

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Featured Farm: The Extended Sherman Family

Jerry Dell Farm: Sue & Vaughn Sherman Dryden and Freeville, New York

By Lisa McCrory, NODPA News & Web Editor

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Named after Vaughn Sherman's parents Gerald and Ardella, Jerry Dell Farm is located in Dryden, NY with a recently acquired second farm in Freeville, NY – just 4 miles away. Vaughn's parents started the home farm in 1946 milking 40 cows. In 1968, Vaughn graduated from Cobleskill College and joined his father on the farm. They soon purchased the farm next door and expanded the herd to 60 cows so that their operation could support two families. In 1976, Vaughn and Sue purchased the

farm from Gerald and Ardella; it was a good time to own a dairy farm. Vaughn and Sue continued expanding the farm in the 70's and 80's, raising their animals in confinement and pushing their cows for production.

Things started to get tough between the mid 80's and early 90's, however, and hardship in the conventional dairy world ultimately put the Shermans on the fortunate path of grass-based dairying and organic production.

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NEWS RELEASE:

Organic Dairy Family Farmers need a fair share of the retail dollar, they require at least a 40¢ a gallon increase in their milk price to stay in business

A remarkable turn-around in demand for organic dairy products in 2011 has resulted in shortages on supermarket shelves, but organic dairy family farmers find themselves not being able to increase production because they can't pay their bills. Sales of organic milk and packaged dairy product are at an all-time high and there is more organic milk being produced by family farms than ever

before, but organic dairy farmers are leaving the industry because they are not being paid enough to cover the increased cost of feed, fuel and family expenses. Farmers require a fair share of the retail dollar. Currently, retailers and farmers receive the same amount for each ½ gallon of organic milk sold.

"For the last year we have been telling the

continued on page 20

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From The Newly Elected NODPA President

Greetings and warmest wishes for a healthy, happy, and prosperous New Year! On this cloudy New Year's Day in northern New York, the ice is melting again. Walking is treacherous for cows down the back lane today with the layer of water over the ice, so the cows are enjoying the relative comfort of their dry, well-bedded tie-stalls. While I am fortunate to know many of you personally, I feel that I should introduce myself. My family (husband Brian and son Nathan) operate a small (50 cow) dairy in Hammond, New York. We have been certified organic since 2000, and currently market our milk to Horizon Organic.

There are some mighty challenges for NODPA to address in 2012. The most immediate is the work to encourage a rise in the pay price through discussions with processors and producers. Our job is to give a voice to your concerns. Farmers from across the country have

seen profits erode over the last few years as the pay price remained stagnant while production costs have steadily risen. Financial frustration and disillusionment with organic farming are common topics of conversation between organic farmers in my area of northern New York. These conversations spell out our mission for the next year: to encourage processors to respond to the market conditions by having the welfare of their producers as a priority, to continue to make sure that organic farmers' voices are heard in the regulatory processes that effect them (in the new Farm Bill, in the upcoming Animal Welfare Standards, and in encouraging Certifiers to apply rules fairly while minimizing paperwork), and to continue our work in expanding farmers' horizons and networks through opportunities for sharing such as the Field Days and the ODairy listserv.

Your help in our work is needed. If you would like to become involved with NODPA, we would love to have your voice! It is not a large time commitment, often just conference calls. Please contact me or one of the Board members or representatives listed below.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the NODPA Desk, January 2012

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

“Our organic grain price went up to \$748/ton. We like to pay our bills on time. We informed Horizon what our costs were. They were not surprised and were rather informed about our costs. They were also not interested in increasing pay price. We were going to lose \$3/cwt at the end of January. The cows were sold December 28th.” Comment from Shannon Nichols, Madison NY in NODPA’s petition on increased pay price. (go to page 21).

For the first time we are seeing the total number of organic dairies decrease, with some returning to traditional dairy and others taking early retirement. The reason is exclusively lack of economic viability.

“We have used up all of our accumulated reserves this year, another year like this year and we are done/gone.” (Organic dairy producer in WA).

The solution is to pay producers more.

Horizon responded to NODPA’s advocacy on increasing pay price because of increased costs in September with a \$1-1.50 increase on their Market Adjustment Premium (MAP) and Organic Valley increased their MAP by \$1 at the same time. Horizon is discussing continuing the \$1-\$1.50 after March 2012 when it is due to be dropped at the end of its four month seasonal payments. Organic Valley has been bolder and will increase its national base price from \$22 to \$25.50 /cwt; change its regional premium to \$3.25 for the Northeast and \$3.50 for New England with a \$1 MAP; and, equally significant, increase its butterfat, protein and other solids to \$2.09 per pound. For OV producers that will be a 2012 base component price effective March 2012 of \$29.75/cwt (Northeast) and \$30/cwt (New England) probably translating into a farm gate price of around \$33/cwt. These changes in pay price maintain Organic Valley’s lead in pay price by \$1-2/cwt depending on contract and location. Unfortunately the \$3/cwt seasonal premium will disappear in March as the \$2 increase from Organic Valley kicks in. So far Horizon has not said anything about increasing its pay price or changing its standard contract terms when its seasonal program ends in February.

It is widely acknowledged that these published increases in pay price will not be enough to compensate organic producers for the increase cost in inputs that the majority of producers have suffered. As with the conventional market where \$5-6/bushel is the new norm for corn, \$11-12/bushel for organic corn is accepted as normal, as is \$4/gallon for diesel and increased health insurance, property taxes and overhead costs. The only place where costs have dropped is with interest rates for new loans that organic dairy producers can’t qualify for.

All processors are sympathetic with the producer’s situation. Organic Valley has taken the lead by raising its national base price, before regional premiums, to \$25.50 from \$22/cwt., but there appears

to be no appetite from any processor to re-evaluate the whole system for determining pay price so that it reflects criteria that can be independently measured. We need to ensure that we have a higher base price and the ability to react to spikes in production costs as Organic increasingly becomes an internationally traded commodity and its pricing structure for feed follows the conventional world market. Some options that have been put forward followed by a response from NODPA and FOOD Farmers:

- Relating the pay price for organic to conventional pay price- this is inappropriate as inputs and production costs are so different.
- Relating the pay price to the retail price - this is difficult as the retail price varies by as much as \$2 per ½ gallon and the return to the processor on the retail price will vary with the retail mark-up. What the processor returns to the producer will also vary depending on their business model and overhead costs.
- Relating pay price to a simple percentage of the average that the processor receives from the retail buyer would mean that the companies, under the present system with no organic pooling of milk, would have to divulge proprietary information to an independent price setting body.
- Ensuring that the retailer adjusted their margins to reflect a more equitable share of the retail dollar flowing back to producers would mean mandating a margin for retailers and mandating that the increase be passed back to producers. Both of these actions have been tried and failed in the non-organic markets. Those states that have enforced legislation for fair pricing of milk related to its costs were faced with costly enforcement or federal challenges to their right to determine price over state lines.

NODPA and FOOD Farmers have suggested different options for determining pay price. Our petition request to consumers and other research tied to Buy Local programs has shown overwhelmingly that if the consumer knows the money goes back to producers they will pay more without dropping consumption. Processors know what their retailers ‘mark-ups’ are and need to work more constructively within those constraints when raising or lowering their price to retailers.

One answer to determining pay price could be: Assume the base price with seasonal quality payments are what the companies can afford in ‘normal’ times and introduce into contracts and cooperative agreements a feed/input trigger that would change the pay price when certain criteria are met. Processors would then go to the market place for increased income or absorb the increase themselves. There would also need to be some form of supply management so there is a mechanism to prevent producers from expanding production and creating an excessive surplus which is costly for processors to deal with.

Insurance based on margins similar to what conventional dairy is looking at may also be a consideration.

What we can NOT do is nothing or suggest impractical pipe dreams and hope the situation will change itself. Producers working together have the ability to ensure that change happens. ♦

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

**Consider Deep Pack Barns for Cow Comfort
And Manure Management**

By A. Fay Benson, Originally Printed in the November 2011 Small Farmers Quarterly

Small dairy farm operators may soon be faced with the prohibition of winter spreading of manure. Any farmer considering updating their barns should consider a style of barn that would provide manure storage plus animal comfort, and may be eligible for government assistance. That style of barn is a deep bedded pack (DBP) system.

In the past DBP were not allowed on dairy farms in New York due to Public Health rules enforced by Milk Inspectors. This is due to the potential of unsanitary conditions if the DBP aren't managed correctly. Planning on the bedding material is critical to successful use and animal comfort. I had the opportunity to see DBP systems at work on farms in Vermont in both the winter and summer seasons this year. This type of system that incorporates animal feeding and manure storage into one open barn can be especially helpful to smaller grazing farms.

A DBP system generally consists of a foundation of concrete or hard clay. There may be a layer of gravel and then a bedding pack

The Benefits of a Deep Pack Barn

- Increases cow comfort
- Can increase milk production
- Manure storage with less capital investment and less labor requirement than liquid storage
- Pack manure mixed with extra carbon is a better soil nutrient than raw manure from typical manure storage.
- Particularly adapted to grazing dairies since barns are used only 6 months and allow plenty of time to clean
- An option for out-dated dairies looking for build a combined housing-feeding barn with manure storage
- Enhances dairy farm conservation practices

of straw, hay, sawdust or well-chipped wood shavings. Manure and urine mix into the bedding that remains in place for several

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months and is generally cleaned out once a year.

A deep pack system is different than a composting pack that is aerated in the barn daily by tiller or turning. Biologic activity taking place 5-7 inches deep in the pack provides the heat that cows enjoy through the winter months.

As with any type of housing structure, adequate bedding and good milking hygiene help manage the pathogens naturally found in a bedded pack system. The biggest complaint of owners of DBPs is the cost of the bedding material. This would be compounded on an organic dairy where it is required to use certified bedding.

Side retaining walls need to be strong enough to contain 4-6 feet of the pack and stand up to cleaning. Cow access, animal grouping, and travel-to-the-feed-alley patterns can be managed by electric fences which reduce manure in bedded areas.

The open barn area allows for natural animal movement, which will become increasingly important as animal care standards are implemented. In a DBP system, cows are able to




Providing that they are managed correctly, cow comfort is one of the main benefits of a Bedded Pack. They provide for a warm dry environment as well as allowing the cow to curl her head to her side; the only position where they can achieve deep sleep.

lie down where they choose and can curl their heads around as they like, something they cannot do in tiestalls or stanchion barns.

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Deep Pack Barns for Cow Comfort & Manure Management

continued from page 5

Good ventilation – whether the barn is positioned to take advantage of geography for natural wind ventilation or uses mechanical assistance with fans - helps keep the cows healthy, the pack dry, and odors down.

This comfortable environment reduces lameness and provides for deep and restful sleep that in turn positively impacts milk production. A report given at the 5th National Small Farm Conference in 2009 reported that a 2000-lb. increase in milk sales per cow was attributed in part to use of a bedded pack management system (www.allacademic.com/meta/p373821_index.html).

Cow hygiene at milking is extremely important with cows housed on a bedded pack, so cow washing and teat prep practices may have to be upgraded. This is due to the high bacteria count in the bedding. In spite of the bacterial population, operators usually report lower somatic cell counts on bedded pack as compared to freestalls or tie stalls. A 2009 study by the Cornell University Department of Applied Economics and Life Sciences concluded that the bedded pack management system was “an excellent environment for cattle and provided the intended environmental benefits.”

Opinions differ on just how much room should be allowed per cow from 70-85 to 100 sq. ft. per animal which is higher than what would be required for freestall style housing. Breed, age, and animal condition impact that decision making when planning a new barn. The general consensus is the more room the better, making a DBP system better suited to smaller herds.

Vermont Pack Barns Show Results

DBP barns have been used in Vermont since the state prohibited winter spreading of manure in 1995. A visit to some of these barns in January showed how the pack impacts cow comfort. The pack at Jack Lazor’s organic Butterworks Farm in Westfield, VT, registered a cozy 80 degrees F.

The bedding pack rises over time as more and more bedding is added throughout the winter. If watering systems are used on the pack to accommodate multiple groups, they need to accommodate this rise by placing a coil of water line underneath the waterer. As the pack rises, the waterer is lifted up. If there is only one group of animals or if all animals can get to the feed alley then the waterers should go there.

This past summer I visited Jack’s farm again. The 350-acre farm was established in 1979 making door-to-door deliveries of its own yogurt and cottage cheese. Today the farm includes its own granary, yogurt and cheesemaking with product distribution throughout Vermont and New Hampshire.



Bedded Pack Barns can be divided up with electric fence so other groups can spend the winter in them.

For More Information

Bedded Pack Management System Case Study by John M. Thurgood, Paula C. Bagley, Challey M. Comer, Daniel J. Flaherty, Jason Karszes, Mariane Kiraly, Cornell University Department of Applied Economics and Life Sciences, September 2009

Conservation and Producer Benefits of a Bedded Pack Management System by John M. Thurgood, Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Brian K. LaTourette, Watershed Ag Council, 2007

NRCS Fact Sheet: Compost Bedded Pack Dairy Barns, June 2007

Video: Milking Time at Dead End Farm, Candor, NY, <http://vimeo.com/31955654>

The third-generation farm milks a herd of 85 Jerseys on an 80-percent forage diet. From November to May the cows are housed in a 60-foot-wide, 120-foot-long, hoop-top barn. Straw is added for clean bedding twice a day. Approximately 1500 lbs of straw is used per day.

I arrived at the farm in August just as the compost piles were being aerated with a tractor-powered turner. The pack is moved from the barn in June after crop work is completed and the first cutting of hay is harvested. Jack uses a dump truck to move the manure from the barn to long rows in a field for composting.

He does not go through the required process to be Certified Organic Compost. He is mainly interested that the manure becomes “aged” so that it has stabilized most of the nutrients and is easier to spread in the fall. Jack described his reasoning for this timing by asking me when does nature apply its carbon and nutrients to the soil. Carbon and nutrients like dead grass, leaves and decaying

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

roots are applied in the fall and decompose through the winter so they can be used in the spring for new growth.

I asked Jack about the significant expense of the straw for the pack: \$80 every other day plus the labor of composting the pack. Jack said that the return is in the positive effect on the soil and soil nutrients.

“Raw manure is hard on the soil and the environment, many of the nutrients are volatile or water soluble. By adding the extra carbon through the straw more of the volatile nutrients are captured and stored. Allowing them to go through the biological activity of composting, the nutrients are stabilized and won't run off with significant rain falls,” Jack said.

That said, Jack now harvests his own straw to use as bedding and reduce the cost of the DBP system at Butterworks Farm.

New York Farm Adds Pack Barn in 2010

In 2010, Ben and Kate Whittemore of Dead End Farm in Candor, NY, built a 70x250-foot bedded pack barn with a 16-foot feed alley and 16-foot scrape alley. The Whittemores operate an 80-cow organic dairy, raise grass-fed beef cattle and pigs, and have a free range flock of laying hens. They sell products from the farm by appointment and at area farmers' markets. They were recognized as Super Milk producers in 2010.

“Our cows love the bedded pack barn with its thick cushy bedding and wide open space to kick up their heels,” Kate White-

more writes in her farm blog. “Most of our cows will choose the bedded pack at night over the pasture.”

While using chopped hay in the pack was less expensive, it was more labor intensive and not as dry, and “since hay is in short supply this year, we plan to use a layer of bark and kiln-dried sawdust this winter,” Kate says.

“We built the new barn with cow comfort and health as our primary concerns. We were also interested in the benefit of the aged manure compared to slurry. We are waiting on results of a comparison of nutrients between the two, but I have to think the added organic matter in the bedded pack has value to our fields,” she adds.

Check on Funding Assistance

Because of the environmental benefits of a bedded pack system, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) may offer funding incentives for designs that pass their engineering specifications. Contact your local NRCS office to learn more. ♦

Authors: A. Fay Benson, a dairy owner for 20 years, is a Small Dairy Support Specialist with Cornell University's South Central NY Regional Team, Project Manager of the NY Organic Dairy Initiative, and a member of the NY Crop Insurance Education Team. He can be reached at the Cooperative Extension office in Cortland, NY, at 607-753-5213, afb3@cornell.edu. Freelance agricultural writer and publicist Kara Lynn Dunn assisted with the development of this article.



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Willow Creek Farm, Belmont, NY



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*Source: IRI data ending November 13, 2011.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Changing of Officers & Board Members at NODPA

NODPA is an organic dairy farm family member organization that is incorporated as a not-for-profit 501 (c) 5 organization. As a membership organization, NODPA By Laws prescribe that NODPA Board and Officers are elected by their farmer peers and the Board then employs the Executive Director who runs the organization on behalf of the members. NODPA holds elections annually for a third of its Board members and for the four Officers of the organization. Representatives from each of the states within the eastern region of the country vote in the elections and ensure that the Board and Officers represent the ideas and interests of organic dairy farm families.

This year the elections were held on December 19th 2011 by conference call. There was a vote of thanks for departing President Rick Segalla in appreciation for his great work for organic dairy farmers in the east and across the country by his dedication to the formation and growth of Federation Of Organic Dairy Farmers (FOOD Farmers).

The representatives from each state elected one new Board member for New York, Steve Kimball who farms in Falconer, N.Y. and re-elected incumbents Steve Morrison from ME, Dave Johnson from PA and Morvan Allen from MA.

Following the elections of Board members, the state representatives and Board members elected a slate of officers:

- Liz Bawden (President)
- Dave Johnson (Vice President)
- George Wright (Treasurer)
- Steve Morrison (Secretary)



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COMMENTARY

From City to the Farm: A Financial Downfall?

“It just doesn’t add up”

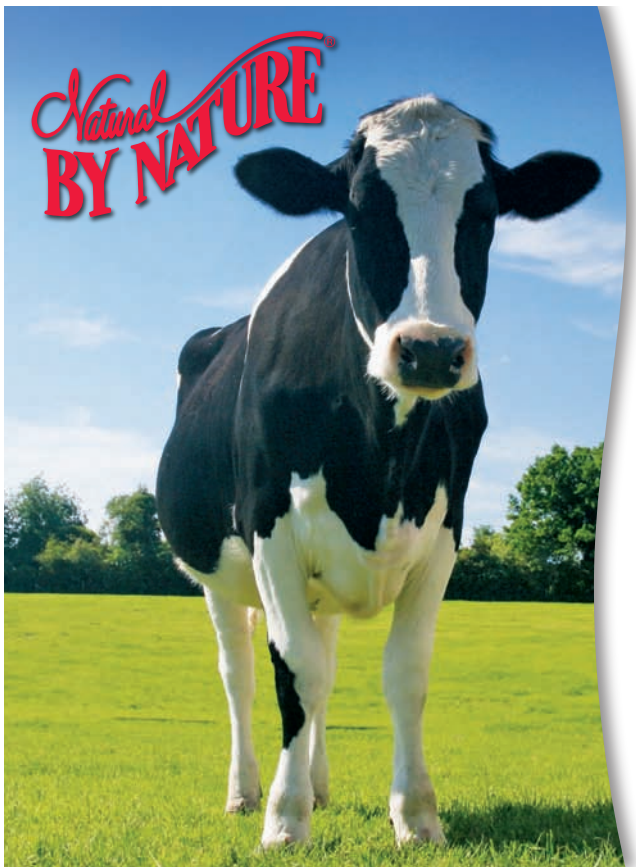
In 1995 when we purchased a farm in central Minnesota, it was the Ideal place to raise children. We started with farrow to finish hogs, a few milk cows and chickens on the farm. Refusing to support large corporations by using chemicals, GMO grains and wanting to be self-supporting and responsible to the land of which we were stewards, we began transitioning the farm to organic production. We became certified organic in 2000 and focused our attention on become a certified organic dairy farm. Like everyone else, to make ends meet I also worked off the farm in home construction. From 2000 until now it takes twice as many milking cows to cover the farm expenses. The cost changes in production needed to sustain a farm from 2000 to today has nearly doubled with little to no increase in milk price.

What is going on? Our expenses keep going up, but milk price doesn't change much. We continue working off the farm and cutting wherever we can, and we still just can't seem to gain the ground we need to bring in much above expenses.

We came to the point of evaluating our monetary value of the US dollar. How much did the dollar buy and how much can it buy today? We think of the dollar and we trust, or rather assume, that it is solidly backed by something more than good faith, but it is not backed by anything except the faith that it will buy what we need. It is not backed by any soft or hard commodity like gold, just goodwill.

In the year 2000 NFO's yearly Class III conventional milk averaged \$9.74 cwt. and gold for that year averaged \$280.00. The milk price is 3.4% of the gold price or it takes over 2874# of milk to buy 1 oz. of gold. Today, January 10, 2012 at 3:00 pm at dairy.com the milk price is \$17.12 and gold at kitco.com is \$1632.00. Our milk price is 1.04% of the gold price or it takes 9,533 lbs. to purchase 1 oz. of gold. That is over 3 times the rate exchange that existed in year 2000. That is over 3 times more milk to buy the same amount of gold. If our milk was the same percentage of gold as it was in year 2000, we would be getting over \$50.00 cwt. What has changed? The gold content is the same 1 oz. and the

continued on page 32



Looking for an Organic Milk Market?

Natural Dairy Products (NDP) is actively seeking organic dairy farmers in the southeastern Pennsylvania area. On September 1st, 2011 the organic dairy farms producing milk for the Natural By Nature brand of organic dairy products started receiving more money for their efforts.

Natural Dairy Products Corporation (NDP), who produces a full line of organic dairy products under the Natural By Nature name, increased their base pay price by \$2/CWT and is also offering an extra \$2/CWT for 3 months over the winter to help offset the high cost of organic hay. The extra \$4/CWT over last year's pay price during the winter will provide welcome relief to NDP farmers.



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RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Winter Conference Highlights for 2012

Conference season is upon us; a time to reflect on 2011, plan for 2012 and beyond, and gather with like-minded people. It is a time to read, learn, share, teach, connect with friends and make new acquaintances. If you visit our Calendar section on page 36 you will see that there are many, many conferences and workshops coming up. Below are a few winter conference highlights taking place in Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Vermont in greater detail.

Soil and Nutrition: An Education and Coalition-Building Conference, February 9-11, 2012 in Northampton, Massachusetts

Featuring leading thinkers and practitioners of building healthy soils, this conference aims to grow the movement for enhancing soil fertility as a basis for the long-term ecological and economic sustainability of farming, the environment, and our society as a whole. Each of the three days is organized with a different format.

Thursday, February 9: Seminar with John Kempf, National and international speaker on soil fertility, farmer consultant, and proprietor of Advancing Eco-Agriculture.

John speaks in clear practical language about scientific understand-

ings of plant eco-systems and how the health of people is connected to healthy land and quality produce. He will explain three stages of plant health, and how by reaching each stage we can grow plants that are not only nutritious, but resistant to soil-borne and airborne fungal disease and insect damage.

- Read a full outline of John's Seminar here: (www.nofamass.org/seminars/pdfs/John_Kempf_Seminar.pdf)
- Read John's article, "Carbon Building, Carbon Cycling" in the October 2011 Acres USA Magazine
- Read the education page on John's Website. (http://growbetterfood.com/Advancing_Eco-Agriculture_Learn.html)

Friday, February 10: Collaborative Symposium with Regional Experts on Managing Soils for Quality.

Presenters include:

- Derek Christianson, CSA farmer, Brix Bounty Farm in Dartmouth, MA
- Dan Holmes, diversified livestock farmer enhancing pasture fertility, Peterborough, NH

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- Dan Kittredge, director, Bionutrient Food Association, North Brookfield, MA
- Jack Lazor, organic dairy farmer and producer of Butterworks Yogurt in Westfield, VT
- Bryan O'Hara, soil building pioneer on his vegetable growing operation in Lebanon, CT
- Julie Rawson, Many Hands Organic Farm, Barre, MA - mixed livestock, poultry, vegetables and fruit
- Stephen Storch, biodynamic grower on Long Island, NY

Saturday, February 11: Strategic Action Working Conference.

Participants will discuss building on the knowledge of building healthy soils to affect the broader world. Work groups will be formed to take action on:

- Defining research priorities that serve the needs of growers.
- Broadening public understanding of soil health and crop quality.
- Linking an understanding of soil health with institutions charged with caring for human health.

For more information, contact: Ben Grosscup, ben.grosscup@nofa-mass.org, 413-658-5374.

Vermont Organic Dairy Conference offered on February 21, 2012, in Randolph Center, VT

Organic dairy farmers will learn about successful calf-raising strategies, grazing innovations, and the latest organic dairy research at this day-long

conference.

Farmer Jon Bansen will give the conference keynote address. Jon is a seasoned organic dairy farmer from Oregon who has honed his management intensive grazing strategies on his 200-head Jersey farm. He will share his experiences with extending the grazing season and managing under dry and wet grazing conditions. Another feature of the conference will be a panel of Vermont dairy farmers--led by NOFA-Vermont's Willie Gibson--who will discuss their strategies, tips, and tricks on successfully raising organic calves.

The conference will also focus on innovative research results. Vermont and the Northeast have a long tradition of leading the nation with cutting edge research conducted by researchers who understand farmer needs. This year, we will hear from some of those researchers who include Andre Brito, Heather Darby, John Barlow, Jennifer Colby, and Jana Kraft. They will share the results of their research on feed supplementation on organic dairy farms, pasture compaction and aeration strategies, mastitis management, and analyses of fatty acids (Omega-3 and CLAs) in forage and their influence on milk quality and on-farm greenhouse.

The brochure and online registration information is available at: www.uvm.edu/extension/organicdairy. You may also register by mail by sending a check (\$20, includes lunch), made payable to University of Vermont Extension, to Organic Dairy Conference, UVM Extension, 278 South Main St., Ste. 2, St. Albans, VT 05478.

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RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Assisting Organic Dairy Producers to Meet New and Emerging Milk Markets

Researchers from the University of New Hampshire are leading a multi-state project that aims to help organic dairy farmers better produce and market their milk. Funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to 12 researchers from the universities of Maine, Vermont, Cornell, and the USDA, well as UNH, the research will explore how organic dairy farmers in the Northeast can enhance farm profitability by extending the grazing season and adding value to milk through flaxseed supplementation.

“Organic milk production has been one of the fastest growing segments of organic agriculture in the nation in the past decade, and the Northeast produces approximately 25 percent of the organic milk in the U.S.,” says principal investigator André Brito, assistant professor of organic dairy management at UNH. “Organic represents a tremendous potential to maintain rural economies and preserve working environmental landscapes through profitable organic dairy farms.”

“As more and more farmers adopt organic agriculture practices, they need the best science available to operate profitable and successful organic farms,” says Kathleen Merrigan, deputy secretary of the USDA. “America’s brand of organic agricultural goods is world-

renowned for its high quality and abundance of selection. These research and extension projects will give producers the tools and resources to produce quality organic food and boost farm income, boosting the ‘Grown in America’ brand.”

The project, which was funded through NIFA’s Organic Research and Extension Initiative, addresses needs expressed by organic dairy farmers in a series of focus group interviews funded by two planning grants. “Organic dairy farmers were specifically concerned about the new pasture rule,” says Brito, noting a new federal standard that dictates ruminant animals must graze on pasture 120 days per year with about 30 percent of the total intake coming from pasture. Extending the grazing season has potential to reduce feed costs, a major obstacle to profitability for organic dairies.

Because extending the grazing season means keeping cows on pasture longer, researchers will conduct plot trials of various combinations of forage species, including perennial ryegrass, white clover, sorghum-sudan grass, brassicas, and small grains. The challenge in the Northeast, says Brito, is not only the late start and early finish of the growing season but also the heat of the summer, when many forage species are less productive.

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The second research question – enhancing milk quality – also concerns what cows eat. Cows on pasture produce milk rich with omega-3 fatty acids and conjugated linoleic acids (CLA), molecules sought after for their human health benefits. For Northeast organic dairy farmers to tap the added value of omega-3 fatty acids and CLA, however, they need to ensure high levels of these throughout the year, not just when cows are on pasture.

In this project, the researchers hypothesize that supplementing cows’ winter forage with flaxseed will sustain omega-3 fatty acids and CLA concentrations, meeting year-round market demands for milk with improved fatty acid profile, and possibly commanding higher prices in the marketplace in the future. Further, the researchers will explore how flaxseed enhances milk production and improves cow health and reproductive performance.

Because both research questions transcend dairy cows to embrace a wider agro-ecosystem – from soils to pasture plants to nutrients available to cows and thus to humans – the project is by its nature interdisciplinary, says Brito. His UNH colleagues on the project are assistant professor of agroecology Richard Smith, associate professor of reproductive physiology Dave Townson, and assistant professor of plant pathology Kirk Broders. A core team composed of animal scientists, economists, agronomists, ecologists, and Extension educators from partner institutions and 20 organic dairy farmers throughout the Northeast are involved in the four-year project, which is supported by a nearly \$2.9 million grant from the USDA.

The project taps the unique resource of UNH’s Organic Dairy Research Farm, the first organic dairy farm at a U.S. land grant

university and the only one in the Northeast. All animal feeding trials will take place within the UNH herd of 50 organic milking Jerseys, and plot trials will utilize the farm’s 300 acres in Lee, as well as research farms at partner institutions.

Brito stresses that although this project arose to directly address needs of organic dairy farmers in the Northeast, its benefits will transcend that group to include conventional dairy farmers transitioning to organic or any dairy farmers who wish to adopt grazing systems. “It’s not only the organic dairy producer who will gain from this research,” he says. “We’ll be generating information that can be used by the whole dairy industry, including conventional and organic dairy farmers outside the Northeast.”

In addition to UNH’s Brito, Smith, Townson, and Broders, investigators on this project include agronomist Heather Darby, associate extension professor Sidney Bosworth, and economics professor Bob Parsons, all from the University of Vermont; Richard Kersbergen, professor of sustainable dairy and forage systems from the University of Maine Cooperative Extension; A. Fay Benson from Cornell University Cooperative Extension; and animal scientist Kathy Soder, plant physiologist R. Howard Skinner, and ecologist Sarah Goslee, all from the USDA-Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Pasture Systems and Watershed Management Research Unity, located in University Park, Penn.

For more information about this research project, you can contact Andre Fonseca de Brito, University of New Hampshire, Dairy Nutrition Research Center, Email: andre.brito@unh.edu, Phone: (603) 862-1341



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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic dairy retail, pay and feed price update
January 2012

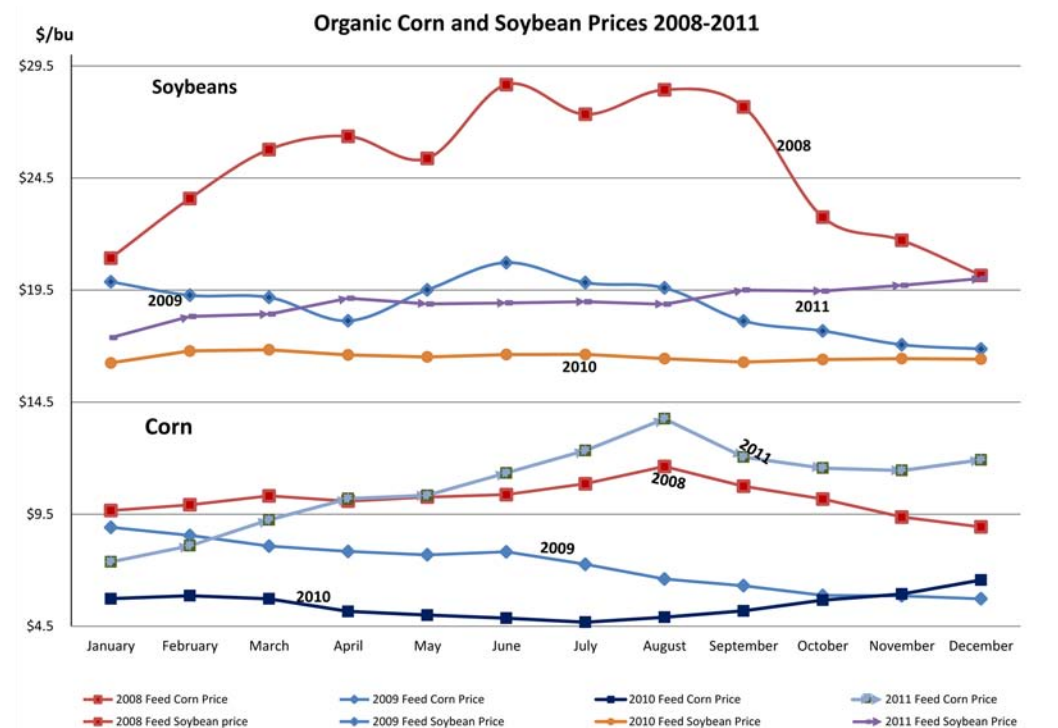
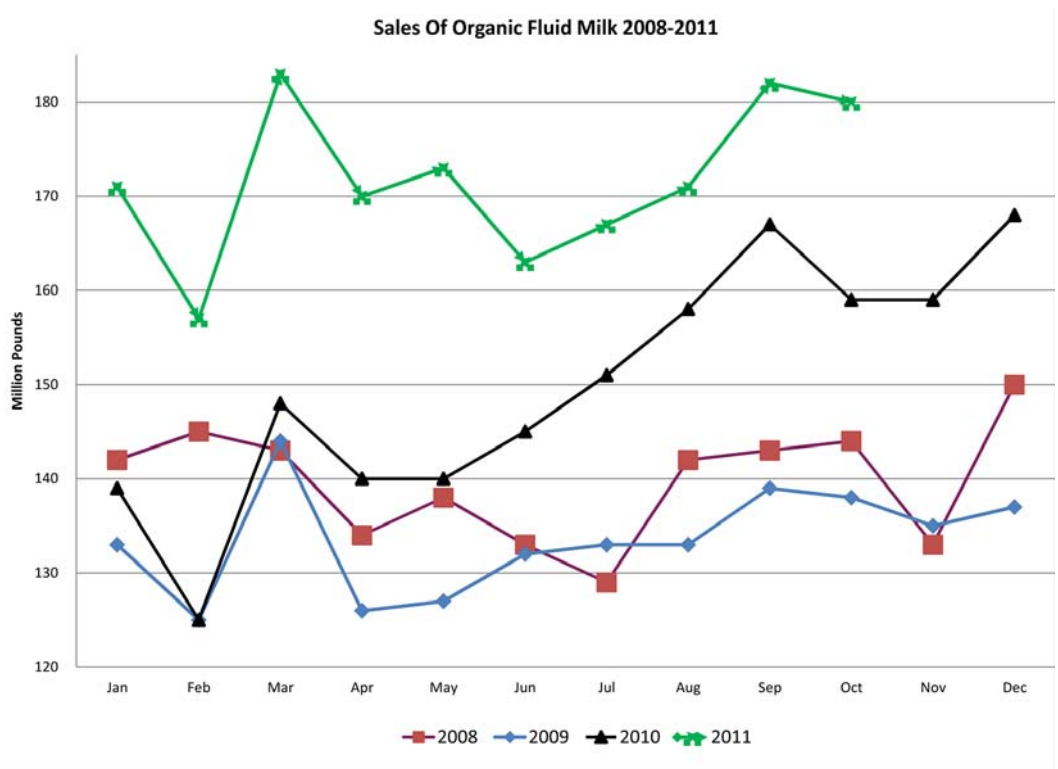
Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Tightening of supply of organic milk raised the lower end of retail pricing for branded product by as much as 69 cents to \$3.19 per ½ gallon. The higher retail price in Connecticut, Pennsylvania and Indiana remaining stable at \$4.49-4.69 per ½ gallon with a combined average for 2011 of \$3.75 per ½ gallon recorded from data in over 30 US cities. In response to the increase in cost and lack of supply the two national brands increased their MAP or Base by \$1-1.50 /cwt (4.3-6.2 cents per ½ gallon) in August 2011 Organic Valley plans to increase again by \$2/cwt in March 2012 (8.6 cents per ½ gallon).

Estimated U.S. sales by the Federal Milk Market Order (FMMO) Administrator of organic fat-reduced milk continued to grow year over year by 13%; growth that has been uninterrupted since March 2010.

With 2011 ending, a comparison of the 2010 and 2011 annual average price for retail half gallon organic reduced fat (2%) milk prices in 30 cities, surveyed by FMMO market administration, shows 20 cities have higher prices for 2011 and 10 have lower prices. Indianapolis, at \$4.19 for the 2011 annual average, is the city with 2010 to 2011 annual average prices up the most, 45 cents. Atlanta, at \$3.44 for the 2011 annual average, is the city with annual average prices down the most, 36 cents. Denver has the lowest annual average price for 2010, \$3.07,

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Fertility Considerations For Growing Organic Pastures & Hay

By Neal Kinsey

When the requirements for life-giving soil fertility to provide abundant plant growth and robust animal health are accurately considered, one finds that far too many pastures and hay fields, even those farmed organically, are seriously lacking. Testing the soils in pastures and meadows has proven this to be true far too often, even when only the absolute minimum nutrient content of those soils are considered. To treat your livestock right you have to treat your soils right. Anything less and you rob from the total potential of life-giving principles for your soil, the plants grown there, the animals that consumes those plants and the products that are provided as a result.

When soils are not cared for correctly, it is not just a case of robbing from the soil and reducing the quality of life that needs to be there. Such actions are robbing every aspect of the operation; from the quality of life in that soil all the way up to the quality of life for the stock, the owners, and what is being produced to sell to others. If there is any place where this description should not apply, it should be to those who are caring enough to be known as the organic producers – those who are there because organic is best and produces the best. From extensive work measuring the initial soil fertility on many organic farms, far too often it has been found that the goal of building the best soil for producing the best feed and food has not been achieved.

Certified organic farmers and ranchers contact us concerning what fertilizers and soil amendments they should use for growing good to excellent pasture and hay. Such questions cannot be correctly answered without a soil sample that has been properly analyzed. We can't tell what you need until we know what you have or don't have! And the soil audit can only provide correct answers when the sample being sent for testing has been taken properly. (Guidelines are available at www.kinseyag.com, or from our office.)

Here is the place for those concerned with real quality to begin when striving to build soil fertility organically. Take soil tests from permanent pastures and hay meadows to a depth of only four inches. Remember the deeper you sample, the less available soil nutrients (including micronutrients) will tend to be. Nutrients applied on top of the soil that cannot be worked in will have the most significant effect on the top four inches of soil over the next year. If the soil is to be worked and newly planted to pasture or some type of hay crop, then consider taking a topsoil sample to an average depth of six and three-fourths inches. When soils are worked after fertilization, even two or three inches deep, that is generally sufficient to mix the materials well enough to be utilized throughout the aerobic zone (as deep as a fence post will rot in that soil). If nutrients levels below this area of prime influence are required, then take a separate subsoil sample to determine what is there.

Keep in mind that when fertilizer or lime is applied on top of the soil and not worked in, most of the nutrients will remain concentrated in the top few inches during the next growing season. As the plants begin to take up nutrients, if levels are correctly maintained, it is possible to positively affect fertility levels over the next year -- which will show up by annually testing that four inch zone. If you follow through with fertilizing and testing for three or four years in a row, it should become very evident that samples should represent only the first four inches as a separate soil sample every year.

When overdone, any fertilizer, even the best of the organic ones, can

contribute to excesses in the exact area where the plant is trying to develop its root system. Taking a six to eight-inch sample will generally show the soil needs far more nutrients than a sample of the top four inches. The excesses caused by over-fertilization can become even more serious over years of supplementation. Although the nitrogen, sulfur, and boron will leach downward in the course of the growing season, a portion of the other nutrients will be held in that four-inch "sphere of influence" for much longer. This can affect how much fertilizer you may or may not need for the next crop. Spend your budget on what will provide both quality and yield, not on what "might" make a difference.

Eventually, due to biological activity -- including the plant roots that penetrate deeper down and then die back and decay plus the activity of microbes, earthworms, and other life forms -- even those nutrients applied on top of the soil will be transported downward and increase the needed levels of fertility to a greater depth in that soil. Although it is a long-term process, while working with organic growers who have done this, we have measured significant changes in the soil to as much as three feet deep (as compared to the control areas that did not receive the nutrients).

This program was conducted where the proper organic fertilizers and liming materials were all applied on top of the soil based specifically on fertility needs as determined by sampling the top four inches and fertilizing accordingly for ten years. The results at multiple sites measured to depths of four feet showed increased levels of nutrients and increased rooting by as much as 30-50%.

Considering these results, why should the correct sampling depth be of prime concern for those growing pasture and hay? At times even the most needed fertilizer, if applied in excess, can make one of more other nutrients completely unavailable. This is the real meaning of balance in soil fertility! Too much of any nutrient, no matter what type, can adversely affect the availability of one or more of the other needed nutrients (particularly trace elements) that can cause the plants growing there to come up short.

Due to the use of compost and natural materials for fertilizers, deficiencies of micronutrients are too often dismissed as unnecessary for the soils of organic growers. We have verified this as true on some soils tested in Europe that have received moderate amounts of manures and compost that have been farmed for 500-1000 years. However, most organic soils in the US have not had the benefit of hundreds of years of such treatments and they show it. When the soils test as lacking in one or more of the trace elements that are shown to be needed, once properly supplied they show up in a positive way concerning the health and vigor of crops and the livestock.

For those who want better fertility management we would be pleased to help provide that. For more information please see our website, www.kinseyag.com, or contact us directly for your specific needs.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Get to Know Jean Richardson: New NOSB Member from Vermont

By Cheryl Cesario, Certification Staff at Vermont Organic Farmers

In December, five new members were named to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), the 15 member advisory board that helps set standards for the National Organic Program. Jean Richardson is one of the newly appointed members and will assume the consumer/public interest slot. It is a five-year term, set to begin this January. Having a board member from Vermont is exciting news for producers in the Northeast. Jean has such a diverse and extensive background, it is hard to summarize her accomplishments on just one page.



NODPA readers will be pleased to know that Jean has a hands-on and practical understanding of organic agriculture. Her experiences over the years include working on a dairy farm in New Zealand and later raising broilers, ducks, rabbits and sheep. Currently, with her daughters and son-in-

law, Jean produces certified organic maple syrup, operating under the name Buck Mountain Maple. Additionally, Jean is an independent contractor for the Vermont Organic Farmers certification program, conducting inspections of both farm and food processing operations. She has witnessed many types

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of production models, inspecting over 100 operations a year. If this were not enough to keep her busy, she also provides consulting services on rural land use planning and zoning.

What makes Jean such a strong NOSB board member is her background in science, policy, and law. Jean is a Professor Emerita at the University of Vermont (UVM), where she taught Environmental Studies and Environmental Law. In 1990, a ten year grant she obtained funded the pasture program at UVM and gave rise to the Vermont Grass Farmers Association. Jean has an in-depth understanding of pasture management and through her organic certification work is knowledgeable of the NOP pasture rule and its affects on organic dairy and beef producers.

In the mid-90's, she was a Founding Director and President of the New England Environmental Policy Center (NEEPC). Grants through this organization funded her research on the impact of long distance transportation of air pollution on dioxin uptake in dairy feeds and milk. That is, how air pollutants produced from a copper smelter in Quebec, for example, were affecting production on Vermont farms. The NEEPC is now the Agricultural Mediation Center for New England, which provides mediation services between farmers and state

or federal environmental agencies.

Jean's appointment to the NAFTA Commission on Environmental Cooperation by President Clinton gave her valuable experience listening to diverse perspectives, which should serve her well on the NOSB. Her interests in serving on the board include topics such as the clarity of labels from the consumer perspective, as well as how proposed regulations can be verified on the ground and how these impact both big and small farms. Jean has not yet been selected for specific committees, but is hoping to be part of the livestock, environment, and/or public policy committees.

Jean says she is looking forward to representing a broad range of interests from the New England region and is very interested in hearing from farmers.

Her email is: jeanrichardson43@comcast.net.

Cheryl Cesario is part of the certification staff at Vermont Organic Farmers. She and her husband Marc operate Meeting Place Pastures in Cornwall, VT and produce grass-fed beef, humanely-raised veal, and pastured pork.

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COMMENTARY

Dissatisfied in Fall milk product incentives by processors

Reading in the most recent NODPA Newsletters I am disappointed by the move of processors to encourage Fall milk production. Farmers know that it makes more sense to let a cow produce milk when it fits her natural cycle, particularly the spring. The spring fresh cow has access to the best forage to sustain her lactation. Calves born in the spring have a much easier time of getting through their risky early months.

Processors are worried about the "Spring Flush" where they have traditionally had to pay organic prices for the milk and then dump the excess into the conventional market at considerable losses. The NY Dairy Task Force addressed this issue in a meeting in 2010. A suggestion from Dairy Marketing Services was that there could be a market for the Spring Flush since this milk is potentially a high source of CLA and has improved Omega-3 to Omega-6 ratio. A product such as butter, cheese, or other soft products that

make use of the milk fat where these beneficial are stored could be a way to expand markets and turn losses into profits for processors and hopefully farmers. The barrier to getting it done in NY was that all processors would have to combine their excess spring milk in order to make large enough volumes to be processed in the large plants that produce these products.

It seems a waste to me to see cows being managed towards fall production and away from what would be a healthy opportunity for them as well as a healthy product for consumers.

A. Fay Benson

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COMMENTARY

Is Bullying the Best Way to Protect Organic Integrity?

By Harriet Behar

First printed in the January- February 2012 issue of the Organic Broadcaster, a publication of the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) www.mosesorganic.org

I learned a valuable lesson while on my high school debate team; you must understand your opponent's point of view in order to bring them to your "side," or to build a compromise that is acceptable to both. I learned that bullying tactics, including threats, intimidation, or humiliation won't get you what you ultimately want, since these kinds of communication stifle discussion.

Not Everyone Knows

Unfortunately, at the most recent National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meeting in Savannah, GA, there was an incident that proved that not everyone has learned this same lesson. At the meeting, a person providing information in support of a proposed recommendation was verbally threatened by someone representing a self-named "consumer watchdog" organization. This popular and well known physician was warned to not speak in favor of a nutrient commonly used in organic products. Damage to the physician's reputation that could result in a negative impact to his financial position was threatened. Although very few in the audience felt that the threats were acceptable, the attacker has defended his actions with comments implying that anything is okay when protecting "organic integrity."

I disagree with this assessment, and believe that this type of activity works against the person doing it and damages both their and their victim's reputations. The use of intimidation does not help the organic community, since it obviously stifles healthy discussion. Bullying and trying to stifle the voice of others who have different viewpoints should not be condoned by the organic community. It is only through open and respectful discussion that we can continue the rapid growth and acceptance of organic by consumers and producers.

Misinformation Also Not Helpful

Unfortunately, attacks I have witnessed from within the organic community have not only been threatening, but have also included misinformation. The use of half-truths by organic supporters to make a point does not provide more than sensational soundbites that confuse consumers and alienate producers from organic. Those who engage in these disrespectful tactics need to reflect more fully on if their activities are actually helping or hurting their cause.

There are plenty of powerful businesses and people outside of organics that view our "niche" either as not viable or as a threat to their livelihood. It is the attacks and misinformation from

those outside of organics that the organic community must rebut, with clear facts and a single voice. When members of the organic community provide partial truths or use bad behavior to attack others within the community this strengthens the position of those who want to see organics fail. An open discussion where intimidation does not prevent the voice of any contributors builds the foundation we need to prove integrity in the organic marketplace.

Bad Behavior Leads to Mistrust

If an organization wants to speak for integrity in the organic label, then they need to act with integrity themselves. Otherwise, they and their message about organic both lose respect. I find it difficult to trust the work done by any organization that utilizes bullying tactics. I am reluctant to trust that any research that does not support desired outcomes would be released, or that results would not be skewed in other ways.

I hope we have all learned from the distasteful experience at the NOSB meeting and can move forward in a respectful way to work through the controversial issues we face.

Improvement Comes From Honest Debate

Our organic regulation is very good, with perhaps five percent of the law needing some improvement. Many of the issues brought up by internal critics have clearly been identified by the organic community as needing to be fixed, either through the marketplace or through the regulatory process. The National Organic Program is moving in the right direction on many fronts, with better enforcement of the regulation and encouraging clarification of areas where there have been inconsistencies.

The organic community is well known for its passionate support of the protection of organic integrity. Of course, integrity means different things to the diverse stakeholders who make up our community or "industry." Consumers may believe there are no synthetics allowed in agricultural production, or as ingredients in organic foods. However, if you tell them that baking soda or ascorbic acid (vitamin C) are considered to be synthetic, or that the dormant oil spray they have been using on their backyard fruit trees is petroleum based, then they may think that perhaps some synthetics should be allowed.

Organic farmers have a wide variety of tools necessary in the production of their crops, including a few that have significant environmental impact, such as copper sulfate, or antibiotics used to control fireblight in pear and apple production. Food manufacturers, retailers, and distributors seek to continually increase

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NEWS RELEASE:

Organic Dairy Family Farmers need a fair share of the retail dollar, they require at least a 40¢ a gallon increase in their milk price to stay in business

continued from page 1

processors that we are losing money,” says Liz Bawden, NODPA President and New York organic dairy farmer, “Now the milk buyers need more milk and we can’t afford to buy the feed to increase production. Some dairy farmers are going out of business. We require at least a 40¢ a gallon increase to be able to pay our bills and stay in business.” Organic farm families are suffering while processors and retailers thrive, and consumers have a product with a retail price 20¢ per gallon lower than in 2008 (1). A recently published summary of a seven year study by the University of Vermont showed that organic dairy farmers have lost equity in their business since 2006, suffering heavily in 2009, with many farmers only able to remain in business because of federal safety-net programs. The amount that farmers receive for their milk is now at 2008 levels, despite increases in the cost of all inputs. In a depressed economy, retail sales of organic dairy are growing at 8-10% annually; thus the consumer wants the product and is willing to pay from \$2.50 for store brand and promotional organic milk to over \$4.50 a ½ gallon for branded product. Demand for organic dairy ingredients is also increasing. Processors are “sweating bullets” to deliver milk to different parts of the country. Cash return to retailers is increasing as the price to the consumer rises.

“It’s time to push the envelope on what the market can bear for a retail price,” says George Wright, New York organic dairy farmer and NODPA Treasurer. “Processors and retailers need to examine whether they need to earn as much or more than farmers from a ½ gallon of organic milk. Consumers need to ask why farmers don’t get their fair share.”

It’s time to trust the consumer and ask for an increase in retail prices so farmers can receive a living wage. It’s time for the retailers to respect their customers and not ‘margin up’ an increase in retail price. Traditionally, a price increase is split three ways: between the farmer who produced the milk, the processor that packages the milk, and the retailer who puts it on a shelf. It is time that the retailer and processor respect their farmer partners and farmer-owners by passing the entire increase on to the farmers to keep them in business.

The rising cost and availability of inputs-- dramatically for corn, fuel and quality forage-- has many farmers feeling the strain of cash flow with few reserves. Hay has doubled in price and protein feed has increased by over 60%. Organic dairy farmers are

For more background on the situation please go to www.nodpa.com and specifically:

Organic Milk Market Update: What is good for the processor and the consumer, isn’t so good for the family farm.

http://www.nodpa.com/milk_market_update_120611.shtml

Pay Price Update: The latest pay price information from Organic Valley/CROPP and Horizon Organic.

http://www.nodpa.com/payprice_only_update_120611.shtml

Study Finds Declining Profitability of Vermont Organic Dairy Farms from 2006 - 2010

By Bob Parsons, UVM Extension Ag Economist & Professor & Lisa McCrory, Organic Livestock Consultant

http://www.nodpa.com/production_economics_parsons_declining_profitability_111311.shtml

anticipating and planning for a net loss, cutting their feed costs to a minimum and hoping to survive. For those that have changed their production in response to processors’ request for more winter milk, the costs of inputs for this time will make winter milk production unprofitable. Seasonal incentives fail to cover even the overhead costs of winter production.

For former NODPA Board president and Organic Valley producer/owner Steve Morrison the answer is simple, “If processors and retailers work with the interests of their farmers at heart, this necessary adjustment of supply and demand can be accomplished quickly and safely with an immediate increase in pay price of at least \$5/cwt., while a more long term solution can be worked on to address the real requirement of an increase of \$8-9/cwt.”

Organic milk is great for the consumer and great for the environment. It’s time to make it great for farm families who provide employment, tax revenue and benefit the environment, and are the backbone of our rural communities.

For more information, contact:

Ed Maltby at ednodpa@comcast.net; 413-772-0444 or 30 Keets Road, Deerfield, MA 01342.

(1) As collected by Federal Milk Order Market Administrators based on a survey conducted one day between the 1st and 10th of each month (excluding Fridays and weekends) in selected cities or metropolitan areas. One outlet of the largest and second largest food store chains are surveyed.

Fair Share of the Retail Dollar for Organic Dairy Producers

The Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA) started a petition January 4, 2012 to draw attention to the fact that organic dairy producers need an increase in their milk price in order to stay afloat. We are asking consumers if they would be willing to pay more for their milk if they knew that the increase went straight to the farmer. Please sign the petition and tell your friends to sign, put it on your Facebook page, ask your certifiers and other organizations you are members of or support to promote it on their website and internet communications plus anywhere else that seems appropriate. We are all consumers, let's make our voices heard.

Our goal is to have 5,000 signatures – we are well on our way.

Organic farm families are suffering while processors and retailers thrive, and consumers have a product with a retail price 20 cents per gallon lower than in 2008. A recently published summary of a seven-year study by the University of Vermont showed that organic dairy farmers have lost equity in their business since 2006, suffering heavily in 2009, with many farmers only able to remain in business because of federal safety-net programs. Farmers can be saved by an increase in the retail price. Traditionally, a price increase is split three ways: between the farmer who produced the milk, the processor that packages the milk, and the retailer who puts it on a shelf. It is time that the retailer and processor respect their farmer partners and farmer-owners by passing the entire increase on to the farmers to keep them in business.

This petition will be sent to George Siemon, CEO (Organic Valley); Ron Schnur (Horizon Organic); and Gary Hirschberg (Stonyfield Farm), which says:

“Increase Organic Dairy Farm families milk price by \$0.60 per gallon to cover an increase in their farming costs or \$0.70 per gallon to save family farms. As a consumer I support paying more if that money goes back to farmers.”

Will you sign this petition? Go to:

http://signon.org/sign/save-organic-dairy-farm?source=c.em.mt&r_by=1915363

No internet access? Fax a letter in support with your name and which state you are in to 866-554-9483 or mail it to NODPA, 30 Keets Road, Deerfield, MA 01342. ♦

At the time of this article, we have just over 900 signatures and some excellent comments. Here is a sampling of what people are saying:

- Organic dairy farmers are the heart and soul of a sustainable and healthy milk supply in this country. While the price of milk may rise a bit, it is abundantly clear that what we cannot afford is the loss of these independent organic milk producers. (CA)
- I would rather spend a little more and have my food come from a family farm rather than a factory farm. (MA)
- Anything for the hardworking farmers. a signature can go a long way when we put our pens together. thanks for inviting me to sign such a fair and critically important petition. (MA)
- Farmers should be allowed to charge whatever is necessary to keep themselves in business. Wow, I can't believe they need a petition to be allowed to do this. Thought this was a free country! (HI)
- It's a sad commentary on a civilization's idea of health care when it's collectively considered normal to know your family doctor and your family dentist but considered strange and revolutionary to know your family farmer. But it is even sadder when it takes signing petitions to force the dairy co-ops to pay the family farmer at least enough to feed his cows. Think about it! (PA)
- Paying farmers in rural America parity and a reasonable profit on their labor is the surest way to bring money into our rural economies and keep it there. (ME)
- Farmers are always the last to see a price increase... It's time they had enough to cover cost of production. Even better would be cost of living! (VT)
- The average organic dairy farm is getting somewhere around \$2.55/gal for their milk and the consumer is getting charged \$8-\$9/gal for the supermarket. There has to be room in the system for the farmer to get more of the share. (VT)
- It is time to step up and give us more of the retail dollar. Remember, just a few years ago, you said reduce your volume....and we did. I did not notice that you lost equity in your businesses at that time as we farmers did do. (NY)



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RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Winter Conference Highlights

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Moses Organic Farming Conference's Organic University, February 23-25, 2012 taking place in Lacrosse, Wisconsin

The Organic Farming Conference is celebrated as the foremost educational and networking event in the organic farming community, with over 65 informative workshops, 160 exhibitors, locally-sourced organic food, live entertainment and inspirational keynote speakers. The OFC also offers Organic University; a pre-conference day on February 23rd.

At Organic University (OU) farmers, academics, and other experts come together to provide over six hours of background information and practical applications. Each class comes with a resource book with course instruction materials and additional information for further learning. Below are some 2012 topics that might interest NODPA's readers.

1. Advanced Crop Agronomics

Join Klaas and Mary-Howell Martens of Lakeview Organic Grain, and Dave Campbell of Lily Lake Farm, for a detailed look at advanced agronomic techniques and strategies for producing high-quality grains



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2. Livestock Health Care Management

Join Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture's Susan Beal and Organic Valley staff veterinarian Paul Dettloff for this comprehensive exploration of homeopathy, tinctures, and herbal remedies as part of a holistic approach to livestock health care that combines husbandry and prevention with careful observation and proven treatment practices.

3. Balancing Soil Fertility for Top Quality and Yields

Both top yields and top quality are needed and possible in organic food and feed production. In organic farming, higher yields indicate higher, not lower, nutritional value. When one or the other is missing, so are the nutrients for providing the best nutrition. The goal of organic production should be to obtain high quality crops from good healthy plants that provide more than enough return to pay for the time and effort needed to stay in business. Join renowned soils expert and writer Neal Kinsey as he shares his knowledge of balancing soil fertility.

4. Overcoming Your Fear of Farm Financials

Your financial recordkeeping and decision-making system might be the most important tool on your farm. Join the Wisconsin Farm Center's Paul Dietmann and Iowa State University Extension's Craig Chase for a journey through the exciting world of number organization and analysis. Using real life scenarios, this course will provide the tools you need to successfully and painlessly manage the finances of your own operation. The newly-published MOSES book, Fearless Farm Finances will be provided to each attendee of this course.

5. Quality Forage Production for Dairy and Beef

With organic grain prices at an all-time high – and no relief in sight – it makes sense for every organic cattle producer to maximize their return on pasture and forage crops. Join Midwestern Bio-Ag soils and dairy consultant Bob Yanda and organic dairy farmer Gerry Klinkner as they discuss fertilizers and management strategies to increase the yield and nutritional quality of forages and pastures to achieve an improved bottom line.

For more information: 715-778-5775. ♦



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gional Coordinators or Farmer Relations for further details.

- In New England, contact John Cleary at (612) 803-9087 or john.cleary@organicvalley.coop or Steve Getz at (608) 632-3790 or steve.getz@organicvalley.coop.
- In New York, contact David Hardy at (608) 479-1200 or david.hardy@organicvalley.coop.
- In Pennsylvania/Maryland, contact Peter Miller at (612) 801-3506 or peter.miller@organicvalley.coop.
- In the Southeast, contact Gerry Cohn at (919) 605-5619 or gerry.cohn@organicvalley.coop.

Farmer Relations is available from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern Monday through Friday at (888) 809-9297 and online at www.farmers.coop.

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Any buyers looking for organic milk who would like to be listed in this column for the March 2012 issue, please email the desired text to Lisa at lmcrory@hughes.net or call 802-234-5524.

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION: FEATURED FARM

Jerry Dell Farm – Dryden and Freeville, NY

A Growing Family Enterprise

continued from page 1

Today, Jerry Dell Farm, certified by NOFA NY, milks 500 cows on two farms, and manage 2000 acres of pasture, hay and crop land.

Farm Team

To run a farm of this size requires a lot of hands, good communication and a positive attitude. The farm employs 13 full-time people. Family members working on the farm include Vaughn, Sue, sons Jeremy & Ryan, and nephews Troy & Kenny. Jeremy manages the Freeville Farm with Jake Mayo, Ryan manages the home farm with Gordie Morgan, and nephews Troy and Kenny manage the cropping and equipment maintenance. Everyone is involved with the fieldwork. Vaughn and Sue work fulltime with Vaughn playing the role of hands-on general manager and Sue as the Financial Manager. Vaughn is in the barns every day looking at animals and seeing what needs to be done. He spends a lot of time on the phone with people, covering all aspects of the farm, and cares for the dry cows and heifers, doing additional feeding chores when the harvest season is in full swing. Sue takes care of the books, pays the bills, runs for parts and occasionally provides taxi service and food delivery (for the farm hands).

Communication is important with a farm of this size and the Shermans manage to have farm meetings at least once a month. “At these meetings we will talk over whatever is going on”, says Sue. “[including] planting, harvest, sick animals, equipment repairs/purchases, building repairs, land rental/purchases – any problems the guys are having, good stuff going on, etc. It is not all serious; we have a lot of fun too and usually have something to snack on.”

Growing Additional Markets

The Freeville farm is located on a well-



Examples of where to find information on organic dairy production:

- Fellow producers,
- Your milk processor,
- Some certifiers provide their producers with a list of approved and prohibited products and practices,
- eOrganic,
- Books (many can be found through Acres USA),
- Resource websites, winter conferences, pasture walks and more,
- NODPA's website Resource Page has a library of organic production articles organized by category from over 10 years of print newsletters. Go to www.nodpa.com/resources.shtml,
- NODPA's ODairy Listserv: a great place to post questions for quick and thorough answers from fellow producers, veterinarians, and other industry professionals.

traveled road and the Shermans have taken advantage of that by creating a store front (Jerry Dell Farm Store) which offers organic, fresh, local produce, grassfed beef and their newly released raw milk cheddar made at Finger Lakes Farmstead Cheese Co. The store also serves as a CSA pick up location for their middle son, Trever, who grows vegetables, blueberries, raspberries and strawberries on a nearby farm.

From Total Confinement to Grass Based Farming to Organic

As a conventional herd, the Shermans pushed their cows for production, milking 3 times a day and using Bst, “Our cows were producing 100# per day but it was hard to keep them upright”, says Vaughn. At the height of their total confinement, conventional dairying career, they were milking 350 cows. Though they never liked this way of farming, Vaughn and Sue felt that this is what they had to do to be profitable. It was hard keeping their animals healthy; their vet bill was well over \$1,000.00 per month. “it seemed like a vet was here all the time”, says Sue. “There were a lot of health issues; DA's, laminitis, acidosis, digestion problems, and sick calves. We had an awful time keeping calves alive.” The Shermans had a large hospital area on the farm that was always packed full with animals. They were even considering expanding the sick cow area prior to their transition to pasture and organic production. But luckily, they decided to make a change instead.

In 1997, tired of the rat race, the Shermans decided to take their cows off the cement and move them onto pasture. They also stopped using Bst, switched to two times a day milking, and sold their tillage equipment. Vaughn and Sue came to realize how much of their potential profit was being sucked up with veterinary costs and lost animal potential. Milk production on their grass-based system



decreased to 50#/cow, but they were still doing better financially than when their cows were pushed for production.

Cow health improved significantly; at least 90% of their herd health problems went away when they switched to a pasture based operation. The sick cow area soon became a 'vacant lot' and today they use it for breeding their cows or setting aside livestock going to market. Today their vet is used for the occasional diagnosis and pregnancy checks two times a month, which has dropped their vet bills drastically to just \$300/month.

Transitioning to organic was the best business decision that they made. The Shermans learned a lot about the organic rules and regulations by watching and learning from Kathie Arnold (past NODPA President) of Twin Oaks Dairy in Truxton, NY. Though their initial interest in organic dairy was financial, they soon were convinced that this way of farming was better for the land, cows and the people. Jerry Dell Farm has been certified organic since 2000; they are currently shipping to Organic Valley, but will be switching to Upstate Niagara starting in May, 2012.

Land and Livestock

There is a lot of overlap between the Freeville farm and the home farm. All the calves are born and raised at the home farm. Milking cows are picked to go to Freeville that will work well with the step up milking parlor. If a cow needs to be dried off, she comes back to the home farm. Almost all of the fields in Freeville are used for pasture for the cows with the exception of a couple fields where they took hay. The second farm, added in 2010, has allowed the Shermans to increase their herd size and create more opportunities for the growing number of family members that are joining the farm business. Between the two farms they manage 2000 acres; 1000 of that is

owned and the rest is rented. They grow about 300 acres of corn (mostly for grain), 100-200 acres of Triticale for grain and straw, 75 acres of soybeans used for livestock feed, 550 acres in pasture, and about 800-900 acres of hay. Between the two farms, the Shermans milk about 500 cows: 300 cows at the home farm, and 175 - 200 cows in their new facility in Freeville

Their goal is to grow all their own feed, but 2011 was a very challenging year. In a typical year, they manage to grow 90% of their grain and all their forages plus some surplus left to sell. After the 2011 growing season, they have about 50% of the grain that they need for the year and just enough forage to feed their 1100 head of livestock.

Livestock Housing and Nutrition

Calves are raised in a 50 x 100 coverall barn with 4 fans, drawing lots of fresh air into their living quarters. There they are raised in individual pens and are bedded down with straw. The calves stay in this barn until they are weaned at 3 months. Though they are happy with the way that their calves grow, Vaughn is interested in nurse cows and may find a way to make that work on their farm.

Cows and heifers are raised in different groups as they mature: Calves 3 months - 6 months; heifers 6month - 1 year; breeding age heifers, bred heifers and dry cows; and milking cows. All groups of animals have access to pasture every day within their group/system and their housing is strategically placed near the pastures that they are grazing. Cows go to new pasture every 12 hours. All the pastures get clipped 3-4 times a year and certain pastures that get ahead of the rotation are harvested for feed.

The grazing season at Jerry Dell Farm starts May 1st and usually ends around the first of November. Cows are fed 10 lbs of grain,

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FEATURED FARM

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some corn silage and the rest is pasture. As pastures start to slow down, cows are fed additional haylage, high moisture corn or Triticale. Total dry matter consumed from pasture is about 80% in the spring and then down to 50% in the summer and fall. The winter ration for the dairy cows consists of 20 lbs of grain, a couple lbs of soy and the rest is haylage and a little dry hay. Yearling heifers and dry cows are on 100% pasture during the growing season and a total mixed ration in the winter time.

With the portable water system, they don't have to deal with muddy/pugged areas in their pastures and feel that it keeps the sod in good health while also keeping fly populations down. Water wagons are transported to the pastures with drinking troughs on the side. Fly tape is also hung around the water wagon so when cows go to drink, they can leave their pests behind. Additional fly control methods on their farm include the use of fly parasites and a vinegar/soap/essential oil mixture that is sprayed on the cows as they leave the milking parlor.

Health Care

Preventive strategies and good observation are key elements for a healthy herd at Jerry Dell Farm. Cows and heifers follow a vaccination program, vet checks take place twice a month, they do regular testing for Johnnes and Staph Aureus and have a regular hoof trimming program to manage Hairy Heel Warts. For mild health issues, they have had great success using homeopathic remedies; 90% of their mastitis cases clear up with this approach. If there is a moderate health situation, they turn to homeopathy plus other supportive/nutritional

therapies and watch the animals closely to monitor progress. If the cow starts to go down hill, they do not keep her. If they decide to use a prohibited health product on a cow, the, the cow will immediately leave the farm – usually being sold to a conventional dairy nearby. For severe health situations, they do not spend any time trying to bring the cow back, but will put her on the truck right away.

Breeding

The herds at the Freeville farm and the home farm consist almost entirely of registered Holsteins. “We have had some crossbreds in the past but have never been happy with them; they just don't last in our herd,” says Sue. They breed mostly with AI picking top bulls with good health traits, productive life, daughter pregnancy rates, SCC, calving ease, good feet & legs, udders, and A2/A2-Beta Casein. Some of the best bulls go for \$30 or more per unit of semen, but they feel it is well worth the investment; they are sure to see dramatic improvements within a generation. They have used their own bulls for cleanup in the past, but are trying to get some Genomic tested bulls for their clean up bulls.

Final Observations

The biggest issue Vaughn sees with organics dairy today is animal welfare; he feels some organic farms could improve the way they are caring for their cows using the experience of organic and non-organic practices. “A lot of people want to throw everything out that they learned when they produced for the conventional market. We need to come back to the middle,” says Vaughn. For example, a new organic dairy producer may feel overwhelmed; they may not know what their options are when it comes to treating a sick cow. Vaughn urges new organic producers to talk with veterinarians, other organic producers and their milk handlers rather than do nothing and hope that the cows pull through. The “do nothing” scenario is discouraging and scary to Vaughn – he has seen it too many times as producers attempt the steep learning curve in transitioning to organic production. He feels that producers need to educate themselves and develop a health care/welfare plan for their farm when they decide they want to produce organic milk. Today, more than ever before, there are many resources available to producers and it is important to take advantage of the information that is out there so that livestock can be healthy, comfortable, and well cared for. ♦

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Dry Cows Can Have Good Memories

By Dan Leiterman, President/CEO of Crystal Creek, Inc.

In the course of one's life there are many lessons and principles presented for a person to learn from. One lesson I have experienced many times over is, "if a dry cow is challenged anytime during the last two months of gestation it could negatively affect the transition period and post-partum performance." In simpler terms, if a dry cow is 'dinged' (experiences a problem or challenge), there is a likelihood that she 'will remember it', resulting in a higher risk of problems during the transition period. In some situations the 'ding' may only last for one day and it may be early in the dry period, weeks away from freshening and seemingly unimportant. However, in many cases the cow could be significantly affected and negative repercussions still result during the transition period and the subsequent lactation.



What Is Dry Cow Memory?

It is a bit of fun and over simplification to personify a dry cow with having the human trait of memory. However, the suggestion of a dry cow having memory is a way of drawing attention to the 'biological memory.' The late term pregnancy of a dry cow is a complex biological process that is sensitive and vulnerable to negative challenges. If the challenge is severe enough during the dry period, the dry cow may not be able to biologically recover adequately for a healthy birthing process and lactation performance may be compromised. There are two general categories of dry cow 'dings' I use to classify the challenges most often experienced during the transition period. 1) The 'ding' was severe enough that the dry cow could not recover adequately prior to freshening. 2) The 'ding' was significant, but it put into motion a biological coping mechanism that can also cause problems at freshening and early lactation. An example of just such a biological coping mechanism that can cause problems is ketosis and/or sub-clinical ketosis. If the dry cow is 'dinged' in a way that interrupts/challenges her ability to access and/or utilize carbohydrates, she will set the stage for excessive fat to come off the back to make up the difference. The result could be various levels of ketosis during the transition period. Just one such predisposing challenge that could set the stage for ketosis to occur would be 'empty bunk syndrome' where the bunk is empty for too many hours in a day, or the feed is not pushed up on a regular basis. This prevents the cow from feeding her rumen fermentation factory on a regular hourly schedule and nutrient delivery to the cow is compromised.

Types Of Challenges Dry Cows Are Sensitive To:

There are a number of predisposing issues that can 'ding' dry cows and set the stage for a problematic transition period and reduced lactation performance. Many of these predisposing/causative issues are listed below and any one of them could make for a long discussion. Two key topics from the following list are covered in more detail in Cow Tales (a newsletter published by Crystal Creek, Inc.). The first is on feed bunk management by Dr. John Popp and the other is on mycotoxins (specifically vomitoxin) by Brian Hoffelt. Both of these topics, if occurring during the dry cow stage can significantly disrupt the transition period and severely reduce farmer profitability.

Ration Balance: Poor balance, especially for energy and cations. Dairy Expo

Counter Productive Ration Strategy: A nutrition model that does not support/develop proper rumen function.

Cow Grouping: Single vs. two group dry cow strategies, crowding, stressful regrouping, moves during dry period.

Energy Level: Lack of monitoring of dry cow body condition score during dry period to reduce the risk of problematic body condition (gains or losses).

Feedstuffs Not Specific To Dry Cows: An example is the feeding of straw in order to utilize inappropriate feedstuffs in the dry cow ration and to make the ration look good on paper.

Cation Balance: Balancing Ca, K, Mg, Na to reduce the risk of milk fever.

Monitoring DMI: Monitoring dry matter intake in conjunction with doing body condition scores helps to reduce the risk

Nutrition Nuggets

It is important to have a scale on your farm! A hanging scale can be a great tool when not using a TMR. Accurately feeding your animals and following your ration can be very beneficial and reduce the risk of incorrectly feeding your animals. You should weigh feed amounts at least once per month to measure accuracy.

Take feed samples regularly. Forages can vary greatly in moisture and quality. Haylage, corn silage, and high moisture shell corn should be sampled at least once per month or more depending on the size of your herd and feeding rate. Sampling often will help reduce the risk of ration error and keep your herd on a balanced ration.

of problematic body condition gains or loses.

Feedstuff Bio-Availability Compromised: Poor Forage Digestibility, moldy forages, heating in the bunk.

Nutrient Blockers In The Diet: Clays, charcoals, humates, diatomaceous earth, mycotoxins, excessive nutrients (sulfur, sodium, iron, sulfates), and Stress

Insufficient Water Availability: Poor access, dirty waterers.

Body Condition: Over Weight: Body score of 4 or more (does not apply to dual purpose breeds), under weight: body score of 3.5 or less, gaining or losing body condition during the dry period.

Feeding Routine and Feed Bunk Management: Empty bunk syndrome, feeding to the last cob, feed not regularly pushed up, irregular feeding intervals.

Stress: Environmental stress: heat stress, cold stress, insect stress (flies, mosquitoes).

Health Threats: Mycotoxins; Other toxins: nitrates, sulfur, toxic plants, poor grouping practices (with sick animals, overcrowding).

Can Dry Cows Recover During The Dry Period To Avoid Transition Problems?

Recovery for dry cows from a ‘ding’ during the dry period is always possible. However, recovery and lack of negative biological memory is going to depend on the severity of the challenge and length of time of exposure. There are a few general dry cow principles that I have found more often than not to be true.

1. If a group of dry cows are ‘dinged’ sufficiently during the dry period, even if it is for one day, then the whole group of dry cows should now be classified as high risk cows for a problematic transition period and should be handled in a manner to help off-set potential problems. In other words, be proactive. These challenged (‘dinged’) dry cows should get extra care and automatically be given preventative amendments for various metabolic disorders, such as ketosis, milk fever and off-feed. This could be called a Level Two protocol for higher

risk dry cows which provides management and nutrition that is over and above normal transition cow protocol.

2. Use a calendar to mark the freshening date that the last dry cow in the ‘dinged’ group will have so you know how long to keep the Level Two transition protocol going.
3. For effective transition cow protocol options see pages 15 through 22 in the 2011 Crystal Creek catalog and then call us at Crystal Creek to discuss the best option for your particular situation.

Dry cows are sensitive, complex and vulnerable creatures that will biologically remember how they are treated. It is always good for a farmer’s bottom-line if the dry cows approach freshening with positive memories. A heightened awareness of the challenges dry cows face is the key first step towards solving and preventing many problems. Be pro- active and identify higher risk dry cows. Providing the extra support they need in a timely manner will keep profit draining problems to a minimum or possibly even eliminate them.

Dan Leiterman, President and CEO of Crystal Creek, Inc., is a dairy nutritionist and a manufacturer of nutraceuticals and natural livestock supplements (www.crystalcreeknatural.com). Dan has 37 years experience in the livestock industry covering dairy nutrition, calves and animal health. You can reach Dan by calling 888-376-6777, or emailing him at: dan@crystalcreeknatural.com.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

New England Farmers Are the 99%

By Annie Cheatham, Executive Director, New England Farmers Union

We followed the Occupy Wall Street story last fall. Though we didn't pitch a tent in any city park, we know that agriculture in New England is not part of the 1%. The 1% are the agribusiness conglomerates. They don't till our rocky soils or haul trainloads of grain, sugar, cotton or rice across our mountains. They don't have small, organic dairy herds that graze our rocky slopes. They are the 1% who benefit most from government programs. They are the 1% with the most money for lobbyists and advertising. They are the 1% that says, "Agriculture is big business. We have to feed the world." How can we occupy our seat at this national table? If New England farmers and their supporters make up 99%, how do we become part of the conversation, instead of being observers on the outside?

Hundreds of thousands of people care about New England agriculture and want it to thrive. They are ready for a talk about direct marketing, agricultural practices, conservation activities, school lunch programs and the price of milk. New England Farmers Union (NEFU) is facilitating a dialogue between these individuals and policymakers. In September, 10 NEFU members spent three days in Washington, D.C., participating in the National Farmers Union's legislative fly-in. NEFU members, along with Farmers Union members from around the country, met with members of Congress and the Obama administration and shared first-hand accounts of why it is important to have policies that support and protect small farms and fishing operations.

The NEFU members who participated — both farmers and food activists — visited 38 House and Senate offices of New England and New York Congressional members. They spoke directly with 10 senators and representatives. At every stop they talked with lawmakers about policies having to do with dairy pricing and regulations, conservation and energy programs, specialty crops, and rural development. They asked members of Congress to preserve the "regional equity" provisions in conservation programs, since without those provisions New England states' allocation of funds will decline precipitously.

In addition to educating lawmakers about specific policy, our members shared their stories. They offered perspectives that they have learned from farming, and suggested how federal policies could be friendlier to New England conditions and markets.

Here's how Tim Wennrich of Meadowstone Farm in Bethlehem,

N.H., summarized his reason for participating: "Small farms are becoming increasingly important and are being creative in pushing farming technology. In a political atmosphere supportive of big agriculture, small farms could use a little more voice and a little more support. Vision is not our problem. Small, local farms are creating a food economy. Politicians always talk about creating jobs, but we farmers are doing it. This is an economy that can support itself. We just need a boost in creating infrastructure to keep it going."

Nothing beats personal connections these days. In this era where information is flowing ever-more quickly, we still need to talk to each other, tell our stories, and write policies that have real people in mind. At New England Farmers Union, we believe strong personal relationships are crucial to building a robust regional food economy. We know from experience that members of Congress listen when they hear from farmers and constituents who are affected by laws made in Washington. Lawmakers hear from paid lobbyists every day. Personal accounts from New England farmers, fishermen, nurserymen, orchardists and passionate eaters bring the issues home.

Help us increase our voice in Washington. As you reflect on the blessings of agriculture at this turning of the new year, imagine what it would be like if we had a whole busload of farmers and food activists going to Washington this spring — just in time for Farm Bill debates. NEFU can underwrite travel expenses for farmers with your help. Donate today to our Send a Farmer to Washington campaign through our website (<http://newenglandfarmersunion.org/sendafarmercc.html>). And help us occupy our seat at the table as we help write the 2012 Farm Bill!

Here's to a healthy New Year from all of us at New England Farmers Union! May your seasonal celebrations be full of good, regionally grown and processed food, and may your farms prosper in the year ahead. ♦

Annie Cheatham, Executive Director of New England Farmers Union, was most recently President of NEFU (2009-2011). Previous to NEFU, she was Executive Director of CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture) in western Massachusetts. She grew up in rural North Carolina and now lives in Conway, MA, where she and her partner have an extensive garden for year round consumption.

**“We were surprised by the results.
We maintain our tank SCC down at 80-100,000 by spraying every
fresh udder for 4 to 5 days.”**

— Alan Mesman



MESMAN FARM, Mt. Vernon, Washington
 Alan and Vickie Mesman and son Ben and daughter Samantha
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 Milking 140 cows with RHA 19,000 lbs (2x)
 SCC: Before — 140-170,000 After — 80-100,000

The Mesman family (l-r) Alan, Ben, Vickie and Samantha.

“We were surprised by our results with Udder Comfort™. We used the new yellow spray, which has a natural coloring. Our SCC had been running 140-170,000, we could not believe how squirting this spray on the outside of the udder would cut our somatic cell count down by 70,000. But it worked. It softens the udder, which relaxes the cow. This helps with edema and irritation when they come fresh,” says Alan Mesman. He and his wife Vickie and son Ben and daughter Sammy milk 140 cows at their Certified Organic dairy near Mt. Vernon, Washington.

“At first we sprayed Udder Comfort on the whole udder of 39 identified cows (out of 140 milking). As a result, the tank SCC dropped down to 80,000. This boosted our quality premium another 29 cents.

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COMMENTARY

From City to Farm

continued from page 9

milk content is the same 100 lbs. It is the purchasing power of the dollar. The dollar is more worthless today than it was in year 2000. In fact, it buys over 78% less than it did in year 2000. This seems to be called monetary Inflation, or someone has printed too many dollars with nothing to back the dollars like a solid commodity as gold.

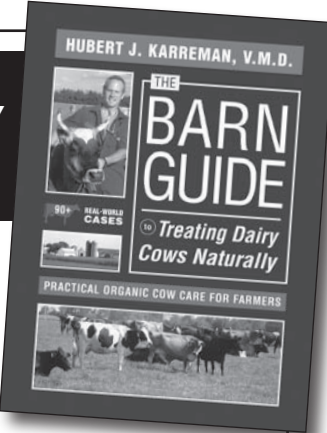
Well, you can use the same conversion on any farm commodity and see the unfairness in our current currency. It's not just the farmer that is at a disadvantage. Everyone who did not receive a 3 times increase in their wage since year 2000 has lost over 78% of the buying power for each dollar they receive.

The same conversion works for organic farms also. In year 2000, organic milk was around \$17.50 CWT base price. Today the same milk costs about \$22.00 to \$23.00 CWT base price. To keep up with gold and equal purchasing power of the dollar, the price of organic milk should be close to \$85.00 CWT.

Yes, we would all love to see these prices today, but just ten years ago we were receiving them based on a gold conversion. Our monetary value is the responsibility of our government. They

Year	Average milk price CWT NFO	Gold price per ounce approx.	Percent of Milk per CWT to Gold [milk cwt/gold oz.]
1962	\$3.11	\$35.23	8.8%
1965	\$3.27	\$35.12	9.3%
1970	\$4.66	\$35.94	12.0%
1975	\$7.62	\$161.02	4.73%
1980	\$11.88	\$612.56	1.9%
1985	\$11.48	\$317.26	3.6%
1990	\$12.21	\$383.51	3.2%
1995	\$11.83	\$384.17	3.07%
2000	\$ 9.74	\$ 280	3.4%
2001	\$ 13.10	\$ 270	4.85%
2002	\$ 10.42	\$ 300	3.47%
2003	\$ 11.42	\$ 350	3.26%
2004	\$ 15.39	\$ 400	3.84%
2005	\$ 14.05	\$ 425	3.30%
2006	\$ 11.89	\$ 550	2.16%
2007	\$ 18.04	\$ 700	2.57%
2008	\$ 17.44	\$ 800	2.1%
2009	\$ 11.36	\$ 900	1.26%
2010	\$ 16.55	\$ 1360.20	1.22%
2011	\$ 17.12	\$ 1632.00	1.04%

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by Hubert J. Karreman, V.M.D.




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need to increase the value of the dollar or we need to find another worthy medium of exchange for our goods.

As members of NFO, we need to bargain collectively. Can farmers unite together? Will they? We want to trust the government. The government's responsibility is to make sure that our dollar is worth using and our responsibility is to feed our families, friends and neighbors.

Dave Andersen

dndfarm@arvig.net

A farmer with a calculator

12/10/2012

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

eOrganic Dairy: A Year in Review and What's on Tap for 2012

by Debra Heleba, eOrganic Dairy Team Coordinator

Over the past a couple of years, you may have heard about eOrganic. It's an online community of more than 700 ag service providers and farmers who are providing science-, experience-, and regulation-based certified organic information on the web at http://www.extension.org/organic_production. Our eOrganic Dairy Team is led by Drs. Heather Darby (University of Vermont Extension) and Cindy Daley (California State University—Chico). More than 60 farmers, agronomists, veterinarians, grazing and certification specialists, animal scientists, and other professionals are working together to publish peer-reviewed articles, videos, and webinars on a range of organic dairy topics.

In late 2010, the team received a multi-year USDA grant to continue our work. The grant is also helping us create two online courses and what we are calling “regional learning hubs,” a way to blend online presentations with in-person audiences around the U.S. We are excited about the hubs because they can: 1) provide a gathering place for farmers and service providers to view webinars together as co-learners; 2) offer a way for farmers who do not have high-speed Internet to access the information; 3) provide local support groups; and 4) encourage folks to develop or adapt the information learned to their particular local conditions.

We were able to test our regional learning hub idea at the January 2011 Vermont Organic Dairy Producers Conference—we “webinar-ed” in Kathy Soder who, due to winter weather, was unable to travel to Vermont but was still able to give both of her presentations to our farmer attendees. We also traveled to NOFA-NY's organic dairy and field crop conference in November to broadcast live Heather and Cindy's “Soils for Healthy Organic Dairy Farms” presentation to virtual audience, as well as record the rest of the field crop presentations as an online conference proceedings. Check them out at: <http://www.nofanyc.org/dairyconference>. We are eager to offer more regional learning hubs in the new year—if you are interested in organizing one in your area, please let me know.

During 2011, we published several articles and videos related to the Pasture Rule: www.extension.org/pages/59498/access-to-pasture-rule. We videotaped farmer Kevin Jahnke as well as Drs. Guy Jodarski and Hue Karreman (thanks to MOSES Harriet Behar, and UVM's Amanda Gervais!)—stay tuned for those completed videos! We also offered the following webinars—you may view the recordings on the eOrganic website: www.extension.org/pages/25242/webinars-by-eorganic or eOrganic's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/eOrganic

- Shades of Green Dairy Farm Calculator, with Charles Benbrook, The Organic Center.
- Using Small Grains as Forages on Your Organic Dairy, with Heather Darby, University of Vermont Extension.
- Fly Management in the Organic Dairy Pasture, with Donald Rutz and J. Keith Waldron, NYS IPM Program, Cornell Cooperative Extension

- Stockpiling Forages to Extend the Grazing Season on Your Organic Dairy, with Laura Paine, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer.

We are excited to offer more webinars in the new year! If you have a particular topic and/or speaker of interest to you, please let me know. Look for webinar and other program announcements—including the debut of our first online course later in 2012—in NODPA News and/or on the ODairy listserv.

Debra Heleba is the eOrganic Dairy Team Coordinator. You can contact Debra by mail, phone or email:

Jeffords Hall, 63 Carrigan Drive, Burlington, Vermont 05405, Email: debra.heleba@uvm.edu, Phone: 802.656.4046.



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

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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.

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NET UPDATE

Recent ODairy Discussions

By Liz Bawden, Organic Dairy Producer,
NODPA President

Last month, several producers discussed the current hay prices and the best strategy for feeding purchased hay. One producer said that good quality dairy hay was \$300/ton. It was suggested that farmers who had to purchase some feed to augment their low to medium quality feed were better off to buy a better hay at the higher price so they could feed it on top of their lower quality feed and allow sorting by the cows. The practice of sweeping the hay up to the cows also gets them to eat the fine bits of the leaves, usually the best part. The coarse, refused hay can then be scraped down to feed animals with lower nutritional needs or used as bedding.

The high cost of purchased hay has some producers in a corner. When grain prices are high, farmers often feed less grain, and feed more hay. This year with high hay prices, there is no clear option. It was suggested that buying feed to keep extra cows will not pay this year. One producer calculated that under current conditions, the cost of production for 100 pounds of milk is \$28.75; another calculated his feed cost at \$20.33 per cwt.

There was also some discussion on farms that sell raw milk. Two producers reported that their insurance companies are going to require an amendment to their farm policy removing any liability for the sale of raw milk.

Things were relatively quiet on the list until the last two weeks of December when a discussion of feed prices led to some very serious talk of financial hardship. Several farmers had begun the year-end accounting, and realized how seriously they had fallen behind. Some farmers were thankful that "Gee, it's not just me." Some farmers were angry that processors had not moved to adjust the pay price in a meaningful way sooner. And others shared their pain as they look at the very real possibility of exiting the organic dairy industry. ♦



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Cost: Display-ready ads are \$100 per month.

Interested in one or both of these opportunities? For more information, contact Lisa McCrory, NODPA News and Web Editor, at:

Email: Lmccrory@hughes.net

Phone: 802-234-5524

Go to the following web page for more information:

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

Subscribing to ODairy:

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

To sign up for the ODairy listserv, go to:

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

Calendar

January 28, 2012

4th Annual Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference
Grayling High School, Grayling, MI

Growing a Food and Farm Legacy. Keynote will be a tribute presentation of Chris Bedford's last film "Getting Real about Food and the Future" with commentary by Stephanie Mills. For more info: www.smallfarmconference.com, Email: northmichsmallfarmconf@gmail.com or 231-838-8093.

January 28-29, 2012

NOFA-NJ 2012 Winter Conference
Princeton University's Friend Cener

Keynote speakers: Shannon Hayes, the "Radical Homemaker" will kick off the conference with her talk 'The End of Consumerism', and Michael Schmidt, dairy farmer, raw milk "law breaker", and organic advocate will give the closing keynote, 'Got Raw Milk?'. To learn more or to register online, go to www.nofanj.org, or call NOFA-NJ at 908-371-1111.

February 1-4, 2012

PASA's 21st Annual Farming for the Future Conference
State College, PA

Conference offers 12 in-depth pre-conference tracks, a trade show, speakers, discussions, and more than 100 workshops, on topics including poultry, fruit and vegetables, livestock, and policy. For more info: <http://www.pasafarming.org/conference2012/index.cfm> or phone: 814-349-9856.

February 1-4, 2012

EcoFarm Conference 2012
Asilomar State Beach and Conference Grounds
Pacific Grove, CA,

With over 60 workshops featuring prominent speakers on the latest advances in agricultural techniques, marketing strategies, research and other important food system issues, along with organic meals and lively entertainment. For more info: 831-763-2111, info@eco-farm.org

February 9-11, 2012

Soil and Nutrition: An Education and Coalition-Building Conference
First Churches, 129 Main St, Northampton, MA

Featuring leading thinkers and practitioners of building healthy soils, this conference aims to grow the movement for enhancing soil fertility as a basis for the long-term ecological and economic sustainability of farming, the environment, and our society as a whole. Contact Ben Grosscup, ben.grosscup@nofamass.org, 413-658-5374, or go to: www.nofamass.org/seminars/winterseminar.php.

February 11-13, 2012

NOFA Vermont Winter Conference
University of Vermont, Burlington, VT

Featuring keynote speakers Vern Grubinger and Wendy Johnson. With over 70 workshops in the works, there's sure to be something for everyone! For more information go to www.nofavt.org or call 802-434-4122.

February 16-17, 2012

Tainio 22nd Annual BioAg Symposium
Historic Davenport Hotel, Spokane, WA

Learn from four of America's leading soil biology, plant nutrition, and GMO experts all under one roof. For more information: 509-747-5471, www.tainio.com

February 21, 2012

Vermont Organic Dairy Producer Conference
Red School House, VT Technical College, Randolph Ctr, VT

Organized by the University of Vermont (UVM) Extension's Northwest Crops and Soils Program and NOFA-Vermont's Organic Dairy and Livestock Technical Assistance Program, John Bansen as Keynote; conference will focus on grazing strategies, innovative research results and raising organic calves. For more information or to register, contact: Heather Darby or Debra Heleba at 802-656-4046, or go to www.uvm.edu/extension/agriculture/?Page=organicdairy.html to download the brochure.

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

Join as a Business Member and receive an additional 5% off all advertising. To learn more about Business memberships and the Web Business Directory, go to www.nodpa.com/directory.shtml or contact Lisa McCrory.

Ad rates and sizes listed below.

Deadline for advertising in the
March, 2012 issue is February 15, 2012.

Full Page Ad (7.5" W x 10.25" H) = \$500

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1/4 Page Ad (3.5" W x 4.75" H) = \$145

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Classified Ads: Free to Northeast organic farmers. All others \$20 for the first 30 words; \$.20 per word over 30

For advertising information call Lisa McCrory:
802-234-5524 or email Lmccrory@hughes.net

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

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Feed & Pay Price

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and 2011, \$3.02. Minneapolis has the highest annual average price for 2010, \$4.52, and 2011, \$4.55. The overall 2011 average price for the 30 cities combined, \$3.75, is 1 cent lower than the combined average for 2010.

Looking at pricing from a different perspective, the Nationally Advertised Price Comparison (the national weighted average advertised price for organic milk) half gallons increased 51 cents to \$3.62 in 2011. The reason for the average price increase was the increase on the low end of the range. The low end of the price range increased 69 cents to \$3.19, while the upper end of the price range was unchanged at \$4.59.

Organic grain and feed price remains high with no significant changes in price since November 2011. Current market price for organic dry shelled corn is between \$500-525 / ton and organic raw soybeans are between \$21-23/bushel. Second cut hay is selling for around \$200-250 /ton and high quality alfalfa hay at \$450/ton at the farm. ♦

Year	12% CP Grain	16% CP Grain	18% CP Grain
2005	\$310	\$330	\$349
2006	\$350	\$380	\$395
2007	\$360	\$393	\$412
2008	\$490	\$565	\$598
2009	\$540	\$585	\$620
2010	\$460	\$480	\$509
2011	\$650	\$700	\$750
% increase 2005-08	58%	71%	71%
% increase 2005-09	74%	77%	77%
% increase 2010-11	41%	46%	47%

Courtesy of Green Mountain Feeds and University of Vermont

New Advertising Opportunities With NODPA:

See Page 35 for more details.



Don't forget to sign the petition found on page 21!

Classified Ads

Feed & Bedding

Certified Organic (NOFA-NY) CLOVER SEED and TIMOTHY SEED ready for frost seeding and/or spring planting. Cleaned and bagged on farm. Contact Jeff @ 607-566-8477 or Mitchellorganics@hotmail.com

Certified organic dry round bales, unwrapped, approximately 550# and stored inside. Cost is \$40/bale at the barn. Located in Barnard, VT. Contact Joe Ladouceur, Email: ladouceurlj@aol.com, Phone: 802-763-7454.

Approximately 15 big round bales of 2010 organic rye straw for sale, net wrapped, \$60/bale, easiest use is with a big bale chopper because of the long stems of the straw. We don't have one so the ones we used last year were challenging to break apart by hand with a fork. They were stored outside in a row last winter, but we had room to put them under cover this summer, after a long dry spell, so they are dry throughout. Kathie, Twin Oaks Dairy LLC, Truxton, NY 13158, Phone: 607/842-6631

For Sale 4x5 bales baleage for sale in Easton NY. 1st cut mixed grass hay with some clover. Certified by NOFA-NY. Good heavy bales individually wrapped with no holes. \$40 bale at the farm. E-mail me or call 518-692-9007 with any questions. Tammy Thomas, Thomas Organic Dairy.

Six large (1700#) rectangle bales of alfalfa for sale. RFQ of 320 and RFV of 276; Protein is 24%, TDN is 78. Full analysis is available. Certified by Organic Certifiers of Ventura CA. Hay is located in Charlotte, NC. e-mail davis05@ctc.net or call, 704-984-6488. Hay is priced at \$420.00 a bale.

Wrapped round 4x4 silage bales for sale. Feed is baled with Welger RP200 fixed-chamber balers. Feed is wrapped and stacked immediately after being baled. Bales are tied with net or string and triple wrapped. Forage tests average +/- 12%P +/- 58Mcal NEL. Perfect for heifers and beef cows. \$25/bale. Trucking available. Forage analysis and organic certification available if desired. Call Robbie @ 1-802-644-5138.

Real Estate

Farm For Sale: Colorado Certified Organic Raw Milk Grazing Dairy: Certified organic dairy farm. Grade A milking facility. Licensed cheese plant. Double six parlor. 120 head freestall barn plus open lots. Dairy currently has 1000 raw milk cow share members, with established beef and egg market. Superb farmers' market access. Colorado has a cow share law allowing production of raw milk for share members. 400 certified organic leased acres, 55 acres owned. 100 head Brown Swiss and Tarentaise cross, grass-fed dairy cattle and young stock available. All machinery available. Contact Arden @ Windsor Dairy for more information: 970-481-8314 or ajndvm@aol.com

Other:

PROTECT YOUR PLASTIC! Secure Covers and Bag Armour™, the tire-less way to protect your valuable silage and grain plastic from hail, wind, and animal damage. Bag Man, 1-800-796-5333

Quatro and Aqua Terra 100% natural rubber boots. All day comfort and a secure step! Sized up to US 16. Bag Man, 1-800-796-5333

COMMENTARY

Bullying & The NOSB

continued from page 19

the offerings of organically labeled products and push for the inclusion of synthetic processing aids and ingredients so more and more conventional processed foods would have an organic equivalent.

No Clear Line

There is a healthy tension between those who do not want any synthetics what-so-ever in organic products and those that feel that if the FDA has allowed a certain synthetic in conventional food (for instance, an artificial sweetener), then it should be considered for allowance in organic. The dance between these two extremes plays out at every National Organic Standards Board meeting, with the decisions made on materials and production methods somewhere in between allowing nothing and allowing everything.

The NOSB discussions are typically civil and educational, with both sides doing their best to bring forward expert testimony that makes the best case for their position. Farmers often explain that a synthetic substance has no natural alternative and is necessary in order to produce a specific crop. Processors explain how a specific synthetic would open the market for a product that has not been in the organic marketplace, and would encourage the growth of more raw organic agricultural crops. Information provided by all who have a stake in the outcome allows us to make decisions on materials and production practices that build a trusted organic label.

The purpose of public testimony at the National Organic Standards Board meeting is to influence the decision making of the board. It is understood that every person comes with their own point of view, and many have an economic stake in the outcome of the decision. I know that there will always be those that feel that their point of view is the only right way to see an issue, but I hope that everyone involved will learn to treat others with respect. In this way those with strong opinions won't become marginalized and shunned by the organic community.

Harriet Behar is a MOSES organic specialist, reach her at harriet@mosesorganic.org

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the MODPA President

Food for thought:

How are you dealing with the increased feed and or input costs?
Are you able to source the necessary inputs to keep your farm producing profitably?

Will the government programs help or hurt organic dairy producers?

How many new regulations or requirements will you have to deal with at the farm level in 2012?

How many more organic dairy farms will revert to conventional production in 2012 – are we growing or shrinking?

How many more conventional producers will start the transition to organic production?

Is organics providing enough incentive to continue organic production or to continue transition to organic production?

New European Union Standards come into effect on January 1, 2012 what impact will this have on the dairy pay price? The new standard requires a 3

month rolling average below 400,000 for somatic cell (scc) and a 2 month rolling average below 100,000 for standard plate count (spc). All producers will be impacted by this new standard as milk products and or raw milk is at times moved into markets requiring this. If any products are exported into Europe the new standard will apply. All processors will require this so that they have the flexibility to move their product into all markets.

Who will be picking up the tab for the necessary paperwork to document compliance with the new regulations?

Will quality premiums shrink as all milk will be required to meet these quality standards?

These are all valid questions many without easy answers. One thing is sure: Times are a changing. Organic feed is short as is the organic milk supply. It seems all processors are looking for milk. There is some talk of pay increases but for many it will be too little too late.

We as producers need to organize and price our production so that we have the ability to continue to produce it. Collective bargaining and supply control are both essential elements to ensure future profits for organic family farms.

Darlene Coehoorn, President

Rosendale, Wisconsin

Email: ddviewpoint@yahoo.com Phone: 920-921-5541

About MODPA

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

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

MODPA Board

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Shiloh, OH 44878
Phone and Fax: 419-895-1182

Become a Member of MODPA!

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Certified Organic Dairy? Yes No # of cows: _____

Transitioning: _____

I wish to support MODPA (check whatever applies):

___ By becoming a state rep or director.

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

___ By providing a donation to support the work of

MODPA. \$_____ enclosed.

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

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA)

c/o Ed Maltby
30 Keets Road
Deerfield, MA 01342

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CALENDAR

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February 23-25, 2012

MOSES Organic Farming Conference, La Crosse, WI

The Organic Farming Conference is an extraordinary, farmer-centered event with over 70 informative workshops, 150 exhibitors, locally-sourced organic food, live entertainment and inspirational keynote speakers. For more information, go to: www.mosesorganic.org/conference.html, or call: 715-778-5775

Feb. 25, 2012

**Granite State Graziers 6th Annual Grazing Conference:
Restoring Grazing Lands, Holiday Inn, Main Street in Concord, NH**

Featuring Kathy Voth of Livestock for Landscapes and Brett J. Chedzoy of Cornell University Cooperative Extension. For more information, contact Bill Foshier at news@grazenh.com or 603-399-9975. Check our website <http://www.grazenh.com>

March 6, 2012: 4th N.H. Statewide Grazing Conference

University of New Hampshire, Manchester, NH

This year's theme, 'Growing Greener Pastures' will focus on using leased land for grazing and building soils to increase herd health. Greg Judy, author of "No Risk Ranching" and "Comeback Farm", will discuss his success with high-density grazing, and custom grazing on leased land, while Doug Gunnick, author of "Sustainable Farming Guide book", will guide folks through the fundamentals of growing pastures with animal nutrition and health in mind. For more info, call 603-796-2151. ♦



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