA, with their membership of the National Organic Coalition, Organic Trade Association and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, partners with many different non-profit groups who have the legal expertise and resources to represent NODPA’s priorities on legal challenges.

Pay price is always a topic at the producers meetings as it has repeatedly been voted as the number one priority for NODPA. This year it was centered on the uncertainty that producers are feeling related to the price they will receive for their organic milk and whether they will have their contracts renewed and what conditions will be attached. One of the reasons that many gave for becoming organic was to have a stable pay price, which is no longer the case. Some of the producer comments are paraphrased below:

- “I’m hoping that I will receive a contract within the next week or so, not sure what it will be.”
- “I don’t know what will be in my next check as I don’t know what my pay price is.”
- “Haven’t heard about what my quota will be from my appeal.”
- “I’ve cut back 10%; hope it works.”
- “Wanted to use over-quota milk on my farm but I wasn’t allowed.”
- “Let’s thank God we have a handler that will take our milk.”
- “I have a good price right now; not sure what my next contract will be.”
- “I haven’t received my contract yet; not sure if the milk company will honor their commitments.”
- “I had to re-sign the amendment; I have a mortgage to pay.”
- “Can we get the dry lot operations shut off?”
- “Rotten to make promises that you are unable to keep. For as bad as that is not to keep promises, it is more important that they are still around when we get through this. We need to make more ado about what we have and not what we don’t have.”

Supply Management was discussed and the fact that all the supply management is being imposed by the processors. There are many models to look at that have producers participate in decisions about supply management. There was concern expressed that once we reach a better balance between supply and demand that we not forget the lessons learned during 2009.

Producers at the Field Days also expressed great concern about any growth in the natural milk label and saw it as a threat to the future of organic. Concern was expressed by most producers that the market leader, Horizon, has produced a naturally branded product which could undermine consumers’ confidence in the benefits of organic milk at a time when we need more sales of organic to keep organic dairy producers in business.

Producers reluctantly ended their meeting at about 10:00 pm. ♦

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Pasture Stations

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difficult to use and often have no pictures.

Learning the plants on your farm and watching their patterns in time and space can improve your understanding of the soils, weather, and topography of your farm, and how they interact with management. Every time you walk your pastures, take a look at what’s there, not just how much and how green. Which species or lack of species respond to heavy disturbance or overgrazing? Changes in pH or nutrients? Drought? Some of the species on your farm may be early indicators of change, and paying attention can pay off.

## Pasture Fence and Water Systems

*By Sarah Flack*

I led a discussion of how to set up and trouble shoot an effective electric fence system and provide water for grazing. Here is a summary of some of the key points:

- Select and properly install a quality energizer. An energizer

**A simple way to determine if the grounding system is adequate is to short out the live fence and then test the voltage on the ground wire. If the test shows significant voltage on the ground wire, the ground system is not adequate.**

- which is not adequately grounded is more likely to be damaged by lightning, will provide less of a charge to keep the livestock in and is more likely to result in stray voltage.
- A simple way to determine if the grounding system is adequate is to short out the live fence and then test the voltage on the

ground wire. If the test shows significant voltage on the ground wire, the ground system is not adequate.

- Lightning protection includes having a large enough grounding system, and can also include diverters, arrestors, chokes or coils.
- Getting high voltage to all areas of the farm is made easier with high quality perimeter fencing that can conduct electricity with minimal resistance. High tensile fence will require the least maintenance and maintain high conductivity over time. Other types of steel wire (at least

14 gauge) can also make a good perimeter fence.



- Portable fencing can be used to subdivide larger areas. There are significant differences in the quality of portable posts and polywire. Highly conductive poly wire known as “turbo” poly wire is worth using if you are fencing areas that rely on the poly wire to carry power over a long distance. Stranded aluminum wire can also carry voltage effectively over long distances.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pasture Stations

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- Water can be provided to paddocks in several ways. If piping water to pastures is not possible, water can be provided using a tank on a wagon parked in the pasture.
- If using pipe to provide water in each paddock, use large diameter pipe so water pressure is maintained as it travels the length of your farm. Many prefer to keep the pipe above ground so it is accessible for repairs and can be relocated if water lines and fences move in the future. Leaving the pipe above ground can raise the water temperature, so in some climates burying the pipe or keeping it in the shade may be necessary.
- Water tubs can be small and portable as long as the flow rate is high enough to keep them full while the herd drinks. Water tubs can also be large and rarely moved, which is often easier if the water flow rate is low or if the herd is very large. It is less expensive to have a few portable tubs than many permanent tubs.
- Fixed water systems where cows walk to drink from a centrally located tub may be your only option when you are getting your grazing system set up, but it will be helpful to begin providing water in the paddocks as soon as possible. Drinking from ponds or streams may also be possible with careful attention to water quality and potential erosion.
- Particularly during wet weather, having well built lanes will make managing pastures easier. Dry, well-surfaced lanes can also help prevent hoof injuries and other problems. In wet areas or heavily used lanes, a road-building filter fabric used under the gravel will create longer lasting lanes and less maintenance. You may also need culverts and erosion controls.
- Check with your local NRCS office for programs to help pay for fences, lanes, water systems and other costs of setting up the grazing system.

Basics of Pasture Management

By Lisa McCrory

The Basics of Pasture Management Station covered some key points to a healthy, successful grazing system including adequate recovery periods, determining the amount of feed that your animals need, estimating paddock size, and planning the number of acres needed for grazing over the growing season.

To prevent overgrazing of plants and maximize

dry matter intake, move animals frequently, so that each paddock is not grazed for more than three consecutive days. Grazing periods of 12 to 24 hours result in much higher pasture and livestock productivity. Average number of days in between grazings will vary from as little as 12 days in the spring to 45 days (or longer) by October first.

Dwight Stoltzfoos joined us for the first session and explained his grazing program to the group. The cows typically go into the pastures when the forage is 8-10 inches tall and they are given a new paddock after each milking. Every two or three grazings, when a pasture acquires a significant amount of rejected feed, Dwight will clip the pasture right before the cows are going to graze that piece again. The cows do an excellent job of cleaning up all the cut feed and anything left over is food for the soil. This system has worked especially well in paddocks where there is a significant amount of fescue.

Below is a copy of the dry matter and paddock size calculations that we used. (There are 43,560 square feet in an acre, which is a square that is about 210 feet on a side). ♦

Estimating Forage Dry Matter Intake (DMI):

Average body weight	_____	(Line 1)
Estimated DMI (as % of Body Weight)	_____	(Line 2)
Daily DMI required for single animal (Line 1 x Line 2)	_____	(Line 3)
Daily DMI required for herd (Line 3 times number of animals)	_____	(Line 4)

Calculating Available Dry Matter:

Available Forage Dry Matter = Pre Grazing Mass - Post Grazing Mass			
Example: Pre Grazing 6"	2400		
Post Grazing 2"	-1200		
	= 1200lbs DM/acre		
Your Farm: Pre Grazing Mass	_____	(Line 5)	
Post Grazing Mass	_____	(Line 6)	
	=	_____	
			available dry matter/acre (Line 7)

Calculating Paddock Size:

Paddock size (in acres per day) = Daily DM Required / Available dry matter			
Daily DM required (Line 4)	_____		
----- =	_____	(Line 8)	
Available DM/acre. (Line 7)			Paddock size in acres/day

Calculating Rest Period:

Maximum Possible Rest Period = Your total pasture acres / Paddock size			
pasture acres available	_____		
----- =	_____		
paddock size in acres/day (Line 8)			maximum rest period

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Diet Selection & Grazing Behavior

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micro-swards of grass pasture, and measured their bite dimensions (bite mass, bite depth, bite width). Not surprisingly, the 'empty' cow (0% ruminal fill) had greater bite mass (took a bigger bite). However, what was surprising was how the dimensions changed- the empty cow (on the left of Figure 1) took a very shallow, wide bite from the canopy. The 'full' cow (100% ruminal fill) took a much narrower, deeper bite into the canopy.

What does this mean? If we look at plant physical structure, the most nutritious part of the plant is towards the tip, where the youngest growth is. The least nutritious part of the plant is closer to the ground, where the higher-fiber stem and dead material are. The 'empty' cow was receiving hormonal feedback (via the hormone ghrelin, the same hormone that stimulates your appetite and makes your stomach growl) that she needed to harvest nutrients quickly. So she harvested only the 'best' of the plant- that is, she only skimmed the top of the plant to harvest the most nutritious bits, and avoided the stem that was deeper in the canopy. The 'full' cow was not as particular since she was not receiving that same feedback (low ghrelin levels), therefore she did not avoid the stem, biting deeper into the pasture canopy.

What can we learn from this? Our feeding and her management strategies, including when and what we feed our cows in the barn, can impact grazing behavior of cows. We must combine our farm goals with what is known about grazing behavior to decide when and how to feed our cows. Pasturing cows directly after milking may impact grazing behavior differently than if

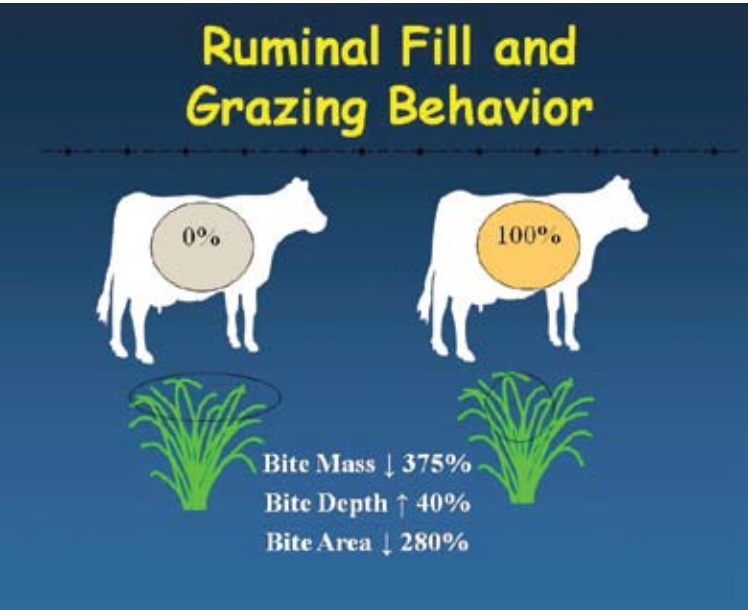
they're fed their conserved feeds prior to being turned out on pasture. Pasturing cows only at night may impact their grazing behavior due to preference changes throughout the day. If pasture utilization is to be maximized, or if we're dealing with a certain pasture quality, we may need to be flexible in what and when we supplement our cows to optimize their utilization of our pastures.

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NODPA is comprised of three staff people, of which two are part-time consultants. All the staff work from their homes located in Vermont, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. Without a formal of-

fice, NODPA saves a significant amount of money on unnecessary overhead and has accomplished some incredible tasks on an annual budget of under \$80,000 per year.

**NODPA lost a significant grant because of the Madoff Scandal and we need your help to continue with our important work. Please consider making a contribution to support NODPA’s efforts.**

In order to meet the annual budget needs, NODPA raises funds through grant writing, advertising in the NODPA Newsletter, business advertising on the NODPA Website and membership subscriptions. Memberships are paid once a year or producers can fill out a check-off form requesting that 2-5 cents per hundredweight go directly to support NODPA.


NODPA lost a significant grant because of the Madoff Scandal and we need your help to continue with our important work. Please

consider making a contribution to support NODPA’s efforts. In the coming months, you may be hearing from us, reminding you to renew your membership or to join for the first time.

You can fill out subscription form on page 17 or the check-off form found on page 18 or just send a check, cash or go to the website to make a donation. We know you all have very limited cash and so we thank you for investing in NODPA we can all secure our futures. ♦

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By becoming a subscriber you will receive 6 copies of the NODPA News and help support the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance. NODPA depends on your contributions and donations. If you enjoy the bi-monthly NODPA News; subscribe to the Odairy Listserv (ODAIRY-subscribe@yahoogroups.com ); visit our web page (www.nodpa.com) or benefit from farmer representation with the NOP and processors that NODPA provides, please show your support by making a generous contribution to our efforts.

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

\_\_\_\_\_ \$35 to cover an annual subscription to NODPA news

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Farm Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Are you a certified organic dairy producer? YES NO

Number of milking cows \_\_\_\_\_ Milk buyer \_\_\_\_\_

Are you transitioning to organic? YES NO If yes, anticipated date of certification: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this form with a check to: Ed Maltby, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342, or by fax: 866-554-9483 or by email to ed-nodpa@comcast.net. Please make your check payable to: NODPA

Credit card: Master Card Visa Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_ 200\_\_ Security Code on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

**What is NODPA?**

Headlines like this do not just happen:

*“Henry Perkins, an organic dairy farmer from Albion, brought a sign to Washington last week that read “Let Them Eat Grass.” After two days of debate, a federal advisory panel on the organic industry took Perkins’ message to heart.”*

*“In the first round to address the dispute, smaller farms appear to have scored a small victory.”*

These headlines happened because of the networking that NODPA has encouraged and facilitated.

**NODPA mission:** “to enable organic family dairy farmers, situated across an extensive area, to have informed discussion about matters critical to the well being of the organic dairy industry as a whole and to do so in an independent farmer-driven mode”.

NODPA was founded in February 2001 at a summit meeting of northeast organic dairy producers. These producers came

together to discuss critical issues within the organic dairy industry including maintaining a sustainable pay price, the National Organic Program, alternative milk markets, and building effective communication lines between fellow producers in the Northeast and beyond.

NODPA is a 501 (c) 5 federally tax exempt organization and membership is open to any organic dairy producer in the northeast. NODPA is governed by a Board of Directors who are organic producers elected by producer representatives from each state.

NODPA is not aligned with any one purchaser or retailer of organic milk, but works with them all and can provide producers with independent information on the many different aspects of organic dairying.

NODPA is able to promote the interest of all organic dairy producers across the country that meet USDA organic standards without favoring any one production system, size of operation or type of ownership.

**What do you get by subscribing to NODPA News?**  
**TURN THE PAGE TO LEARN MORE >**



Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance Producer Milk Check Assignment Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (please print name on your milk check)

request that \_\_\_\_\_ (name of company that sends your milk check)

deduct the sum of :

\_\_\_\_\_ \$0.02 per hundredweight to support the work of NODPA

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

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

as an assignment from my milk check starting the first day of \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_\_\_\_. The total sum will be paid monthly to NODPA. This agreement may be ended at any time by the producer by sending a written request to their milk buyer with a copy to NODPA.

Milk handlers please send payments to:

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA), Ed Maltby, NODPA Coordinator, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342

Producer signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Producer number/ member no: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of milking cows: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel #: \_\_\_\_\_

Certifying Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm Address: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Producers—please send this to NODPA, Attn Ed Maltby, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342, so we can track who has signed up and forward this form to the milk handler. Thank you.

What do you get by subscribing to NODPA News?

You receive six copies of NODPA News and provide financial support to NODPA which allows it to:

1. Administer NODPA which is the largest grassroots farmer organizations in the country that is dedicated to organic dairy farmers’ interests, not to recreating new bureaucracy.
2. Provide leadership in analyzing the activities of the National Organic Program and communicating that information to farmers, processors, industry representatives and consumers.
3. Represent the interests of organic producers at national meeting and work closely with its sister organization in the Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA), and the Midwest Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (MODPA) and coordinates the Federation Of Organic Dairy Farmers (FOOD Farmers).
4. Organize an Annual Meeting and Field Days Event each year at different locations in the northeast.
5. Produce and distribute the NODPA News bi-monthly

- newsletter that goes out to over 1,900 subscribers and many different casual readers at events.
6. Moderate Odairy, the organic dairy electronic discussion group, which has over 960 subscribing members. To become an Odairy subscriber, email: [http://nodpa.com/list\\_serv.shtml](http://nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml).
7. NODPA updates and maintains a web site filled with resources including educational information on animal health and grazing management, industry news, certification, classifieds, calendar events, and a business directory. ([www.organicmilk.org](http://www.organicmilk.org), [www.nodpa.com](http://www.nodpa.com) )
8. Be a member of the Organic Trade Association, the National Organic Coalition and the Accredited Certifiers Association and promote producers interests nationally and in Washington DC.
9. Work constantly to retain the integrity and consistent application of organic dairy standards in order to uphold consumer expectations and provide a sustainable future.
10. Administer and grow NODPA's Farmer Emergency Fund to assist organic dairy farmers.

For more information contact Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director, 413-772-0444 or [ednodpa@comcast.net](mailto:ednodpa@comcast.net).

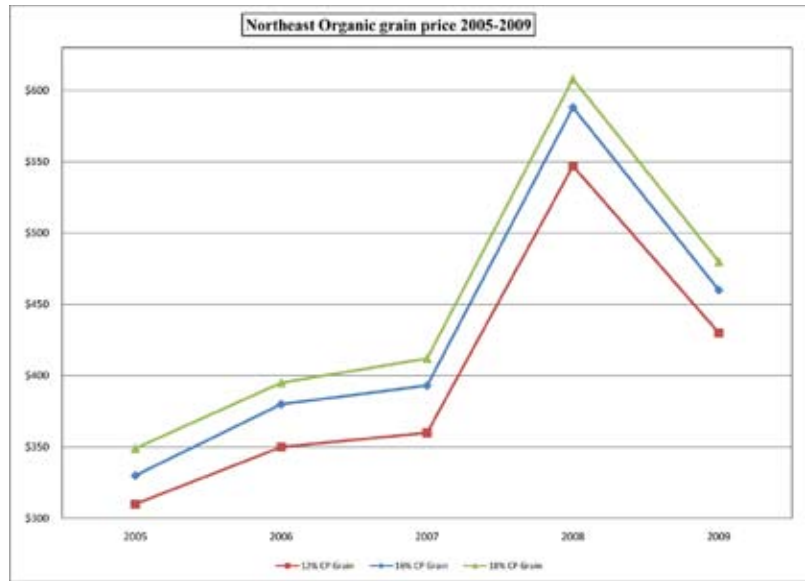
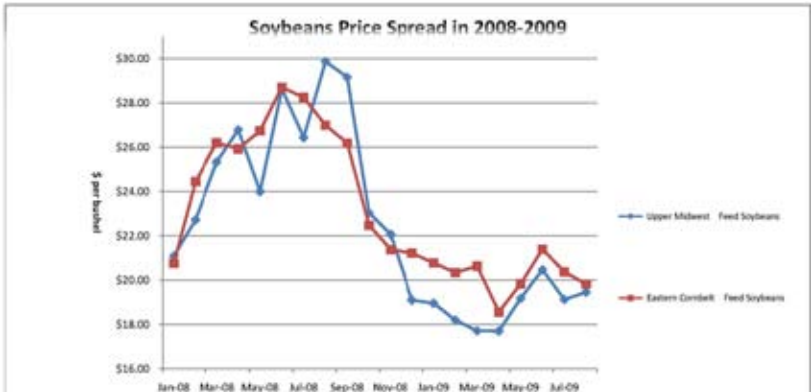
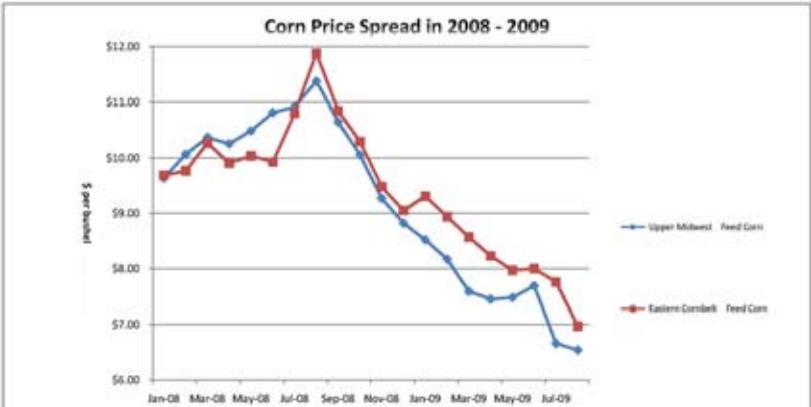
ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Feed Price Update

By NODPA Executive Director Ed Maltby

It's still too early to make decisions about purchasing of grain or budget for the winter feed prices with trade at a near standstill, as demand from processors is very light, leaving growers with much uncertainty about price and demand. With uncertainty around how the Access to Pasture Final Rule will affect organic poultry and beef operations and the lower demand for organic eggs, demand for grain from those sectors is very slight. Some new crop corn is being priced from \$5.00 to \$6.00 per bushel and alfalfa prices are from 80 cents to one dollar per point, weaker than in July. Most of the Cornbelt has experienced plenty of moisture this summer which has produced some poor quality wheat. Confirmed cases of wheat affected with vomitoxin and sprouting has spread throughout the eastern states.

NODPA gives monthly update of organic feed prices on its home page, go to [www.nodpa.com](http://www.nodpa.com)



National Organic Program to Undergo Independent Audit

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has ordered an independent audit of its National Organic Program (NOP) to boost transparency and integrity, and bring it in line with international standards.

USDA deputy secretary Kathleen Merrigan wrote to the National Organic Coalition on July 29, after the organic alliance had urged the department to undergo an outside review of NOP practices in order to strengthen public confidence in the program.

Merrigan wrote: “Third-party recognition is important for many of USDA’s audit-based programs. We understand the value of this step as we continue working to strengthen the integrity of the NOP and to build the organic community’s trust in the program.”

International standards

The audit will assess the NOP’s more than 100 private certifiers to ensure that the USDA is adhering to strict international standards for accrediting them and overseeing their work. It will be carried out by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and is due to begin on October 1.

The audit is expected to take several months and the National Organic Coalition anticipates that the NOP will have to make several changes in order to qualify under NIST’s National Voluntary Conformity Assessment Systems Evaluation.

National Organic Coalition policy coordinator Liana Hoodes said: “We anticipate that the potential changes NOP will make to earn NIST recognition will result in greater consistency and integrity in USDA organic standards, greater fairness to organic farmers and handlers, and greater consumer confidence in the USDA organic label.”

Questioning USDA organic

The value of the USDA NOP program has been called into question several times – including by the National Organic Coalition, which has previously accused it of having “a history of issuing inconsistent, secretive, and poorly justified interpretations of USDA organic standards and regulations.”

Liana Hoodes said: “We think the USDA and the entire Obama Administration have sent a clear message that maintaining and improving the integrity of the organic industry is a national priority, and that the USDA will continue to build a trusting alliance with the broader organic community as the NOP grows and matures.”

NODPA is a member of the National Organic Coalition.



INDUSTRY NEWS

# NODPA 9th Annual Field Days Wrap-Up

*continued from page 10*

exchange of these sessions could be two or three separate articles and I wished we had recorded them for future use. Below is a brief summary of what transpired under the excellent moderation and control of Sarah Flack.

### Making Great Rations

The first session was titled Making Great Rations: Economical and Efficient Use of Inputs with Kathy Soder, USDA, ARS and Ken Muckenfuss, KOW Consulting Association, dairy nutrition.

Kathy Soder presented first with some general information on productive pastures and how cows graze with plenty of examples from her research and work with producers.

**Questions and answers included:**

- How does an empty stomach impact how the cow is grazing? If hungry, the cow takes the cream of the crop with a wide sweeping bite and a cow with a full stomach will graze deeper into the sward.
- How much protein supplementation is needed on pasture? Research shows that cows will choose the forage that will balance their protein if it is available. (cows went to the legume pasture – craving more protein when fed a 10% protein grain and went to the grass sward if they are fed 18-20% protein grain).
- If you want the cows to clean up a particular type of forage how can you manage what you feed in the barn? We need to do more research on the sugar content in the pasture and why feed value varies at different times of the day to supplement the feed accordingly.
- How to determine when a pasture is ready to graze? General rule of thumb is 6-10 inches tall and leave it when it is 3-4 inches tall to maximize the regrowth potential of the pasture. If we graze it shorter it will deplete the plant's energy reserve and take longer to recover.

Ken Muckenfuss from KOW Consulting based his presentation on his work at Springwood Farm. Some of the issues on the farm were high SCC and calf health which needed to be solved by looking at nutrition and how to alter production practices to improve the situation.

**Questions with answers included:**

- Dry Cow Protein in ration? 12% Protein is ideal at dry off and then by freshening, increase to 16% and then 18% for the early lactation cow.

- Measuring Milk Urea Nitrogen (MUN)? – use MUN as a marker, but not as a tell-tale
- Proper MUN? = 12-16 is ideal. It is normal for pastures to have an elevated MUN so a grazing animal needs to get 5-8 lbs of dry hay before going out on good pasture. Baleage is good when grasses start to lignify and hit summer slump.
- Do you believe in kelp? Yes to some extent... If you are not doing any mineral supplementation, then kelp is a good source.
  - Free choice minerals versus force feeding in a grain mix? Preference would be to force feed 75-100% in a Total Mixed Ration (TMR).
  - Can animals detect deficiency of minerals? Yes (Kathie Soder), research shows that it can take 2-3 years time to learn, but it can be done, and if they can learn from their dam or from their peers, they can learn faster.
  - How many types of rumen bacteria are there? (Kathie Soder) There are million's of rumen bacteria and these types will shift based upon what the animals are eating. A calf will come in this world with a sterile rumen and its rumen needs to get inoculated with bacteria from its environment. Forages have a higher rumen pH (favoring bacteria that digest cellulose/fiber) vs high grain diet (lower rumen pH).
- Feeding Yeast? (Ken Muckenfuss) There is a lot of variable research on Yeast in the diet but if you see a response and it works economically, then yes.
- Molasses supplementation? Corn vs molasses – 1 lb molasses for 3 lbs of corn seems to be the ratio that Ken hears, but depends on your geographical location.

The second session followed a short milk break and was on Animal Health with Hue Karreman and Jeff Mattocks.

### Somatic Cell Counts (SCC)

Hue made a short presentation (well, as short as Hue can make anything!) on Somatic Cell Counts and Calves and Internal Parasites which is summarized below.

SCC is the immune system of the cow reacting to something in the udder due to either bacteria or chemical damage. SCC goes up and down normally, going up during the hot summer days and going down when the temperatures are more comfortable. Even if you do nothing, you will see a rise and fall in your SCC numbers. An abnormally high SCC count is usually due to bacteria and you won't know what kind unless you have your milk tested to identify the



Sharad Mathur (DMS), Roman, Lucy and their daughter.

bacteria causing the problem. Everybody's got something that they use to treat for mastitis, but with chronic SCC of 500 K or higher, you probably have Strep ag or Staph aureus. These forms of mastitis are contagious, passed during milking (equipment, hands). Good milking and udder prep can help reduce the incidence of environmental and contagious mastitis.

### Calves and Internal Parasites

Calves and internal parasites are probably the weakest link of the organic dairy sector, especially in August and September. Parasites are invisibly jumping off blades of grass into the stomach of your animal, and the calves don't have immune capability until 12 months to adequately respond. Symptoms of parasites include pot bellies, scours, rough hair coat and weight loss. Prevention can be achieved by offering calves a good diet and producers should consider keeping calves on milk for at least 3 months, introducing other feeds, and making the weaning process less stressful. Nurse cows can work very well though calves may be a little wild which can be prevented by spending time with cows for human contact. High SCC cows can make good nurse cows and the milk in your bulk tank will be better quality. Be careful about turning cows with contagious mastitis into nurse cows.

**Questions on Hue's presentation included:**

- How do you wean the nurse calves off the cows and introduce new calves to a nurse cow?
- If you use High SCC for nurse cows are you inoculating your calves with certain bugs keeping those bacteria going?
- How do you know which cows will take calves?
- Difference between nurse cows and group fed calves
- Is their natural resistance to parasites

Jeff Mattocks followed with a presentation on Milk Urea Nitrogen (MUN) and Molds and Micotoxins. Jeff's presentation highlighted the importance of monitoring and testing for MUN, molds and micotoxin especially this year. He explained that each grain in a forage has bacteria in it and there is beneficial and pathogenic fermentation. Mold toxins aren't visible so you need to have a mold toxin test done on your forages. To avoid the risk of micotoxins, raise your cutting height as white molds grow at the bottom of the crop when it is stressed.

**Questions and answers included:**

- Does roasting cure that vomitoxin? Roasting will blow off the toxin load... but you are only killing the mold and stopping it from producing more toxin.
- Should I test loads of purchased grain? Yes, once the mold has lived, the toxin remains.
- Can I get rid of toxin in purchased grain? You can lessen the impact by mixing it with good grain, and you can use mold



Fabulous feast: Steve Morrison and Henry Perkins (past and current NODPA Presidents).

and vomitoxin binders. You need to identify the toxin in order to know which binder to use.

### Landis on Human Resourcefulness & Farm Budgeting

James Landis followed with a highly personal and lively presentation before lunch that sketched out his beliefs and how they drive him in his work. James is an organic enthusiast and loves to work with living things. One of his resource books is the "The Ultimate Resource #2" by Julian Simon, which concludes that there is no physical or economic reason why human resourcefulness cannot solve all the earth's problems.

James drew attention to the comparative cheapness of the milk but he is not a believer in government intervention and quoted examples of success in New Zealand by being more innovative and producing milk cheaper so that our market can expand. The free market allows for competition and will cut the inefficient guy out of business and James believes that you cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong.

As he ended his morning presentation, James reminded producers that the main fuel to speed our progress is our stock of knowledge and the brake is our lack of imagination.

After lunch and the draw for door prizes, James continued his presentation by talking about the practicality of farm budgeting and the afternoon ended with a tour of the Stoltzfoos farm. The tour started looking at the benefits of the milking parlor, a New Zealand Dairy Master 22 swing parlor made in Ireland, which include low cow stress and no requirement to train heifers and cows to tie stalls for milking. James made the point that it is more profitable to have 2 cows milking 10,000lbs/year than an over stressed cow with a shorter life span milking 20,000 lbs/year.

### Fly Control

Fly control is always a "hot" topic in the summer and folks were impressed by the lack of flies on the farm. This can be credited to good production practices, kunifin bran fly parasite and the chickens following behind the cows. Spring Wood farm has been grazing for many years and has experimented with many production practices to improve yields and prolong grazing. The pros and cons of pre-mowing was discussed with higher labor costs but also higher dry matter intake, and better pasture clean up and weed control. The practicality of nurse cows was discussed as they were moved to a new pasture and Roman highlighted the benefits of rejuvenating overused pasture by fallowing it, an essential component in organic production that is often ignored under the pressure of maximizing production from a limited land base. The tour and Field Days ended with everyone wondering why we don't hold these events more often. ♦



## 2009 CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM SIGN-UP

**August 10 – September 30**

Farmers and ranchers may sign-up to participate in the initial 2009 edition of the federal farm bill's Conservation Stewardship Program at their local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office through the end of September.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a comprehensive working lands conservation program designed to protect and improve natural resources and the environment. CSP provides technical and financial assistance to farmers and ranchers to actively manage and maintain existing conservation systems and to implement additional conservation activities on land in agricultural production. CSP targets funding to:

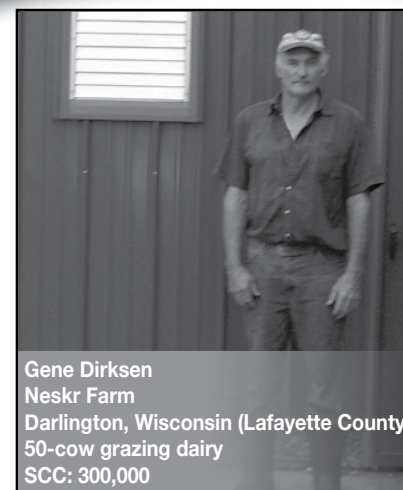
- Address priority resource concerns in a given state, watershed or region;
- Improve soil, water, and air quality;
- Provide increased biodiversity and wildlife and pollinator habitat;
- Sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to mitigate climate change; and
- Conserve water and energy.

### STEPS INVOLVED IN ENROLLING INCLUDE:

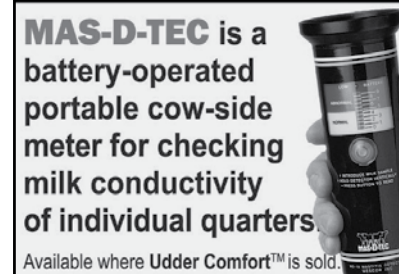
1. Complete a producer self-screening checklist to see if CSP is right for you. May be done online -- [www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new\\_csp/special\\_pdfs/CSP\\_Producer\\_Self\\_Screening\\_Checklist.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/new_csp/special_pdfs/CSP_Producer_Self_Screening_Checklist.pdf) -- or in local NRCS field office.
2. If applicant is not currently an operator in the USDA Farm Service Agency farm records management system, get entered into the system at the local FSA office.
3. Complete the basic CSP application in the local USDA NRCS office.
  - You must get through steps 1-3 by September 30 to have a chance to enroll as part of the initial 2009 sign-up cohort.
4. Complete the detailed Conservation Measurement Tool (soon to be available on the NRCS website to preview) at the local NRCS office. The Tool will be used to determine ranking and payment points based on total environmental benefits.
  - Step 4 may be started anytime after mid-September and must be completed by about the end of October. Check with your local office for more specific dates.
5. NRCS will rank proposals received and determine which are eligible for enrollment by about mid-November. Those tentatively accepted into the program will then be scheduled for an on-site field verification visit by the local NRCS conservationist. Once field-verified, the conservation plan and CSP contract will be developed and signed. Implementation of the plan then occurs during 2010, with the first CSP payment made in October 2010.

**Special Note:** Sign-up is continuous throughout the year, but there are cut off dates when ranking will be done. The 2010 sign-up that follows this initial 2009 sign-up will likely have a late winter cut-off for ranking. Proposals submitted for 2009 that do not get funded will be held open for the 2010 ranking unless the producer withdraws it. The initial payments for both 2009 and 2010 enrollments will be October 2010. Nationwide, 12.8 million acres are eligible for enrollment in both 2009 and again in 2010.

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Bulk Tank SCC”**

~ Gene Dirksen

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it a lot this spring when I have a bunch of fresh cows coming into the herd in March. The **Mas-D-Tec** showed me which cows and quarters were contributing to the bulk tank SCC. Then I put **Udder Comfort™** on those quarters (20% of the herd) after both milkings for about a week. The result was a 100,000-drop in my Bulk Tank SCC. After seeing that, I started using **Udder Comfort™** on any cow with a hard

quarter. I was surprised. We had one here a couple weeks ago that came in with a hard quarter. I applied **Udder Comfort™** and the next day, she was in good shape again. After giving it a good try and sticking with it, I can definitely say the results are a lot better with **Udder Comfort™**.”



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RESEARCH & EDUCATION

NESARE Competitive Grants

The Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program is a USDA competitive grants program supporting agriculture that is profitable, environmentally sound, and good for communities. Below is a list of some of the projects awarded for 2009:

NESARE Research and Education Grants

The Research and Education program funds outcome-based projects offering research, education, and demonstration projects that engage farmers as cooperators in the exploration of sustainable farm practices.

**Reducing fuel and fertilizer costs for corn silage in the Northeast with cover crops and no-till.** Grant Recipient: Rick Kersbergen, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Waldo ME, Grant ID Number: LNE09-287

**Improving the efficiency of nitrogen use and reducing ammonia emissions from Pennsylvania dairies.** Grant Recipient: Alexander Hristov, Penn State University, University Park PA, Grant ID Number: LNE09-286

**Improving oilseed production and harvesting practices in New England: A farmer-to-farmer exchange.** Grant Recipient: Heather Darby, University of Vermont Extension, St. Albans VT, Grant ID

Number: LNE09-282

**Marketing on-farm compost for sustainability and economic viability.** Grant Recipient: Athena Lee Bradley, Northeast Recycling Council, Brattleboro VT, Grant ID Number: LNE09-280

**Use of whole-farm analysis to reduce nutrient losses, improve nutrient cycling, carbon status, and energy use on small dairies in New York State.** Grant Recipient: Quirine Ketterings, Cornell University, Ithaca NY, Grant ID Number: LNE08-271

Partnership Grants:

The purpose of the Partnership Grant program is to support agricultural service providers who work directly with farmers to do on-farm demonstrations, research, marketing, and other projects that will add to our understanding of sustainable agriculture. The maximum award is \$10,000.

**Evaluation of forage Brassica establishment and productivity on grazing farms.** Grant Recipient: Steven Canner, Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County, Canton NY, Grant ID Number: ONE09-095

**Tracking labor for time and enterprise budgeting.** Grant Recipient: Seth Wilner, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, Newport NH, Grant ID Number: ONE09-110

**Evaluating the use and seed production of forage radishes in field and forage crop fields to control compaction, concentrate nutrients, suppress weeds, and provide a local seed source in the limestone soil of the northern Shenandoah Valley.** Grant Recipient: Craig Yohn, West Virginia University Extension Service, Kearneysville WV, Grant ID Number: ONE09-111

continued on page 38

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**For more information contact:**  
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**John Zmich**

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION: FEATURED FARM

Maedke Family Dairy: Coleman, Wisconsin

John Maedke & his wife Bonnie found the transition to organic production, which they completed in December 2002, easier than they expected. Their greatest challenge? Getting acclimated to the grazing management requirements.

By Lisa McCrory

The Maedke Family Farm, located in Coleman, Wisconsin is a farm that still uses some of the old farming ways while also embracing new technologies that improve the efficiency and independence of their farm. They milk 40 Holstein and Holstein/Brown Swiss cross cows, have about 30 replacement animals and have a closed herd. Annual production on their farm is about 584,000 pounds per year or 14,600 pounds per cow.

John and Bonnie own approximately 200 acres of which 35 acres is pastureland, 15 acres is wooded, 20-40 acres are in corn, 60-70 acres are in hay and 20-40 acres are in small grains. They grow most of their own feed, usually sowing fall rye. Oats and barley are part of the annual rotation of small grains, and they dabble with other forages and grains from year to year including oats planted with peas and different varieties of sorghum sudan grass.

John has been farming 15 years on his own. Prior to that he farmed with his parents for 10 years while employed by the National Farmers Organization as a Dairy Field Representative. His responsibilities included procurement, producer relationships and milk quality. This job gave him a pretty good understanding of the inner workings of the dairy farmer. Farmers, he found are challenging to organize, and stubborn. Bonnie joined John in farming when they married in 2002. She is in charge of raising the calves, keeping the farm records, the books and running the house.

The Maedkes have three children: Corey is 19 and is away at college; Sydney is 16, and a junior at Coleman High School. She helps with chores when she is not competing in track, working at a local diner, or hanging out with friends. Simon is 5 1/2 and just started Kindergarten at their local Christian Day School. He

loves to ride on the tractors, knows all the equipment and what it does. He is a farmer for sure.

Matthew is their only employee and works for John and Bonnie full time. He started when he was 18 years old, working part time for 4 years and full time for the past three years. Matthew was already versed in organic production when he started with Bonnie and John; his family raises organic chickens and eggs. Matthew recently purchased ten acres of land nearby which he is transitioning to organic with the hopes of raising organic beef in the near future. They feel truly blessed to have such a trustworthy, hardworking, dedicated employee. It was because of Matthew's dependability that John, Bonnie and their son Simon were able to take a vacation and attend the NODPA Field Days this year.

Transition to Organic

John and Bonnie have been certified organic since December 2002, and started shipping milk January 2003 to Organic Valley. The Maedkes originally started the transition to organic because



John didn't trust the local agricultural centers and was not interested in getting his own sprayer applicator license. By choosing not to spray, he learned that he could still grow nice crops so why not go organic. An added bonus is having a voice within the co-op when it comes to milk pricing. It was still a three-year process; they just needed to get through the huge binder of paperwork. Bonnie was great with the organic paperwork. If it wasn't for her, the

transition to organic would have been much more delayed.

The transition to organic dairy production was easier than anticipated. According to John, it was actually 'uneventful'. Their biggest concern when they started their transition was how to deal with sick cows. This ended up to be the least of their problems. Their greater challenge was getting acclimated to the grazing management requirements, but they have made some



great strides in that arena. Another challenge has been with the record keeping. The Maedkes do not believe in ear tags, but understand the importance of identifying all the animals on the farm and tracking their movement if they leave the farm. They use neck chains, making sure not to re-use numbers, and photos of the animals, which gets filed with their records. They are certified through MOSA, out of Viroqua, Wisconsin.

Grazing Management

Prior to being organic, the Maedkes turned their cows out on pasture, but it was not managed as a part of the daily feed ration. Pasture was more of a turnout for the cows where they were supplemented with green chop or some other harvested feed. John and Bonnie have made a lot of improvements over the years, but still see their grazing program as a work in progress. Currently, they have 17 paddocks about one acre in size. They rotationally graze these paddocks providing fresh pasture after the evening milking and offer green chop or other harvested forages during the day.

To get started with their grazing system, they turned to many people for advice and wisdom including Don Baker, an organic farmer in Iowa, and Rick Adamski, a fellow organic dairy producer with Organic Valley and current DEC Representative. They also have worked with their local extension agent, participated in a grazing group, and have hosted a pasture walk at their farm.

Due to a series of unseasonably dry summers, John decided to find a forage variety that can withstand dry conditions and that is adapted to his area. Last year, they planted 15 acres of pasture land to some native grasses, Big Bluestem & Canadian Milk Vetch that they hope to start grazing in 2010-2011. Big Bluestem is a perennial warm season grass climatically adapted throughout the Midwest and Northeast on well-drained soils. The leaves are very nutritious for cattle, and it is now being rediscovered as commercial hay and a forage plant.

Feeding Program

A representative summer ration on the Maedke farm would be 40% pasture, some green chop, a couple pounds of straw, dry hay and 4-5 lbs of an oats/rye/corn grain mix. The winter ration consists of dry hay, bagged feed (corn silage and hay silage), straw and 4-5 lbs of the same grain ration. They grow all the small grains on their farm and purchase organic shell corn. Their feed is mixed at a contract feed mill called Peshtigo Mill, located about 10 miles from the farm. The mill works with conventional producers, but it is also certified organic for the Maedke Family Farm. In this situation, John is responsible for purging (cleaning) the system before his organic grains get mixed and formulated into a ration. To do this, he brings organic straw and runs it

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FEATURED FARM

*continued from page 27*

through the mill first, cleaning out any conventional grains or chaff that was lingering in the equipment. John and Bonnie really enjoy working with their local grain mill and appreciate how they were willing to work with them. Prior to working with their local mill, the Maedke’s had to travel 200 miles to western Wisconsin every 3 months to have their grain mix formulated for them.

Livestock Health

The primary preventative health plan on the Maedke farm is to not push the cows for production. They seem to heal very effectively on their own in a low stress environment. Mastitis clears easily by stripping the cow several times per day and is usually necessary for 1-2 days and then she seems to be recovered. They don’t see much Ketosis but when they have had it John has used organic coffee as a way to perk up the cow to get her to eat. They do this by mixing coffee and water in a beer bottle and drenching the cow.

Prior to being organic, the Maedkes had a few milk fevers a year and the occasional down cow. Today, John can’t remember when he had a case. “ Since the conversion to organic, I have seen the tremendous ability the cows have to heal themselves. Part of this is due to the organic feed and the other is due to us not pushing the cows to produce gigantic amounts of milk”, says John. They do not vaccinate the cows or the calves, nor do they use any type

of Homeopathy. They rarely call their local vet, though they feel that the ideal vet would be someone who offers alternative treatments and does some on-farm research looking at the efficacy of organic treatment options.

Calves are raised during the spring and summer months only. They use calf port-a-huts and wean the calves at around three months. Currently, due to a milk quota which requires that they reduce their production by 7%, they decided to keep their calves on milk longer and fertilize some hay ground with excess milk. The calves definitely look good. Hay is always available to the calves from birth and they receive a sniff of grain once a day. They don’t have any health issues with their calves.

Old and New Technologies

At the NODPA Field days, John heard the words, ‘Don’t be afraid to experiment.’ From James Landis, the keynote speaker. John has to agree. “We have tried some weird things”, says John. “We grew Cammellina to try and raise our own fuel, we’ve planted peas with our corn, and use an old dependable McCormick-Deering threshing machine for our small grains.”

All the vehicles and machinery on the Maedke Family Farm are run on diesel fuel, and a percentage of the fuel used is from waste vegetable oil. Interested in growing their own fuel oil crop, they tried growing Cammellina, but the crop was a failure due to droughty conditions and weed problems. They continue to use waste veggie oil from a number of restaurants and in the summer time, 50% of the tractor fuel is from vegetable oil and up to 80% for their Mercedes family car.

Inspired by the ‘Three Sisters Garden’ approach to soil fertility, the Maedkes started planting peas with their corn. The system has worked well for them and they can enjoy some nice peas for the supper table if they get out in the cornfield at the right time.

John has been threshing his small grains ever since he can remember and his boy Simon is amazed and enamored with the process. The grain is swatted in the field in July or August using a draper head. The crop lays in the field in windrows for a day or two and is then harvested with a chopper and brought to the barnyard where the thresher is waiting to sort the grain from the straw (photo of thresher on page 27).

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How to Better Serve the Organic Dairy Industry

When asked what needed to be addressed in the organic dairy industry in order for producers to be better served, John responded quickly by saying “price, price, price”. A ‘fair’ pay price for the Maedke family would need to be at least \$35 dollars per hundredweight, but parity would, of course, be better. “If a farmer makes money, he spends it [within the local community] and the whole economy grows”, says John. Bonnie and John are in full support of the Organic Valley mandatory supply reduction program, but are disheartened by the number of farmers that choose to not participate by producing excess milk. He feels that price can be addressed by implementing various supply control measures on the farm and making sure to always be talking about price so that it is heard by the industry. Supply management also needs to be a part of every discussion. “That [supply management] and only that will keep the farmer in some position of strength when it comes to negotiating the price for his/her raw product,” says John. “Supply management and price go hand in hand. A good price promotes supply management and supply management is conducive to a good price, contrary to the common thinking that a high price promotes excess production.” ♦



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Foster Farms Top Bid for Humboldt Creamery

Foster Farms Dairy of Modesto was the winning bidder for the Fernbridge and Stockton creamery and other related assets of Humboldt Creamery’s business in a bankruptcy court auction. The arrangement is that Foster Farms would buy the business for \$19.5 million -- with a provision to adjust the price based on how much more or less than \$10 million in working capital is on hand at the time of the deal.

Foster Farms is the biggest private dairy operation in California, and an acquisition of Humboldt Creamery would significantly boost its position into the organic dairy business.

The cooperative of dairy farmers that owns 75 percent of the company was unable to put together financing to make a bid for the court auction. Dairy farmers are concerned over arrangements with Dairy Farmers of America -- a former 25-percent owner of the creamery -- to buy their milk and deliver it to Foster Farms. Dairymen worry that not all organic milk they produce will be bought at organic prices, despite the higher cost of production. Foster Farms said its intention is to expand the organic market so it can buy more organic milk. Clover Stornetta Dairy in northern California was unable to work with the cooperative of dairy farmers and is now facing its own problems with maintaining it organic market.

Humboldt Creamery declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy in April, two months after former CEO Rich Ghilarducci pointed out financial inaccuracies in the company’s books and resigned. An FBI investigation into alleged fraud is ongoing. The realization that the 80-year-old company’s finances were tens of millions of dollars off put its fate into the hands of federal bankruptcy court. ♦

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COMMENTARY

Time To Be Politically Incorrect?

Hello ODairy List,

Time to be politically incorrect.

I applaud Sen. Sanders’ effort at questioning Dean Foods’ pricing policies, but I’m willing to bet his attempt will be futile. Why? Gregg Engles does not care about family farmers, or any farmers for that matter. He considers himself one of the ‘elite’ in society, and he certainly doesn’t consider farmers his equal. If anyone thinks I’m way off base with my explanation, I welcome your arguments. But in contemplating recent events in organic dairy, I can come to no other conclusion.

One of the first unspoken facts you learn in business school is that the more employees you have working under you, the higher your earning potential. If you are self employed, with no employees, the only money you can earn is from your efforts and your efforts alone. The same holds true of you are a laborer in any company. The CEO of a large corporation takes a share of the wages of everyone else who works in the company. That’s how a CEO is paid tens of millions of dollars per year; no individual can possibly ‘earn’ that much money by him / herself.


Dean Foods has many, many employees; thousands when you consider that the farmers that supply their milk are, technically, Dean Foods employees, and so are all the employees on those farms, including the cows. The total compensation that Engles receives each year comes from the work of not just him, but everyone else ‘below’ him. I’m sure , along with most CEOs, he believes he deserves every penny, and probably thinks he should receive more, given the amount of money Dean Foods handles every year and the total number of people under Dean’s employment.

That’s the reasoning behind Suiza’s purchase of Dean Foods, and Engles’ drive to continue to purchase other dairy companies. Not because there are any economies of scale or efficiencies to be gained, but because growing in size increases the number of employees in the company, the amount of power Dean has in the marketplace and in the political arena, and, just as importantly, in the earnings potential of all the upper management people.

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money. The so called elites of our society consider themselves at the top of the social ladder. Their children go to private boarding schools and attend the elite colleges. Farmers’ children are expected to go to vocational schools and attend ag colleges. Wealthy people don’t look down with loving eyes at their newborn children and say “I sure hope he / she becomes a farmer, or marries a farmer.” Heaven forbid! Either occurance would be a nightmare come true.

The fact of the matter is, while the elite consider themselves at the top of the social ladder, they consider farmers on the bottom rung, if that. They think of farmers more like cows than themselves: there will always be new ones coming on, so if you lose a few farmers, so what? Family farmers are an expendable production unit, easily replaced and not deserving of anything more than the poverty level income they are given. The loss of a few farms is simply the cost of doing business, and expected by the corporations.

The power has accumulated for decades, so that in any economic downturn, the farmers can be forced to bear all of the burden. That’s why most dairies must pay to have their milk trucked to processing plants, why ‘make allowances’ came into being, why the price of dairy products on the store shelves doesn’t drop as much as the price farmers are paid, and why parity pricing was abolished. Power can continue to consolidate, unless laws are written, and enforced, to prevent that from happening.

When a country takes its food supply for granted, bad decisions are made with regard to food production. Organic agriculture was envisioned as a more just and sustainable food production, distribution, and retail model. In organic dairy, because of the greed of Dean Foods, Aurora, et. al., that has not proven to be the case. Gregg Engles may pay lip service to Sen. Sanders, but to him all is right with the world: profits are up, Dean Foods stock is higher, the company is at full employment, there’s plenty of cheap milk available, Dean continues to grow, salaries and bonuses will be up, what could possibly be wrong?

The people with power in the dairy industry will have an epiphany at some point in time, but probably not until their judgment day. The damage done in the meantime will be tremendous.

Sincerely,  
Kevin Engelbert  
Organic Dairy Producer  
Nichols, NY

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COMMENTARY

Heirloom Economy

By Tim Wightman

As our economy grinds down to find its footing again, it appears our leaders are bent on keeping things the same with a stimulus package geared toward fixing a few bridges, getting a few old cars off the roads to make room for imports, and propping up banks who still hold a vast amount of bad debt on houses and strip malls we don’t need, and who pray land values edge up a little before they cut loose the number of foreclosures they are sick of sitting on.

In our debates why aren’t we discovering how we got where we are, focusing our efforts on creating a sustainable economy or exploring how the rest of the world lead comfortable lives and safeguard their resources?

There is one root to the various problems confronting us now: economy, health care and food safety. And that root started 57 years ago, in 1952; the year of the first farm bill.It was announced that this first farm bill would overhaul and launch agriculture into a new century. Here’s what folks were told....

1. We are going to reduce the parity program due to the parity programs inability to adjust for efficiency.
2. Food should be cheap so we can spend money on other more important things (enter consumer driven economics)
3. The children of rural America deserve better than their parents had. The city is full of jobs and spouses there for the taking.

However, the unpublicized and underlying motivations were not so noble. Here’s what public wasn’t told, and was recorded in the minutes of those Congressional hearings.

1. Reduce the cost of raw agricultural products (enter the term commodities not food).
2. Keep farmers too busy to organize beyond Farm Bureau.
3. Keep farmers too broke to participate in their townships and county boards, eliminating those leaders who would put brakes to unlimited progress and cultivate thoughtful expenditures of the tax dollars.
4. Empty rural America

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- a) By lowering raw material food prices to below production costs.
- b) Move farm kids to the city to enlarge the work force and depress wages.
- c) Decrease income to the farmer reducing the solidarity between labor unions and farmers.
- d) Weaken the rural communities who were resistant to change (to a consumer driven economy).

So began top down integration and our hard earned dollars funneled upwards, away from our local economies and into the hands of the few.

Here is where I would like to interject just what this means (other than the obvious example of Fall 2008)

1. Agricultural raw materials have a multiplier effect of seven
2. All other raw materials like lumber, iron, brick etc. have a multiplier effect of three to five.
3. Big box chain stores have a multiplier effect of at best two.

Simply put, when local dollars buy local raw food materials, the economy is robust. When local dollars buy imported or sent away and returned processed food, the economy goes bust. Bubbles are creates on next fool economies and we eventually go bust just the same.

It has been widely known, from the first time economists looked up from their studies, that to have a healthy economy, farm income must be at 10 to 12% Gross Domestic Product (GDP), financial gain on banking/investment/interest should be about 1.3%, personal income 66%, corporate income 12.5% with other money generation making the total. In 2007 farm income was less than 1.6% GDP, in the best year on record, finance now is 52% GDP and personal income (business or job) is down to 32% GDP.

How much money did the economy lose by moving to a consumer driven economy?

From 1952 to 1982 we have conservative estimates of five trillion dollars (\$5,000,000,000,000) removed from the U.S. economy from the creation of the first Farm Bill and it’s upwards creation of the money flow. We moved the money out of the hands and purchasing power of the local economy to corporations, even though everyone lost out on the five trillion not produced in the process.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Go Local & Prosper ...  
In More Ways Than One

By Jack Bradigan Spula

To show how far we’ve come in a generation on matters of health, compare two slogans from popular culture. The first used to be everywhere in American media: “I’d walk a mile for a Camel,” said the ad copy from the golden, or leaden, age of cigarettes. (Even back then, many asked if the smoker would have enough breath for the journey.) The second slogan, ubiquitous on today’s real and virtual front pages, takes several forms. The website sustainabletable.org renders it comprehensively as: “Eat local, buy local, be local,” which implies that the consumer would walk two miles, round trip, for local, organic chevre or lamb.

But “localism” is about a lot more than the evolution of health awareness, the personal health of “foodies,” or new pedestrian approaches to quadrupeds. Perhaps most significantly during a Great Recession that’s predictably hurt farmers and rural economies – and stunted the recent growth spurt of organic agriculture, which only last year promised salvation for struggling small farmers – localism is becoming a strategy to save the farm and the businesses and communities that depend on it.

Take what’s happening right now in the state of Maine. As reported recently in the New York Times, farmer-members of Maine Organic Milk Producers are exploring the creation of a “Maine label.” There are some legal hurdles, including assurances that dairy products so labeled are processed within the state. But clearing the hurdles could be a matter of survival. “We’re so remote, we’re high and dry otherwise... unless we find our own market,” eastern Maine dairy farmer Aaron Bell told the Times.

If small farms, organic and conventional alike, are to ride out the economic storm, they’ll need to cultivate localism for all it’s worth. This will mean more direct marketing and sales of locally-grown (and especially organic) produce, dairy products and eggs, breads, and so forth – essentially more grassroots control of the means of production, in ways that cut across old habits and fond ideologies. And putting the power back into the hands on the plough will yield benefits across the board, in areas like these:

- **Nutrition.** The central problem with American diets these days is imbalance. To fight this problem, Americans will have to heed sources as diverse as the American Heart Association (“Eat a diet rich in vegetables and fruits” and “choose whole-grain, high-fiber foods”) and best-selling author Michael Pollan (“Eat mostly plants, especially leaves”). And such advice will lead shoppers increasingly to the street markets rather than the supermarket aisles.

- **Energy and transportation.** A 2003 study by the Iowa-based Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture established that “food miles” (in their terms, “weighted average source distance”) for locally-sourced foods were substantially lower than for those conventionally-sourced. That is, conventional outlets in Iowa, focused on economies of scale, sell produce that travels an average 1,494 miles from grower to consumer (think broccoli from California). For in-state products, the average is a mere 56 miles. It’s axiomatic that something local is closer to you than something across the continent. But even adjusting for this obvious point, the differential is striking: the typical Iowa supermarket is selling out-of-state produce that travels 27 times farther than what this quintessential agricultural state can provide itself.
- **Support for other communities and institutions, and the accumulation of “social capital.”** Over the last century or more, and especially during the last 30 years, we’ve seen a forced migration from rural areas to cities and a drastic reduction in the number of farmers. Market fundamentalists rationalize this as the development of higher “efficiencies,” that is, more production with fewer, and less well paid hands. But the localism movement gives new opportunities to farmers – including a new generation drawn

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to farming as other career paths wind up as dead ends – to stay on the land, meeting a new demand for “real food” and creating truer, more humane efficiencies of scale. And this is not pie in the sky: the true efficiencies come from local linkages between farmers and school lunch programs, hospital food services, and the like. And the “profit” from these connections is found in things that usually get left out of the calculations – like lower contributions to destructive climate change. For example, the National Sustainability Research Service says one university study found that “replacing a year’s supply of conventionally sourced hamburgers and French fries with local ingredients saved 43,000 gallons of fuel [plus] the associated greenhouse gases.”

The free marketers, though, are not sitting back and letting common sense prevail. Rightwing libertarians, for example, have mounted an attack on the concept of food miles, buttressed by a simple belief that, in a formulation that appeared in Reason Magazine online, “Food should be grown where it is most economically advantageous to do so.” Those who buy this argument are really saying it’s best on balance to exploit dirt-cheap labor in developing countries, never mind the costs of transportation and other “inputs.” In fact, the market logic twists this exploitation into a supposed virtue: One backgrounder from the World Resources Institute cites (unnamed) “development oriented

organizations” as contending that “public concerns over food miles could have serious consequences for

poorer nations” like Burundi, Ghana, Malawi, and others, whose “food exports make up more than 75 percent of their overall merchandise exports.”

Talk about turning reality upside down. The problem of food insecurity in these very countries is rooted in the decline of small, sustainable subsistence farming to meet local food needs – and the concomitant concentration of land holdings into agribusinesses that produce crops (many of them non-nutritive) for export to the wealthy abroad. In other words, what’s happening to small farmers – and contributing to hunger and deprivation - in the developing world is what happened to many North American farmers and communities long ago. The National Sustainable Agriculture Information

Service notes that in 1870, 100 percent of the apples consumed in Iowa were produced in that state. By 1999, though, that proportion had declined to a mere 15 percent. This shows just one way in which Iowa, a state known for “corn, corn, and more corn,” has lost a healthy diversity in its agriculture – the kind of diversity of production that can ride out the type of financial storms that are inevitable in a globalized economy with unpredictable ups and downs in ag commodity prices. You might say that diversity in production coupled with the building of a loyal local customer base ultimately prevents the “export” of farmers from the land.

Yes, the economic logic of the traditional small farm – multiple crops and rotations on healthy soil with sustainable practices – is hard to refute when you look at all the relevant factors. And it’s no exaggeration to say that, as proverbially with politics, all farming needs to be local. ♦

Jack Bradigan Spula, based in Rochester (NY), is an environmental writer and activist who works with the Northeast Organic Farming Association.

If small farms, organic and conventional alike, are to ride out the economic storm, they'll need to cultivate localism for all it's worth. This will mean more direct marketing and sales of locally-grown (and especially organic) produce, dairy products and eggs, breads, and so forth.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Cornucopia Re-files Complaint against Aurora Dairy

By Will Fantle, The Cornucopia Institute

Aurora Dairy, based in Boulder, Colorado, the nation's largest organic dairy producer, is once again facing allegations of improprieties. Aurora had previously been found in "will-ful" violation of multiple federal organic standards by USDA investigators in 2007.

In late August The Cornucopia Institute, filed a new legal com-plaint with the USDA in Washington alleging that one of the five industrial dairies operated by Aurora, its High Plains dairy near Kersey, Colorado, was failing to graze their dairy cattle as required by the federal law.

Family dairy farmers recently appealed directly to USDA Sec-retary Tom Vilsack for swift enforcement action in response to giant corporations "gaming the system" and squeezing them out of business. They claim they are being placed at a competitive disadvantage. A national surplus of organic milk has been driv-ing down prices to farmers.

Aurora's milk is sold to many of the nation's grocery chains, including Wal-Mart, Target, Safeway, Costco and others, for their cheap store brand label organic milk.

Aurora is allegedly, primarily, confining their dairy cows in giant barns and pens instead of being allowed to graze on fresh forage, and exhibit their natural instinctive behaviors, as federal regulations mandate.

"After recently scrutinizing USDA documents, obtained through a freedom of information request (FOIA), we refiled these serious charges, including making additional first-hand witness testimony available, because there is no evidence that the Department followed through with their commitment to investigate what Aurora has represented as a model pasture-based dairy," said Kastel.

In response to a previous legal complaint filed by Cornucopia, USDA investigators found that Aurora was in violation of 14 tenets of the organic regulations including confining their cattle to feedlots, instead of grazing, and bringing thousands of illegal conventional cows into their organic operation.

Cornucopia filed a subsequent complaint, later in 2007, outlining evidence the High Plains dairy was violating the law. The USDA's Agricultural Marketing Services informed Cornucopia that it would be integrated into Aurora's one-year probation under a consent agreement they signed.

"This is an unmitigated disaster for many family farmers who are now facing no market for their organic milk and possibly losing their farms because of the softening economy and the overload of milk coming from these giant factory farms," said Kathie Arnold of Truxton, NY, an organic dairy farmer milk-ing 130 cows.

USDA Secretary Vilsack recently met in Wisconsin with organ-ic family farmers and their advocates who appealed to the new Obama administration to "clean-up the mess they inherited" at the National Organic Program.

Farmers were heartened by the Secretary's commitment to ramp-up enforcement at the NOP and appoint officials there who will share the values of organic community participants. "We are focusing on rules that will level the playing field so that small and medium-size producers have a fair shot," Vil-sack said, adding: "I commit to you that we will enforce the [current] rules."

"It is inexcusable that the past administration did not protect the vast majority of ethical dairy marketers and the family farmers we partner with," said Ned Mac Arthur, President of Pennsylvania-based Natural Dairy Products Corp., bottler of Natural by Nature brand organic milk. "We are now placing our hope and trust in the new Obama/Vilsack administration at the USDA." ♦

NET UPDATE

Recent Discussions On ODairy

By Liz Bawden

Milk quality was discussed on various threads over the last month. The legal limit for SCC on conventional milk production remains at 750,000, and one post suggested that it should be lowered incre-mentally to about 400,000. Most organic producers would probably agree, since the SCC limits are much lower. It is generally held to be true that a lower SCC results in longer shelf-life of fluid milk and better cheese yield; there are no known human health issues. As for the cow, her SCC count is a direct reflection of her udder health. One producer shared a chart comparing somatic cell count with reduced milk yield: at 200,000, milk is reduced by 2%, at 600,000 milk is reduced by 10%, and at one million, it is reduced by 18%. His point was that by working to reduce SCC in your herd, you will not only be working to gain quality premiums, but it will increase your volume at the same time. Other producers who had experience with soaring SCC due to tingle voltage problems talked of their ef-forts to resolve these issues with the utilities. Another producer told of his experience with PI counts. He had three different people take 14 samples within a two-hour period and sent them out to several different labs. The counts came back with numbers from 1,000 to 1,000,000.

Several producers discussed the directions they are going with cross-breeding. They felt that to characterize herds with crossbred animals as a "don't care" approach was false. These producers are genuinely breeding for a new type of cow -- selecting for shorter, barrel-chested body type, good feet and legs, good udders, cows that will do well on grass. And these producers are selecting for these traits to be repro-ducible. As one farmer said, "We are essentially creating a new breed over time".

A newspaper article was posted on ODairy that featured the story of a family farm being sold after six generations in the same family. The story hit a nerve for many people. One farmer assumed that mismanagement had to be at fault. Others questioned why we feel that there cannot be "life after farming" --- after all, when is it ever OK to call it quits, and move on to do something else? One insight-ful post asked why, as farmers, we believe that "losing the farm" is the primary measure of personal failure. It is a terrible burden we place on ourselves and our families. Sometimes an auction is not the result of personal failure. Sometimes it is a well thought out step for-ward. The producer also touched on the subject of keeping choices available for our young people on the farm. Not everyone is suited to the same occupation as their parents.

The thread moved to discussing the roles of women on the farm. Women are perhaps more visible these days (look around you at the

Web Sponsorship Advertising Now Available on NODPA.COM Support NODPA's Work On Behalf Of Organic Dairy Farmers. Take Advantage Of This Opportunity NOW!

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](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 criti-cal to the organic dairy industry.

To sign up for the ODairy listserv, go to:

[http://www.nodpa.com/list\\_serv.shtml](http://www.nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml)

NODPA Field Days or other meetings), but the old stereotypes still exist. Farmers complained that the calls from the machinery dealers or Farm Credit ask for the male member of the family every time. Recent statistics tallied by the USDA report that the numbers of women operators and owners is growing; 30% of operators on farms in the US are women. The dramatic increase has much to do with the fact that women operators were never counted before.

The last thread started with a forwarded article about Cheez Whiz. Probably it is not a staple in your kitchen, but consider it for the laundry room. Apparently, the enzymes in the product make a great stain remover for grease-based stains! ♦

Neptune's Harvest Organic Fertilizers:

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# Calendar

**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. More details to come. Free for farmers. Sponsored by Heather Darby at UVM Extension.

Directions: From Rt 22a in Shoreham take Rt 74 west. Follow Rt 74 for about 4 miles. Farm is at 3678 Rt 74 West, Shoreham.

Cost: Free for farmers; \$15 for all others  
Contact: NOFA-VT, Phone: 802-434-4122, Email: info@nofavt.org  
http://www.nofavt.org

**The American Pastured Poultry Producers Assn (APPPA) Field Day Starts: September 26, 2009 10:00AM**  
**Location: Eli Reiff's in Mifflinburg, PA**  
**APPPA FIELD DAY!**

Join Eli Reiff, APPPA staff, board members and members for a hands-on educational field day.

Tour Eli's diverse operation and try hands-on processing using his mobile processing unit in the morning. Enjoy a delicious pastured chicken lunch.

Spend the afternoon learning from a panel of experienced pastured poultry producers and visiting the exhibit booths.

You will learn:

- how to safely and quickly process chickens
- about different models of pasture pens, including those for layers
- "best practices" from experienced producers

Pre-registration is required. We expect this field day to fill up, so get your registration in early! Download a registration form at [www.apppa.org](http://www.apppa.org). Email [grit@apppa.org](mailto:grit@apppa.org) or call 888-662-7772 with questions.

Contact: 888-66-APPPA, Phone: 888-662-7772, Email: [grit@apppa.org](mailto:grit@apppa.org)  
<http://www.APPPA.org>

**September 22-25, 2009**  
**Fair Winds Farm Draft Horse Workshop: Level I**  
**Brattleboro, VT**

Level I teaches the basics of handling, harnessing, hitching and driving horses for farm work or pleasure. 4 days on our working family farm w/ homegrown meals included. Brattleboro, VT, 802-254-9067, [www.fairwindsfarm.org](http://www.fairwindsfarm.org), [fairwind@sover.net](mailto:fairwind@sover.net)

**September 25-27, 2009**  
**Common Ground Fair**  
**MOFGA'S Common Ground Education Center, Unity, ME**

The Fair allows fairgoers to make connections with a rapidly expanding base of organic farms in the state of Maine. Hundreds of vendors, exhibitors and demonstrators, more than 1,000 volunteers, and tens of thousands of fairgoers will gather to: share knowledge about sustainable living; eat delicious, organic, Maine-grown food; buy and sell beautiful Maine crafts and useful agricultural products; compete in various activities; dance; sing and have a great time.

For more info: [www.mofga.org](http://www.mofga.org) or call 207-568-4142.

**Saturday October 10, 2009, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**  
**NOFA-NH 1st Annual NH Herb and Garlic Day: Backyard Medicine.**  
**Auburn, NH.**

This conference is a one-day event that will feature herbal classes and workshops, herb walks, and an herbal marketplace taught by some of our state's finest herbalists and herb and garlic growers. Topics will include

how to make herbal medicine at home, how to grow an herbal garden, growing native and at risk herbs, herbs for the immune system, growing and using garlic, and herbal gift making. We expect to attract approximately 200 attendees for our event, and our Herbal Marketplace will feature approximately 50 area businesses and organizations. The workshops are geared towards all herb enthusiasts - from "budding" to practicing - including anyone who wants to learn about natural, affordable, empowering health care available right in our backyards. This conference is our state's only bioregional herb conference. For more information please contact Maria Noel Groves at 603-268-0548 or [office@wintergreenbotanicals.com](mailto:office@wintergreenbotanicals.com)

**October 3 & 4, 2009**  
**21ST ANNUAL VERMONT SHEEP AND WOOL FESTIVAL**  
**Tunbridge Fairgrounds, Tunbridge, VT**

A new venue for this Vermont Sheep and Goat Association sponsored event, Tunbridge Fairgrounds in Tunbridge, Vermont. Please note the date change from last year. [www.vtsheepandgoat.org/festival.html](http://www.vtsheepandgoat.org/festival.html)

**NOFA/Mass Practical Skills Workshop: Seed-saving**  
**When: Sun, October 4, 11am – 2pm**  
**Where: Gill, Mass**

Description: Seed-saving : keeping your favorites for next year with Laughing Dog Farm's Dan Botkin. Learn how you can get your seeds from

*continued on page 37*

## Advertise With Us!

**NODPA News is Published Bi-Monthly**  
January, March, May, July,  
September & November

Ad rates and sizes listed below;  
deadline for advertising in the  
November issue is October 16, 2009.

**Full Page Ad** (7.5" W x 10.25" H) = \$450  
**1/2 Page Ad** (7.5" W x 4.5" H) = \$230  
**1/4 Page Ad** (3.5" W x 4.75" H) = \$130  
**1/8 Page Ad/Business Card:**  
(3.5" W x 2.25" H) = \$60

**Classified Ads:** Free to Northeast organic farmers. All others \$10 for the first \$30 words; \$.10 per word over 30

For advertising information call Lisa McCrory:  
802-234-5524 or email [Lmccrory@hughes.net](mailto:Lmccrory@hughes.net)

Please email your electronic ad (.eps, .tiff, .jpg, .gif) to [chris@chrishillmedia.com](mailto:chris@chrishillmedia.com) or send your ad to: Lisa McCrory, Nodpa Newsletter, 341 Macintosh Hill Rd., Randolph, VT 05060

**NOTE:** Ads requiring typesetting, size changes or design work will be charged additional fees, according to the service (minimum charge \$30.00).

Please send a check with your ad (made payable to NODPA).

## COMMENTARY

*continued from page 31*

However, this was not enough and NAFTA was born from the same idea as the original farm bill; with a twist. It was extended to Canada & Mexico, now flooded with our cheap corn. The cheap corn displaced Mexican farm kids and farmers alike who went to the boarder factories because of the inability to produce a crop at competitive prices.

When factory workers (former farmers) demanded better wages, the companies moved to China where the process of exploiting farm workers began all over again. The factories in China are idled farmers, and farm kids are heading home and there is no longer the ability to produce food for a severe water shortage is now plaguing China's food growing areas due to manufacturing polluting the water beyond use or lowering water tables to the point of an ability of replenishment.

Enter the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas - a new twist on the old Farm Bill idea. Just take the land and food and exploit the labor and soil, with no real offered benefit to the country other than a few roads to move products before Japan, China, South Korea, India, Royal Dutch Shell(largest land holder in Argentina & Brazil) buy too much of it.

One of the best things to happen to the sustainable/local food movement is the collapse of the health care debate. You are what you eat has not yet entered into the discussion. If you take a graph of the last 57 years on money spent on food in relation to total household income, and pair it against the rise in the need/cost for health care as a percent of total household income, a perfect X pattern results. The less we spent on food the higher our health care costs are.

# Calendar

*continued from page 36*

your own plants instead of from catalogs and shady middlemen. NOFA Members: \$30 Non-members: \$33

**Nose to Tail: Pork Processing Workshop**  
**October 10 - 12 at MOFGA's Common Ground Education Center in Unity.**

Raising, humanely slaughtering, and processing pigs. Common Ground Education Center, Unity. Details pending. For more information call MOFGA at 207-568-4142.

**October 13, 2009**

**Udder Health and Milk Quality on Organic Dairy Farms**  
**Double Tree Hotel, S. Burlington, VT**  
**8:30 am – 4:00 pm**

A workshop for Veterinarians, covering preventive care, approved treatment modalities and a deeper understanding of the National Organic Program's certification standards for organic livestock production systems. This workshop qualifies for 6 hours CE Credit for Vermont Veterinarians. Contact Lisa McCrory, 802-234-5524, email: [Lmccrory@hughes.net](mailto:Lmccrory@hughes.net) or call the NOFA Vermont office: 802-434-4122, email: [info@nofavt.org](mailto:info@nofavt.org) for more information.

If we're going to fix health care, it starts with what we do three times a day...and that's not checking stock quotes. It is true that parity did not have the tools to account for efficiencies or determine who should deserve the parity program's insurance cost benefit to bring a fair price for raw food materials.

But now, local and sustainable farmers and consumers are creating a hybrid parity program with efficiencies factored in. In this evolved version, market forces will be applied, but this time in relation to quality and sustainability. Quality is directly related to taste; the higher the brix, the better the taste and quality and more demand is created. The money stays in the local economy to be re-spent seven times.

When talking about an economic stimulus package we only need to look back from where we came, give credit to what worked in the past, look past what we were told worked and take back our rights as local citizens. We must stop these new food safety laws that lure the feds with dollars and allow large corporations to remove the competition and comparison – fresh, locally farmed foods.

If we no longer can produce/buy safe fresh local food, the corporate offerings will be our only choice and if a few hundred million people get sick a year – that's be the new norm – as diabetes, heart disease and cancer are now - and our children will know no different.

*Tim Wightman is a founder and board member of the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund and its education and charitable arm, the Farm-to-Consumer Foundation ([www.farmtoconsumerfoundation.org](http://www.farmtoconsumerfoundation.org)). He is the author of the Raw Milk Handbook, a handy resource guide for farmers interested in producing quality raw milk, and who wish to implement testing and safety standards. First published in 2008, the handbook is already in use in thousands of small dairies worldwide.*

**October 17 & 18, 2009**  
**2009 Northeast Animal Power Field Days**  
**Fair Grounds, Tunbridge, VT**

Conference will feature workshops, equipment demonstrations, working demos, exhibitors, local food, swap meet, and more. Keynote Speaker will be David Kline; an organic dairy producer, author and Editor of Farming Magazine. Visit the website to download the 2009 Program Booklet and see program updates: [www.animalpowerfielddays.org](http://www.animalpowerfielddays.org). Interested in Volunteering? Contact Kristen Gage at [kristengage@comcast.net](mailto:kristengage@comcast.net) or call: 802-431-1029. For more information, Email: [info@animalpowerfielddays.org](mailto:info@animalpowerfielddays.org) or call: 802-234-5524.

**October 23rd & 24th, 2009**  
**2009 Mid-Atlantic Grass-Finished Livestock Conference: Merging the Art and Science of Grass Finishing**  
**Holiday Inn Conference Center, Staunton, VA**

Featuring nationally and internationally renowned experts on grass-finishing, field tour Of Joel Salatin's Polyface Farm, meat cutting and cooking demonstration and more. For more information and registration, contact Margaret Kenny at 434-292-5331 or [makenny@vt.edu](mailto:makenny@vt.edu).

**It Takes A Region: A Working Conference to Build Our Northeast Food System**  
**Starts: November 13, 2009. Ends: November 14, 2009**  
**Location: Desmond Hotel and Conference Center, Albany, NY**

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Classified Ads

Employment

**Milk Thistle Farm Seeks Herdsperson:** Full time herdsperson position open immediately for experienced individual with a background in livestock management. Experience with rotational grazing and organic dairy practices including organic cow health required. Duties include milking, calf management, feeding, fencing and tractor work.

Milk Thistle Farm is a 50 cow dairy located in Columbia County, NY. All milk produced is processed on farm into fluid milk products, yogurt and cheese and sold in New York City and the Hudson Valley. We are looking to gradually expand our herd size up to 70 milking cows.

Please contact us directly with any questions and e-mail resume and references to: Dante Hesse, dante@milktthistlefarm.com, www.milktthistlefarm.com, ph. 518-567-9490

**Wanted:** Pete and Gerry’s Organic Eggs in Monroe, NH is trying to locate farmers who would be interested in joining our family of family egg producing farms. It could be as an add on to dairy farming or as a replacement. Please contact me to discuss. Thank you.  
Karl Johnson, Email: growthwords@roadrunner.com  
Phone: 603-638-2034

Feed and Seed

**For Sale:** Certified Organic Orchard grass, alfalfa, and O/A mixes. Prices upon request due to delivery and various locations.  
Contact : Kim Summers, Email: summers104@embarqmail.com  
Phone: 1(717)658-8371. Location: Chambersburg, PA

**GOA certified organic barley straw,** 400 lb square bales, 3 x 3 x 7. Asking 150/T, can deliver. Contact Doug Tillotson at 585-721-4728 (western NY)

**Certified Organic Baleage.** 1st Cutting grass/clover 4x4 round bales \$35 each. Nichols, NY (607) 699-7968

**High quality baleage for sale:** 17-18% protein, .67-.70 energy. Contact Tom and Sally Brown, Groton, NY. Phone: 607/898-4401 or 607/345-2087 cell

Cattle For Sale

**Organic heifers for sale or trade:** R&W Holsteins, B&W Holstiens, Pure Bred Normande, Pure Bred Normande Bull and Pure Bred Milking Shorthorn Bull

All Pure Breds can be registered. All ages, 3 mos to 18 months. Many to choose from. Very good heifers from top AI sires. Selling due to not enough winter feed and housing in barn. Prices start at \$350 and up.  
Contact: Doug and Heather Donahue, Email: donahues\_in\_ny@yahoo.com  
Phone: 315-287-2296. Location: Gouverneur, NY

**For Sale:** We have a wide variety of animals for sale, there are 17 Breeding age heifers that have been with our Jersey Bull since Aug. 8th many will be freshening at first sign of grass next spring. Also 2 nice heifers that were bred in early summer and 4 Dry Cows one of which is a second calf heifer and ready to start making milk this next lactation. We had plenty of pasture this year and all are in great shape. Certified Organic by NOFA and can be seen at our website www.Breezyacresorganicdairy.com.  
Contact: Bill Sullivan, Email: William\_Sullivan@hotmail.com  
Phone: 607-591-2171, Location: Cuyler, New York 13158

Real Estate

**Needed:** My wife and i are looking for a dairy farm to lease purchase for a year nad then buy it. I milk cows in Concord, NC and have to move and I need to find a dairy farm ASAP.  
Contact: Blair Burrage, Email: qman.burrage@gmail.com,  
Phone: 704-786-3195 ♦

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

*continued from page 24*

**St. Lawrence County agricultural plastics recycling project.** Grant Recipient: Keith Zimmerman, St. Lawrence County, Canton NY, Grant ID Number: ONE09-112

Professional Development Grants

Northeast SARE Professional Development grants build the knowledge base and educational infrastructure so that Cooperative Extension educators and other agricultural professionals can get and use the knowledge they need to help farmers move toward greater sustainability.

**Sustainable livestock mortality management.** Grant Recipient: Mark Hutchinson, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Waldoboro ME. Grant ID Number: ENE08-108

Farmer Grants

The goal of the Farmer Grant program is to develop, refine, and demonstrate new sustainable techniques and to explore innovative ideas developed by farmers across the region.

**Assessments of the benefits of raising calves with their mothers in an intensive grazing system.** Grant Recipient: Steffen Schneider, Hawthorne Valley Farm, Ghent NY, Grant ID Number: FNE09-670. ♦

Value Added Producer Grants Now Available

The Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) Program Notice of Funds Available has been reissued. Above is the link to the VAPG NOFA published in today’s Federal Register.

Our VAPG Web site ( <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm> ) should be updated with application templates and materials later today. We encourage you to submit paper applications to either our Concord NH office or our Montpelier VT office.

Although the deadline for filing an application is November 30, 2009, we highly recommend you file your application as soon as possible so we can make certain you have all the information required for a complete, eligible application package.

Please direct questions on this program to:

Sherry Paige at [sherry.paige@vt.usda.gov](mailto:sherry.paige@vt.usda.gov) or 1-802-828-6034

USDA Rural Development City Center 3rd Floor 89 Main Street Montpelier, VT 05602

OR

Steve Epstein at [steven.epstein@nh.usda.gov](mailto:steven.epstein@nh.usda.gov) or 1-603-223-6041

USDA, Rural Development Concord Center, Suite 218 Box 317, 10 Ferry Street Concord, NH 03301

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

From the MODPA President

As the saying goes, when life hands you lemons, make lemonade. Or if you are in the dairy business, when you have surplus milk, make ice cream, cheese, puddings, yogurt or the like. It is time for all organic dairy producers to quit waiting for someone else to help us out of the situation we are now in and we need to take control of the supply on the farm. We cannot wait for government to help. How many years have we been waiting on the pasture rule? Our processors have their own profit margins and businesses to worry about and it isn’t always in their best interest to insure profitability on the farm. We need to initiate the changes necessary for survival today. We need to start with measures we can to reduce supply on the farm and yet retain the organic value of that production. Some suggestions include: 1) feed more milk to your calves, crops, alternative livestock species, 2) heavier culling of problem animals, 3) decrease grain feeding, 4) longer vacations in the dry lot, 5) increase human consumption by family. On our farm this has turned into all sorts of wonderful dairy deserts.

All of the ideas listed above may have already been implemented on your farm so now is the time to try some new ones. Some suggestions

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

<b>Wisconsin</b> Darlene Coehoorn, President Viewpoint Acres Farm N5878 Hwy C Rosendale, WI 54974 <a href="mailto:viewpoint@dotnet.com">viewpoint@dotnet.com</a> Phone: 920-921-5541	Sauk City, WI 53583 <a href="mailto:taofarmer@direcway.com">taofarmer@direcway.com</a> Phone: 608- 544-3702
Jim Greenberg, Vice-President EP 3961 Drake Avenue Stratford, WI 54484 <a href="mailto:greenbfirms@tzn.net">greenbfirms@tzn.net</a> Phone: 715-687-8147	Jim Small, Director\ 26548 Locust Ave. Wilton, WI 54670 Tel: 608-435-6700
John Kinsman, Secretary E2940 County Road K, La Valle, WI 53941 Phone: 608- 986-3815 Fax: 608-986-2502	<b>Iowa</b> Andy Schaefers, Director 25037 Lake Rd Garnavillo, IA 52049 Tel: 563-964-2758
Bruce Drinkman, Treasurer 3253 150th Avenue Glenwood City, WI 54013 <a href="mailto:bdrinkman@hotmail.com">bdrinkman@hotmail.com</a> Phone: 715-265-4631	<b>Michigan</b> Ed Zimba Zimba Dairy 7995 Mushroom Rd DeFord, MI 48729 <a href="mailto:zimbadairy@tband.net">zimbadairy@tband.net</a> Phone: 989-872-2680
John Kiefer, Director S10698 Troy Rd,	<b>Ohio</b> Ernest Martin, Director 1720 Crum Rd, Shiloh, OH 44878 Phone and Fax: 419-895-1182

include: 6) donating a cow to the local food pantry, 7) processing a cow and giving the meat to family and friends who also have been hard hit by the economic situation we are in, 8) try using milk or whey from farmstead cheese as a silage inoculant, 9) direct marketing of products from your farm may be a possibility. Perhaps an alternative product produced on your farm. Suggestions include milk soap and milk paint.

We need to think creatively to survive the times we are in. As a sometimes quilter, I know that one wrong cut can ruin an intended quilt pattern, or it can force me to change my intended pattern-at times if I am flexible this results in an even more beautiful outcome than was originally planned. I urge you to change what you are doing if you truly want different results. We cannot just keep shipping whatever volume is produced following the conventional model if the price goes down making more milk at even less dollars to try to meet on farm budget needs, expecting that we will not suffer the same fate that conventional producers are now experiencing.

We need to think outside the box. We need to be proactive. We need to do some self policing and start reporting all abuses of the organic rule when we find them no matter who or what size operation is involved. We should expect our certifiers to hold fast to the organic rule and let them know that if they don’t we all suffer as consumer confidence is of the utmost importance.

May the setbacks you suffer in life strengthen your character and give you more perseverance so you can accomplish your original goals, or may they change your direction so that you grow into your true calling and or become a more beautiful original. ♦

*Darlene Coehoorn, Rosendale, Wisconsin*

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

Prsrt Std  
US Postage Paid  
Permit 183  
Greenfield, MA

## CALENDAR

*continued from page 37*

This year, NESAWG's annual conference takes on some hard issues. As a region, we need to grow our thinking and our work to develop a truly sustainable and resilient food system. We will get beyond the jargon, myths and fuzzy concepts to come away with a shared vision, coherent strategy and concrete plans. Through in-depth working sessions, homework, provocative debates, and exercises, we'll tackle questions such as:

- Why regional? What does a regional food system look like?
- What do we want? What will it take to get there?
- Who needs to be at the table?
- What are realistic milestones? What do we need to know, measure and monitor?

We'll draw upon the exciting efforts already underway in our region and nationally, including alternative supply chain networks, research projects, infrastructure initiatives and policy advocacy. We'll address scale, size, and geography to reach beyond political boundaries and sector "silos". MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND BE THERE! For more information, contact Kathy Ruhf, NESAWG coordinator. Phone: 413-323-9878, <http://www.nesawg.org>

**December 13th to 16th, 2009**

**Fourth National Conference on Grazing Lands  
Reno/Sparks, Nevada - The Nuggett Hotel and Casino**

This conference will provide you with a forum for discussion and exchange of grazing land information, technology, scientific and applied research, and to see new products and services. The National GLCI and its Program Committee wants to have the best of the best farmer/rancher speakers at this year's 4th National Conference on Grazing Lands (4NCGL). Unlike the past, there will be fewer speakers overall, less concurrent sessions. General information about the conference is available at [www.glci.org](http://www.glci.org). ♦



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