NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

MAY 2012 Volume 12, Issue 3 WWW.NODPA.COM

INSIDE THIS ISSUE: Organic Industry News

Organic Production

Commentary

Research/Education

Net Update

Member Info

Featured Farm: Grazing Acres Farm, Chetek, WI

Vibrant Grass-Based, No Grain Organic Dairy

By Lisa McCrory, NODPA News Editor

With almost 20 years of farming and investing resources into their landbase, grass-based dairy genetics, and growing a competent workforce, Cheyenne and Katy Christianson have made a name for themselves in the organic dairy community. A skill that Cheyenne feels has contributed to their success is their fluid approach to farming; he is always watching the little details on his farm, from observing his cows, to walking and evaluating his pastures, to monitoring the feed quality of his forages. Their farm has grown from a nutrient-poor conventionally managed farm to a vibrant biological system that is practically self-sufficient, needing only a little seed and fertilizer for their forage system. The Christiansons operate a grass-based, no-grain organic dairy consisting of 325 acres (280 is owned, 40 rented); 240 tillable acres are designated for pasture and hay with about 15 acres in 'wooded pasture.'

continued on page 24

OTA proposes legislative language for an Organic Check-off

Where a 'technical correction' is not what it seems. Why don't we trust producers enough to allow them to choose whether to invest their check-off money dollars in their own farm, their cooperative or organizations of their choice? Why do we need a complicated federal program to dictate how their check-off money is used?

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

In 2011, the Organic Trade Association (OTA) spent $50,000 on a feasibility study in Phase 1 of their plan for an Organic Check Off as part of a Federal Research and Promotion Program (FRPP). In January 2012, after approval from their Board, OTA launched Phase 2 of their plan. Phase 2 included plans to hold town hall meetings across the country to help educate the organic community about their proposal and to gain reaction from stakeholders within the community before reaching any final decisions on next steps (see page 9 of March 2012 NODPA News). In March 2012, on behalf of OTA, the DC-based Podesta Group lobbied Senators in Congress to sponsor legislation that would provide a technical correction to past regulation and also allow for the formation of an organic check-off program. In April 2012

continued on page 20

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From The NODPA President

Some of you have your herds out grazing spring pastures by now. Here in northern New York there is some grass, but it is still too cold to get much growth. We will hold them back from the grazing rotation for a bit yet. The girls are happy to get a few mouthfulls in the field where the bales are fed. We always feel a sense of relief when we can put them out to pasture. Once the fences are repaired and the water lines and tanks working, it is less work every day, and gives us a bit of a break before the first baleage needs to be harvested.

This spring season feels different to me somehow. "Cautious" describes the mood of the organic farmers I have talked with most recently (OK, some are downright fearful). But most are concerned with the bottom line as we have all seen a sharp narrowing of our margins. More farms are looking at diversifying their operation instead of planning to grow the milking herd. It seems to be generally accepted that expanding to milk more cows these days does not pencil out. (It reminds me of the old economic joke about the guy who is losing money selling his watermelons at $1 each. Of course the punch line is he figures that he just needs a bigger truck!) Especially for those who must purchase some or all their feed, adding more cows may just not help the bottom line. The same is true for farms that produce more feed than they can use -- there is more profit in just selling the extra forage and grain than if they used that feed to put through their own cows.

Farms are diversifying in many ways, depending on their land resources, skills, and family interests. We can look to our neighbors for ideas and to our local markets for niches to fill. I wish you all a bountiful spring pasturing season.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the NODPA Desk, May 2012

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Who would have thought two months ago that we would still need a fire in the evening in early May? The weather in 2012 has definitely been unpredictable in the Northeast, ruining the maple syrup season and teasing us about the possibility of early grazing then slamming us back into snow and frost that will affect the fruit growers badly.

What has been very predictable are the continuing high inputs for organic dairy producers and the increasing strain on cash flow as producers struggle to pay feed bills. With more producers on COD with grain companies, farmers are selling cows and heifers to take advantage of the high cull cow prices and then have cash available to pay bills. There are reports of cows starting the grazing season in poor condition, with the consequences that will be felt both on their production and breeding schedule. Producers are looking to diversify as the prospects for organic dairy profitability get more distant. Key decisions are being made whether to milk the same number of cows or to grow feed for sale. Growing organic feed for sale wins every time. With a farmgate price in the low $30 per cwt, producers across the country agree that they need another $3 per cwt to bring them back to break even. Representatives from the three producer groups (NODPA, MODPA and WODPA) continue to meet with processors to press home the request for more planned increases in pay price in order to plan for the fall. Unfortunately, the message coming back is not hopeful for any further increases, although there seems to be a commitment to not lower base price or the Market Adjustment Premium (MAP).

The first phase of the 2012 Farm Bill started with the release of the Senate Agriculture Committee version of the Bill last week. Their Bill includes a $15 million per year authorization for NOP which is a significant increase from their current operating budget and $5 million in mandatory funds was proposed to upgrade NOP's technology. Senator Leahy introduced an amendment to provide improved enforcement authority to NOP, including subpoena power and "stop sale" authority. Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) was included with $16 million a year in mandatory funding, a slight decrease on the $20 million received annually under the last Farm Bill. Organic Certification Cost Share was recommended at $11.5 million a year in mandatory funding which is significantly more than the $5.9 million provided annually in the last Farm Bill. Organic Data Initiative (ODI) was included at $5 million in one-time mandatory funding, same as in the last Farm Bill. The Senate Bill will be discussed on the Senate floor in the next month but we are still waiting for something from the House Agriculture Committee which then needs to be approved both in the House and then in a joint committee in order to have a final Farm Bill. Most observers do not expect a Farm Bill ready for the President's signature until 2013.

The NOSB will meet in New Mexico on May 25 and will consider draft guidance in evaluating Animal Welfare and the recommendations on the use of vaccines derived from GMO's. We hope that when the Board looks at these recommendations they will consider the realities of organic livestock farming which is a very uncertain business that is subject to many difficult problems from weather, economics, outside contamination, excessive paperwork and many state and federal regulations. The current "animal welfare standards" being used in the United States were written in response to the problems relating to animal welfare found on some nonorganic, and many times, factory style farms. To try to use the same tools and measures designed for a completely different system does disservice to both these standards and to the organic farmers that would need to implement them. By trying to stuff the round organic farmer, into the square hole of judging animal welfare by a number scoring system, we ignore the important fact that managing the farm as a whole system is a foundational concept of organic livestock farming.

The use of GMO vaccines as a preventative measure for organic livestock has been bouncing back and forth between the NOP and NOSB for the last five years, with certifiers interpreting the regulations in many different ways. At this time, the regulations are clear that vaccines derived from GMO's are not allowed. What we don't want coming out of this NOSB is a headline that "National Organic Board Recommends Allowance of GMO Vaccines for Organic Livestock - GMO-treated meat, milk, and eggs could be sold as "organic." We already had that from the Office of Inspector General's report on GMO's in organic feed. We do need vaccines to deal with emergencies, whether they are GMO based or not, and not lose certification. There is already a provision in regulations for emergency treatments that can be further defined for use of non-approved vaccines. We may not need GMO vaccines for regular production practices that are the key to preventative care for livestock. We don't always know which vaccines are or are not derived from GMO's so in many cases we don't know what choices we have. What livestock producers need is a list of allowed vaccines from which to choose, and consistent implementation of the regulations by inspectors and certifiers.

Over the next months we will be asked by the Organic Trade Association (OTA) to consider an organic check-off program. In this issue of the NODPA News we consider some of the baseline questions. The organic community is very diverse and any process needs to appreciate the uniqueness of the community. When the National Organic Coalition sought input for a National Organic Action Plan it had many in-person meetings over a 2 year period. If OTA really wants to gather opinion, they should use this model rather than a series of webinars at a time of year when most farmers are outside working the land. ◆

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Managing For High Quality Forages, Part 2: The Plant

Look at the plants you are growing and be sure that they fit your management goals

By Gary Zimmer

As I wrote in part one of this series (in the March NODPA Newsletter) on grazing dairy cows, the soil is where it starts but also where there are many limits on production. As soils change, so do plants. This second article, on the plants, will address how to plant pastures, which plants to grow, and how to manage them.

So what makes an ideal pasture?

1. Thick, nutrient rich and diverse
2. Very palatable, something the cows can overeat on
3. Very digestible—this has to do with species, plant size and weather
4. Has a very good balance between protein and energy
5. Has a mineral balance, not only for cow health but for plant health
6. Fits the climate in your area
7. Tolerates the cattle you're grazing

In late fall, cows grazing on turnips

How to plant

You need to start with soil preparation before deciding what seed to put in the ground. In my previous article on soils, I talked about applying a soil corrective on an established pasture. It's difficult to get nutrients into the soil, not just lying on top of the ground. So before leaving a field in long term pasture, get the soil corrections done first. I like my calcium applications worked into the top few inches so I have a good supply in the area where the seed starts. Choosing the right calcium source for your situation is a major factor in successfully growing good forage plants.

After I have the ideal soil conditions to put the seed in, I need to sow enough seed, and use methods of planting so that my final result is a thick, dense stand like a perfect lawn. Now, how you get that done may vary, but the purpose is threefold: weed control, the cow getting full bites (she is only going to take so many bites in a day), and high yields under proper management. I use a Brillion seeder with a legume and a grass seed box and bulk spread the seed. I also make sure the seed is at the proper planting depth and gets rolled firmly. Accomplishing this is essential to establishing quality pastures. There is no sense in buying expensive seed, then doing all the work, and not getting a perfect, lush stand. Make sure you can achieve this.

What to plant

Your next big decision is deciding what to plant. It's hard to pick out one plant that fills the need for an ideal pasture. Where the climate is ideal, the one that comes closest in my experience in the world is rye. A lot of milk can be produced on rye, especially when you apply enough nitrogen to establish a lush stand, and feed your cows a bale of hay for effective fiber and a grain mix with added minerals.

Now, if I could add a little clover to the rye, I wouldn't need to apply all that nitrogen to the soil, and the mineral balance for the cows would improve, too. Rye certainly has its problems in our area, like coping with cold winters and hot, dry summers, and the need for intensive management. On our farm, we annually no-till in more rye seed later in the growing season-- these are on milk pastures rotated and intensely managed.

Rye, and better yet rye with clover, is great for the milk cow. In our climate it is best in early season and again late season.

Other dependable standbys would be fescues and orchard grass. With newer genetics, these are improved on time of maturity, digestibility, palatability and reduced endophyte problems in the fescue. Here on our Wisconsin farm, the tall soft fescues seem to do the best, even in our alfalfa forage mixes. My observation of what works best in a pasture is two-thirds grasses and one-third legumes with other plants like chicory or plantain added in at a low percentage. Remember, the soil likes diversity and the cow likes it too. What you see in a pasture is what's being managed for: stage of growth at grazing, the rotation, the fertility of the soil and the fertilizers used all have an effect.

Another consideration when choosing pasture plants is the group of cattle you are feeding. Dry cows, heifers, and milk cows certainly aren't all fed the same. Livestock have principles to live by just as plants and people do. The word balance is always there. What you supplement your animals with when they are grazing is what's missing from the pasture. Energy, minerals and effective fiber are things that always seem to need to be dealt with (Part three, in the next issue, will deal with those needs.)

Managing pastures

Once the pasture is established, we need to manage it. What stage do we graze? This could be the topic for another whole book! Most realistic, depending again on species, is grazing plants at maybe a foot tall. Shorter is too extreme for the health of the soil and the cow, taller is too low in digestibility and palatability. Cows don't like eating mature, headed out pastures, even if they're high in Brix. Rye grasses certainly do better at the middle grazing height of about 8 inches.

For adding fertilizer to established pastures on organic farms, a good nitrogen source is chicken manure, but you do need to be careful. If the soil is already high in calcium and phosphorus, you may be getting an excess by adding chicken manure. If there is an excess of calcium and phosphorus when putting on the manure for nitrogen, the program can't be sustained long-term. Remember, the minerals in the soil are going to determine which plants are dominant on your pastures. Nitrogen favors grasses while calcium and phosphorus favors legumes. On our farm, calcium levels are high and legumes are dominant. That means I have to adjust my seeding rates when I'm planting pastures to make sure I can get enough grasses. Just a few pounds of legume seeds go a long way on our farm.

When managing pastures, my vote is to start by getting the basics right with the soil, choosing the right species for your situation, and establishing a good stand. It's then that you can test and experiment with adding other things. For example, you could try

continued on page 28

COMMENTARY

Open Letter: Low Milk Prices Driving Producers to the Ground

Cows losing production, condition, or leaving the farm for beef, says Ralph Caldwell

March 5, 2012

Horizon Organic threw us a bone last month that will take effect this month, with the addition of a couple dollars per hundredweight. We will start getting help in March, adding to a Market Adjustment Premium (MAP) that will end in the summer, instead of adding about $7.00/cwt to the base price that is badly needed. Probably Horizon wouldn't be able to sell to BJ's Wholesale store enough milk for the same inexpensive price to sell to the retail customer for $2.50 to $2.99/half gallon.

There are signs in several super markets in my area on the dairy case that say 'Due to shortage of organic milk, we run out every week because we didn't receive what we ordered, but that it will be straightened out by June'. The real reason they are running out is because the milk companies have paid less than the cost of production for several years and the Northeast is getting over a million pounds of milk per month less month after month, even though the dairy processors are signing up new farmers all the time. Boy, have the new farmers got an education coming. Part of the reason milk is down, is when you can't pay all of your bills at the end of the month, dairy cows go to beef. Because of this, cows that are slow breeders die to pay farmers' bills. Farmers are also running out of minerals and grain on occasion because they can't come up with money enough to pay the grain bill. By the way, a lot of grain is green instead of golden because it is alfalfa meal, which is 17% protein. If your grain is green and smells like hay, it is alfalfa and not corn and soybean meal, because of this, cows give less milk. However, alfalfa costs $300/ton instead of $1000/ton, but the energy is 65 therms instead of 100 and the cow tells the farmer that difference in the milk tank. The farmer may be fooled but the cow is not.

March 20, 2012

Attention Horizon Management:

You are driving your 'Producer Partners' into the ground deeper than they have ever been. When you don't buy grain for animals, including the milking herd sometimes, because you don't have money enough to pay the old grain bill, and you can't replace machinery that desperately needs to be replaced. This is going to affect feed quality, because old dead machinery breaks down when you need it.

You used to be industry leaders; now you have to be bought along dragging and kicking. This has been going on long enough so that your 'producer partners' are in the most distress

Informal Survey of Horizon Producers Reveals Economic Pain

Ralph Caldwell (organic dairy producer in Turner, Maine) made up a questionnaire that was passed out to Horizon Shippers (about 20 of them) at the Horizon annual meeting in Maine this past spring. Ninety percent of the farmers answered the questions on the questionnaire, and 81% responded to the questions in the following way:

1. Does someone in your family work off-farm to buy the groceries and clothes and get health insurance? YES
2. Do your family members and employees have health insurance with less than a $2500 deductible? NO
3. Did you cull more cows than usual in the last 24 months or sell more heifers to pay bills? YES
4. Do you have more milking age cows now than 2 years ago? NO
5. Did your family take 7 days or more vacation last year? NO
6. Do you have more debt and more over-30-day bills than 2 years ago? YES
7. Have you borrowed money or put bills on a credit in the last year because your milk check didn't cover necessary expenses such as grain, fuel, taxes, electricity, and groceries? YES
8. Do you seed down at least 10% of your farm each year to grow quality feed? NO

COMMENTARY

they have ever been.

You finally threw us a temporary bone after every one else had and many of your shippers (producers) were talking with Organic Valley about changing. $2.00/cwt is an insult when you have a $6.00-$8.00 shortage just to survive and the increase needs to be on the base price, not a bandaid. There are approximately 50 organic dairy farmers left in Maine and at one time there were 70. If you would straighten up, there could be 100 farms. However, you would have to make a commitment to allowing the farms to make a profit.

I feel comfortable saying you folks probably have hospitalization insurance. Most of your shippers don't because they think more of their animals than of themselves and the few that do have a deductible of $5,000 - $10,000 so they use their limited money to pay the light bill. The joke, however, is on the shippers because you added the $2.00, but you took away the $3.00, so we lost $1.00.

Maybe you even had a vacation with pay; I hope it was enjoyable. The farmer hasn't had the finances to get away for years because of negative income. It may be time the 'producer partners' took their problems to the consumer. I suspect they would be interested to know that we haven't had a 'break-even' price in several years and have been existing on the family woodlot and whatever they can pick up for outside work by family members and old depreciation.

I suspect if you went and looked at the cattle that your 'producer partners' are keeping you would find a lot of shamefully thin animals with no bedding to lie on and dung balls a-plenty.

In closing, I can get along nicely without a monthly newsletter, just send the money. And, if this letter hits a nerve, you might start paying a fair price. Grain is up by several hundred percent since you changed the base price and fuel has doubled.

And, if this aggravates you a lot, just send me a 30-day notice that you will do nicely without me and I will go away. If you take this offer, thank you in advance, because I have been trying to make this choice for several years.

Ralph Caldwell

Caldwell Farms

Turner, Maine

RESEARCH UPDATES

University of Minnesota Organic Dairy Research Update

By Brad Heins, Assistant Professor, Organic Dairy Management, University of Minnesota

Spring is almost here and soon the organic cows at the University of Minnesota's Organic Dairy will be turned loose on lush, green pastures. We are fortunate to have 450 acres of certified organic pasture for cows and heifers, thus spring flush is very stressful here at Morris trying to manage all of the pastures. We will cut some pastures for winter hay. Our team has been planning many research and extension activities for the upcoming year. Below are a few of the current research projects we are doing at the University of Minnesota. Results are preliminary, because the studies are ongoing. If you have any questions about the research studies, please contact Dr. Brad Heins at 320-589-1711 or hein0106@umn.edu

Effect of whole milk feeding duration with group fed calves on growth, health, and behavior of organic dairy calves.

Dairy replacement feeding and management systems have undergone major evolution in the last 25-30 years. As herd sizes increased, individual hutches were introduced to protect calves from contaminated and overcrowded environments. Recently higher levels of milk feeding are recommended to promote early growth, and now some farmers are adopting extended suckling until calves are weaned. Group calf rearing offers opportunities to reduce labor and to aid in socializing calves, but performance of group managed calves in enlarged hutches is not well documented. The maintenance of health and growth of organic dairy calves is very important in their first few months of life. As no organic milk replacers are available, whole milk from high somatic cell organic cows, as well as bulk tank milk, must be fed. The cost versus benefits of milk consumption and weaning age is very important and has not been researched with organic dairy calves. Therefore, our objective is to evaluate the growth, health, and most importantly, the economic performance of organic dairy calves fed once per day and weaned at different ages.

During the spring of 2011, Brad Heins and graduate student Elizabeth Bjorklund evaluated feeding group fed calves as part of a 2-year study. Calves were born from March to June 2011, and breed groups of calves were Holsteins (contemporary and 1964 genetics); crossbreds that included combinations of Holstein, Montbeliarde, and Swedish Red for high-input confinement

dairying, and crossbreds that included Holstein, Jersey, Swedish Red, and Normande for low-input dairying. Calves were fed in groups of 10, and groups were fed 1.5% of birth weight of 13% total solids organic milk once daily and weaned when the group consumption averaged 2.0 lb. of starter/calf/day. Calves were consuming about 11.5% of their birth weight in whole milk once a day. The average daily gain (lb.) for breed groups was: Holstein (1.59), 1964 Holstein (1.34), High-input crossbreds (1.49), and Low-input crossbreds (1.32). Average daily gain (lb.) was 1.15, 1.49, and 1.65 for the 30, 60, and 90-d weaning groups, respectively. Total costs (grain and organic milk) to weaning were $108.81 for 30-d, $167.68 for 60-d, and $275.79 for 90-d groups; however, the cost per pound of gain was higher for the 30-d group than the 60-d or 90-d groups. From our preliminary results, adequate gain can be achieved in low-input and organic dairy calves that were group fed once a day. Successful group feeding of organic dairy calves is enhanced with aggressive suckling during infancy and early consumption of high quality organic calf starter. This project is funded through the CERES Trust Graduate student grant program.

Organic dairy calves at the University of Minnesota

Effect of Growth, Meat Quality, and Profitability of Organically Raised Dairy-Beef Steers.

Scientific research on methods used to raise organic dairy-beef steers is lacking. This project will examine the growth, meat quality, consumer acceptability, and profitability of raising organic dairy-beef steers. Organically raised dairy-beef steers will be compared to conventionally-raised dairy steers; however, this is not the overarching goal of the research project, but an important one. We will evaluate growth rates, health incidence of steers, and use the available data to conduct an economic analysis for

continued on page 37

COMMENTARY

Open Letter to Governor Cuomo About Fracking

Dear Governor Cuomo,

You have said that the science of hyrofracking will determine whether or not it will go forward in NYS. If you truly mean that, why did you not include money in your budget to complete a health study of the potential health effects of hydrofracking? By completely ignoring the science of how hydrofracking relates to the health of people, you are putting the people of this State at unknown risk. With this omission, your assertion that this budget puts the people of the State first is disingenuous.

As a landowner of hundreds acres of farm and forest land, the development of shale gas extraction here in Cortland County could bring many riches to my family and me.

However, no amount of money can fully compensate for contamination of our groundwater, that of our neighbors, or that of our community. The groundwater in upstate NY is particularly susceptible to both surface spills and methane migration from gas drilling. In the 1970's, a salt brine lagoon of a DEC permitted gas well in the Cortland County Town of Harford spilled into a stream. That brine spill contaminated surface water, then groundwater, and then drinking water wells, over 3,000 feet away. Closing on 40 years later, that groundwater remains contaminated today.

Methane can and does leak into the groundwater, not only during the drilling process, but also from outside the well casings, because a perfect seal between the outside of the casing and the ground layers cannot be attained. Over 60% of the wells tested in a Canadian study were found to be leaking outside the casing. No matter how many extra layers of casing DEC requires, it will not stop this outside the casings leakage of methane.

No amount of money can compensate for ill health effects. Ask anyone who has a progressive, unknown, or untreatable illness. As my husband, who has Parkinsons, answers in a heartbeat, the choice is health, not money. There are far too many unanswered questions and a lack of in-depth study of what the

health effects will be of widespread shale gas drilling to not invoke the precautionary principle at this point in time. We don't really know, although there are many cases and mounting evidence from areas where shale gas extraction is in full swing that raise big red flags. First, we must do no harm. That can't happen by drilling first and researching later.

No amount of money can fully compensate when we leave thousands of abandoned wells, once they are no longer economical, that will leak methane into the air and groundwater, to negatively affect the lives of generations to come. Sooner or later all metal rusts and all concrete will fail.

No amount of money can fully compensate if we destabilize our foundation and trigger increased seismic activity and earthquakes.

Why be in a rush and risk our water, our air, our health, and the viability and purity of our foodshed, for an energy commodity that is currently in oversupply and at historic low prices, with much of the gas destined to be exported to foreign countries?

I would rather work for my living, work in a beautiful, unspoiled, green region that is noted for its pristine, abundant water, rather than be handed a series of checks, profiting off the death of organisms from 400 millions years ago, now turned to gas. Given today's drilling techniques, the risks are too great that profiting from that gas will jeopardize the health and well being of my family, my neighbors, the greater community, and generations to come.

Because the SGEIS does not take into account the unique geology that makes our groundwater easily prone to contamination; because the SGEIS contains no comprehensive analysis of the cumulative impacts of a full natural gas build out; because the SGEIS contains no assessment of potential health impacts; because the SGEIS contains no plan for the disposal of millions upon millions of gallons of hazardous flowback fluid; because the SGEIS contains no analysis of the costs and negative consequences to governments, to communities, to agriculture, to tourism, to recreation; because; after because; after because; the list continues on. The SGEIS is far from complete and does not ensure our protection. Governor Cuomo, you must open your eyes and realize that science has NOT established that hydrofracking can be done safely. To ensure the protection of the people of this State and that of future generations, hydrofracking must not go forward at this time.

Kathie Arnold
Twin Oaks Dairy LLC
3175 State Route 13
Truxton, NY 13158

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Fly Control And Pinkeye

By Jerry Brunetti

In articles I've written previously, I've discussed methods and strategies to reconcile challenges from the various families of fly genuses which affect productivity, health and comfort on the farm. This article will focus upon one potential unsavory outcome of fly persistence, namely pink eye, scientifically called *keratoconjunctivitis*.

Pink Eye is an infectious bacterial disease caused by the bacterium Moraxella bovis, which attacks the cornea, or the transparent layer of the eye which allows light to enter. This painful condition can affect all ages of stock, particularly calves up to one year old during their first season of grazing. The process begins when the Moraxella begins to burrow into the cornea forming a pit, or ulcer, which appears as a small white spot or ring upon the cornea surface. Initially, copious amounts of tears are produced, in order to wash away the infection, as well as delivering antibodies to the site. The eyelids may close to reduce the pain and protect the eyeball, especially from bright sunlight which has irritating ultraviolet rays. If the ulcer progresses, another immune summons begins, signaling a rapid growth of blood vessels across the eye, which appears as a red ring progressing inwards from the rim of the cornea toward the center. The eye may become totally red (pink eye) but there is still an opportunity for the eye to recover, especially if the herdsman intervenes prior to the bacterium perforating the cornea, causing the fluid in the anterior chamber of the eyeball to leak out. At this point, the eye may be lost.

There are natural treatments that can be made that are quite effective in containing the progression of pink eye, but timing is important and dedication to daily treatment is necessary. Begin by making a tea, utilizing approximately (1) oz (30 grams) each of the following of dried, or fresh herbs to (1) quart (approx. 1 liter) of water. Some herbs one can blend are:

- **Comfrey** (Symphytum): Contains allantoin, a cell proliferation stimulant for wounds. It also contains a lot of demulcent mucilage to soothe and coat damaged tissue.
- **Eyebright** (Euphrasia): is an excellent anti-inflammatory and astringent for all mucous membranes, and especially the eyes.
- **Goldenseal** (Hydrastis): is not only healing to mucous mem-

branes, but it has effective anti-microbial properties that are attributed to the alkaloids berberine and hydrastine.

- **St. John's Wort** (Hypericum): has anti-inflammatory, anti-microbial, astringent and analgesic compounds that speed the healing of wounds and minor burns.
- **Calendula:** also known as pot marigold, this plant is rich in terpenes that have demonstrated anti-bacterial, anti-viral, anti-fungal and anti-inflammatory activities. It's a great partner with comfrey to stimulate the regeneration of tissue.
- **Plantain** (Plantago): has valuable healing properties acting as a demulcent, anti-inflammatory, astringent and antimicrobial.

Ideally, after blending in a stainless steel pot, bring to a boil, then immediately remove from the stove and let steep overnight. Then filter the tea through a coffee filter or clean muslin cloth, add about 1oz.of boric acid per quart to preserve the infusion and then refrigerate in a spray bottle, to be used on an as needed bases. I would say the infusion has a shelf life of 1-2 weeks at least. Generously spraying this infusion into the affected eye daily, even several times daily for a week is a sound idea.

In addition to the botanical topical spray, I would strongly urge the stockman to give sub-cutaneous injections of the following "nutriceuticals": 10cc of Vitamin A, D, & E; 10cc of Mu-Se (selenium and vitamin E, available from your vet); 5cc of Multi-Min, an injectable containing selenium, copper, zinc and manganese; and 50cc of a colostrum whey serum. All of these would be given once, maybe twice, 20 days apart.

Prevention is obviously the preferred route to travel, and of course fly control is of paramount importance here. Nutrition creates a hearty immune system. More specifically, good quality proteins (i.e. amino acids) to build antibodies and immune cells; then there are the fat-soluble vitamins A, D & E. Vitamin A, livestock get from the carotenoids (e.g. beta carotene, lutein), Vitamin D they synthesize from sunlight, and Vitamin E (tocopherol) is loaded in fresh green forages.

Let's not forget about the immunity associated with trace elements that should be in the soil and thus your forages such as selenium, zinc, copper, iodine which make up important numerous enzymes that are requisite for strong immunity. An example is the enzyme "glutathione peroxidase" which is made up of the amino acids, methionine, glycine and glutamic acid and the trace element selenium. Livestock or humans can't go very far without it.

Zinc is synergistic with Vitamin A to activate the thymus gland, the master immune gland, responsible for the production of thymic hormones that build T-helper cells and T-killer cells. It modulates the function of lymphocytes, natural killer cells, antibody production, cytokine synthesis and neutrophils. Copper is associated with two important enzymes, ceruloplasmin, and

continued on page 33

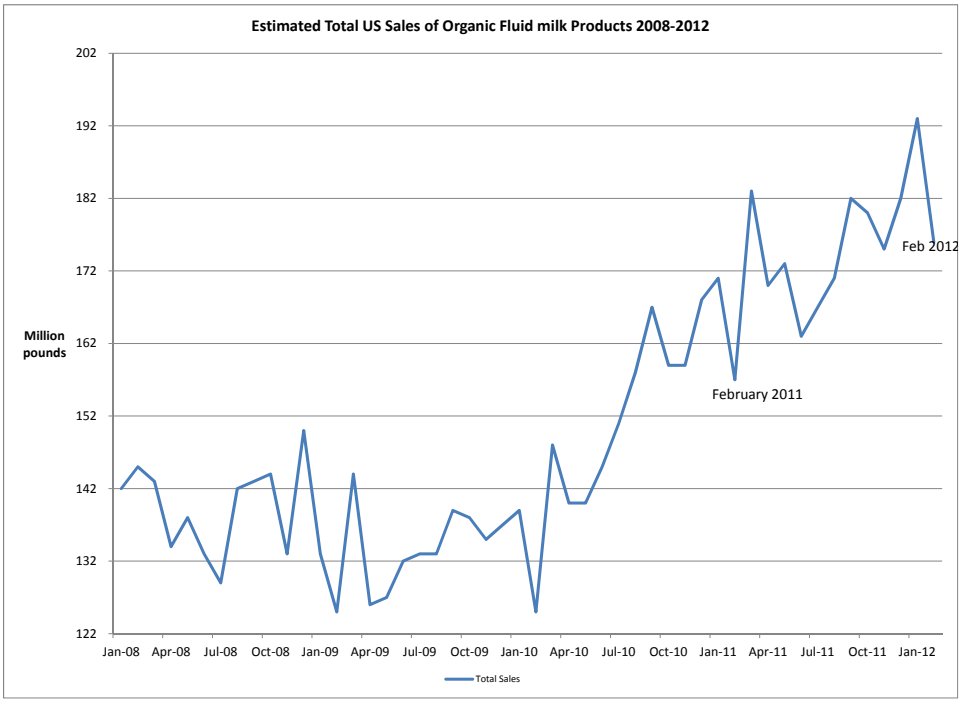
ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

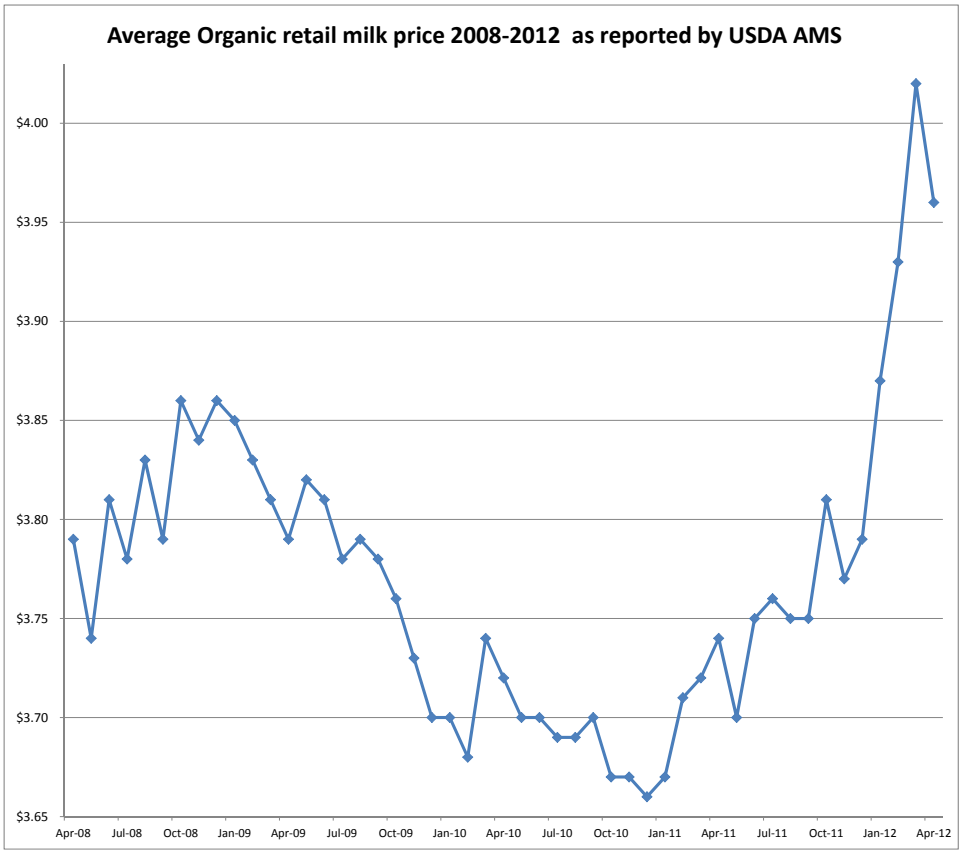
No light at the end of the tunnel on feed costs and pay-price: Feed & pay price update, May 2012

Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Horizon Organic announced at the end of April that their MAP will be maintained at $3 or $3.50 /cwt (depending on geographic location) until the end of September 2012. Horizon's four month seasonal payment of an extra $3/cwt starts in October and there is an expectation that the MAP will continue at the same rate over the winter as supply tightens. Organic Valley pay price continues to be the highest of the national brands but some of the regional processors are currently paying more. to break even as there seems no break in the price for feed even with imports of soybeans and substitution of other grains and alfalfa in pelleted mixes. The costs of other inputs have remained high, for example land rent, taxes, health insurance, diesel and supplies for harvesting forage, which will continue to cause a strain on cash flow. Luckily the beef price remains high and many producers have been selling cows to pay for feed. For those that claim the MILC, March payments are estimated at $0.85 and April at around the $1 mark. Producers across the country are still requesting another $3 per cwt to reach a breakeven point for 2012 based on sound economic analysis from independent sources using data from farmers in all area of the US. The overall message is don't expect any increases this year and budget for the fall with continuing high feed prices and no further increases in pay price, but probably no decrease as well. All reports are that 2011 was a difficult and unprofitable year and 2012 holds no promise for any change.

continued on page 18





PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Micronutrients for Better Pasture Fertility

By Neal Kinsey

Once liming and N-P-K needs are met many raising pasture and hay feel this is all they can justify using. These nutrients are necessary when the need can be established by testing the soil. Especially for dairies it is a serious mistake to stop there. Test as well for key trace elements that are necessary in order to grow the best grasses and legumes for herd health and milk production.

But does it help to test for micronutrients and apply them in adequate amounts along with N-P-K and lime? Perhaps one of the best comparisons to help explain their usefulness is that micronutrients are to soil fertility like spark plugs are to a tractor. The tractor will still run when one is missing, but not nearly as efficiently. Each micronutrient acts as a catalyst to help the primary and secondary nutrients from fertilizer and lime to work properly.

For example, crops need to be able to take up enough boron from the soil in order to optimize the utilization of the nitrogen required for proper growth. Consider legumes as an example. Some producers rely on them to supply needed nitrogen, and forego any additional N fertilization. However, without adequate boron it requires more nitrogen in order to produce the same amount of growth. Boron can be leached and yet it is not usually considered as a necessary addition for growing pasture. So whether or not nitrogen supplied from legumes is being considered for your pasture or hay crops, be sure there is an adequate amount of boron present to assure the nitrogen you apply will be sufficiently utilized.

Boron needs to be present in adequate amounts when grass begins growing. The level should be at least 0.8 ppm minimum, and 1.5 to 2.0 ppm is considered ideal when there is sufficient calcium and phosphorous. The higher boron levels are only desirable then. There is no need to expect the best response from boron if either is deficient.

Like nitrogen and sulfur, boron can be leached from the soil. More often than not, the soils we receive to be analyzed are deficient in boron, including most pastures. So consider it a necessity to test for boron content and adding any that is required from year to year for pastureland, hay meadows and silage production.

Applying calcium or potassium excessively will tie up boron in the soil. Yet the more deficient the calcium saturation is in a pasture, meadow or any other field, the more likely boron toxicity problems will be present. Always apply boron based on need as established by a soil test, not by guessing it is or is not needed.

Zinc is also very important to pasture and hay production. Plants need zinc for adequate moisture absorption. Then you can grow more tonnage with the same amount of water. Using our testing, the minimum level is 6 ppm for zinc. That level will vary from one soil testing company to another, so do not try to apply this level indiscriminately as the correct level on a test run by another lab.

Excessive phosphate levels in the soil tie up zinc, making it unavailable to the plant. But excessive zinc levels in the soil can also tie up phosphate. In addition, for best overall results, the zinc and phosphorus levels in each field should be raised together. For example, when P is at a minimum level, zinc should be too. But when P is at maximum desired levels or higher, zinc should be at maximum desired levels as well.

Manganese is another micronutrient that is important for pasture soils. It enhances seed germination and helps plants develop and grow off faster. Following adequate levels of potassium, it is the second key for needed stalk strength. Plants will stand more foot traffic when there is adequate manganese. Inadequate manganese in the soil increases breeding problems for livestock. From our analysis, a minimum of 40 ppm Mn is required for pastures. In terms of plant quality, raising manganese to optimal levels helps increase carotene and vitamin C content. The ideal level begins at 125 ppm, but few pastures achieve such levels without applying significant amounts of additional manganese.

Copper should also be included on soil tests as a very necessary nutrient for pastures. Where too much nitrogen is applied for the amount of growth or tonnage produced, expect copper problems. Excessive nitrogen ties up copper. This is of special concern on fodder-type crops. Sufficient copper helps increase protein content in all crops, and increases protein conversion in the animal. This results in the shiny hair coat seen on healthy livestock. It is needed, along with adequate potassium and manganese for stalk strength and resilience in plants, and reduces problems with bone and muscle inflammation in livestock. The minimum desired level on the test we use is 2 ppm, with 5-10 ppm being considered ideal when all other nutrients are present in optimum amounts.

If you have pastures with a low pH and are having trouble growing good legumes on soil that appears to produce pretty good grass, a test for molybdenum should be considered. If the level is less than 1 ppm on the test we use, we would recommend it be applied, but spread evenly and in very small amounts. One farmer sent in a test on alfalfa that was not growing well, but to save money, did not test for molybdenum. The soil analysis showed it should be the best producing field on the farm, but it was actually the worst. The alfalfa did not grow well and there was a problem with leaf-drop, which indicates a possible molybdenum deficiency, but not how much is needed. It was the only field on the farm that had these problems and the only one that needed molybdenum. Both problems were solved by adding the proper amount just once, though some soils require several treatments to completely solve the problem. If not sure, consider checking a key pasture or two before spending a lot of money testing them all.

Iron levels are not difficult to measure. However, even when deficient in the topsoil, on some pastures the plants still obtain sufficient iron from what is available directly below. Unlike other similar elements, iron may actually be more available in the soil at the six to twelve inch depth than it is in the top four to six inches. Iron levels should be at least 5 ppm higher than manganese in the soil and the manganese level should be a minimum of 40 ppm. If the soil shows deficient in iron but plants are not showing yellow this may be the case.

One point to remember once you have applied needed micronutrients is it takes time to see the full benefits they will provide. There can be measureable and very significant results in the first year, especially if applied in the autumn for crops to be grown the next spring. But results will become even more evident over the next three years after the correct levels are achieved. It will usually take that long before the full effects will be seen in the crops and livestock.

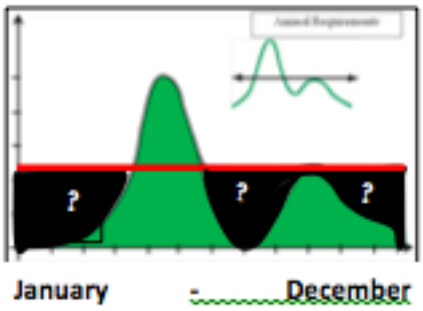
Even more information on soil fertility and micronutrients is presented in *Hands-On Agronomy*. See our website, www.kinseyag.com, or call 573-683-3880 for more information.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Filler Forage: Extending the Grazing Season

By Joshua Baker

The Production Curve

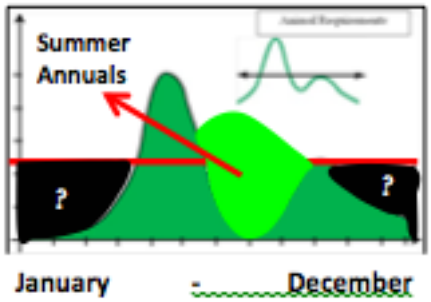


Perennial pasture production is an integral part of dairy and livestock grazing operations. Understanding the growth patterns of perennials, helps you match forage production needs with your cows' requirements. The chart below shows the typical growth pattern of perennials with a horizontal red line to mark the livestock needs throughout the year.

Considering the chart above, let's examine some options for bridging the gaps so that your animals continue to have high quality forage in front of them and their production level is unaffected.

Summer Annuals

With summer annual production, the graph above takes on the look of this graph at right



There are multiple options for you to choose from when considering development of a summer annual pasture.

BMR Sorghum Sudan - This crop carries the BMR trait and is highly palatable and digestible. It also has strong tillering and excellent regrowth from multiple grazings or cuttings. Seed with a drill after soils have warmed up to at least 60 degrees. For mechanical harvest, the crop should be cut with sharp blades at between 3 to 4 feet (Start grazing at around 2 feet) and about 6 inches of stubble should be left in the field. Wide windrowing promotes rapid drying.

BMR Sudangrass - This is a finer stemmed BMR that dries easier than Sorghum Sudan. This can be a multi-graze/harvest product and can be taken for dry hay. Seed after soils have

warmed to 65 degrees. Mechanical harvest should occur at 3 ft. with grazing beginning earlier than this.

Prussic Acid: There is reason to be cautious when grazing Sorghum Sudan or Sudangrass. While prussic acid poisoning is a concern, proper management can remove or alleviate this unease. These crops should not be grazed when the plants are very short or in a new growth stage. Additionally, grazing should be delayed roughly seven days after a hard frost.

BMR Tillering Corn - This is a high yielding, highly digestible crop that produces feed in around 60 days. Planting date is the same as corn. This corn is a one cut/graze system that should be taken at the tassel stage. With high sugar content, this crop makes a great feed for dairy cows or finishing livestock.

Millet - This crop is similar to sorghum sudan. Dry matter production with millet is typically 20 % less than sorghum sudan. Soil temperatures should reach 65 degrees or greater before seeding, and it needs good seed to soil contact. It grows bushier than sudan, so it should be grazed at about 12 inches and no taller than three feet. Always double-check to make sure plants are not being uprooted by grazing.

Brassica Crops - Brassicas can be used to provide a high quality summer grazing. Without the lignification that we see in some grasses during the hot months, brassicas maintain higher quality. They can be seeded alone, or with the above annual grasses. With grazing, cows must become accustomed to the plant before they will aggressively graze. Introduce them slowly and make sure that adequate effective fiber is being fed.

Break Crop

We often use the term 'break crop' to describe a cropping situation where perennial pasture is removed and replaced by one of the summer annual options mentioned above. There are many added benefits to utilizing a summer annual to fill in the 'summer gap' that extends beyond just the extra forage production.

With the potential for a break crop, the decision of whether or not an older perennial stand should be removed becomes easier. Analyzing the estimated cost and yield associated with summer annuals can help you measure out if the extra feed, above what you would expect your perennial mix to yield, is worth the change to the summer annual. With these summer annuals, you even have the option to take first cutting/grazing of the perennial pasture and then assess the stands strength against your forage need.

Rotating crops can also help with disease/pest pressure. By introducing a summer annual, the pests and diseases that have 'homesteaded' on a perennial stand for the past few years create less pressure for the new crop.

Weed control is also another benefit of rotation. The 'renovation' effect, from totally removing the perennial, also helps suppress weeds that have developed through the years that the perennial has been the predominant crop on that piece of ground.

No matter which summer annual seems to be the most viable op

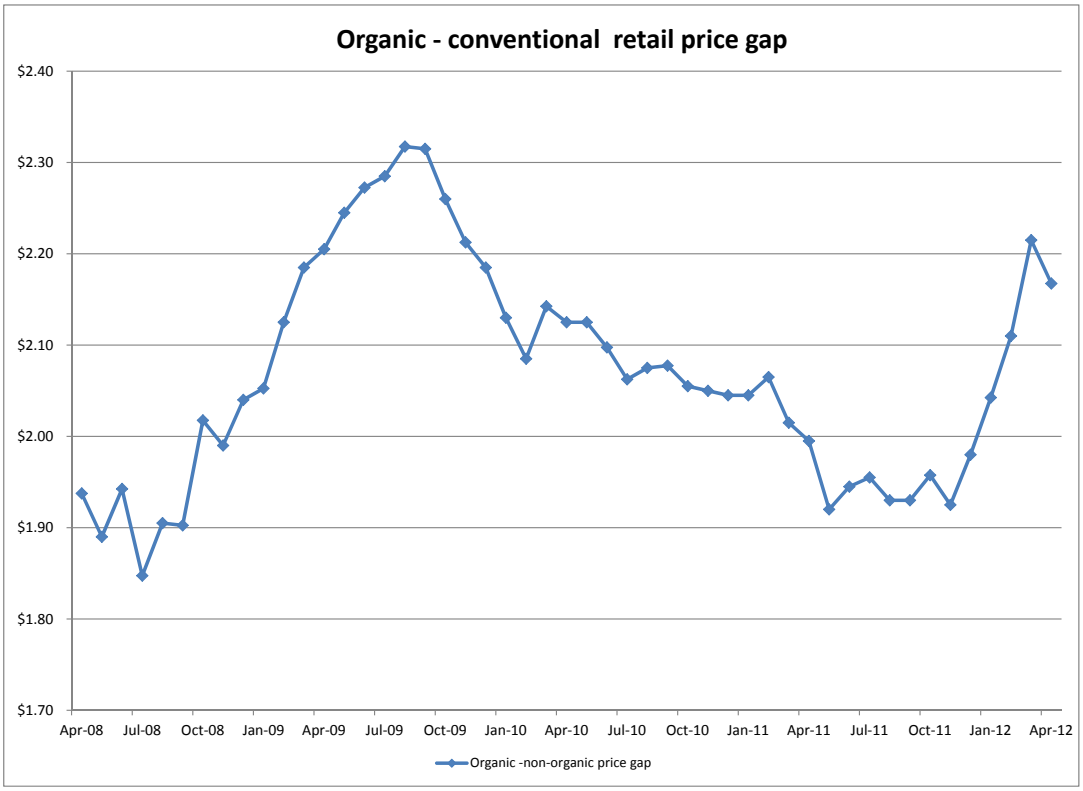
continued on page 30

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

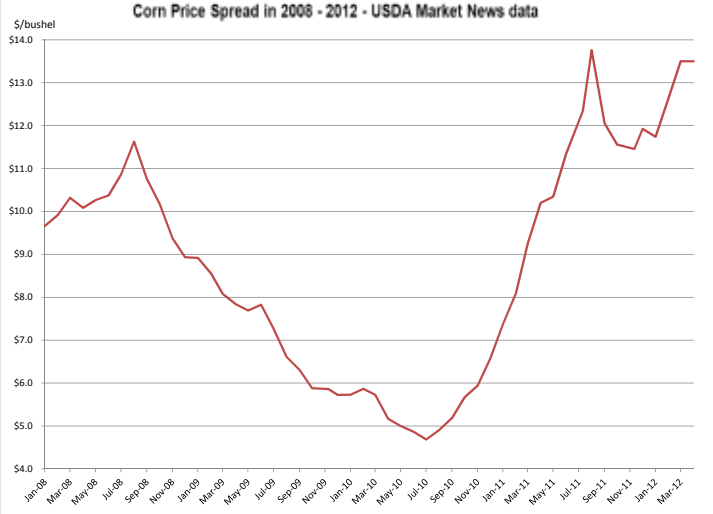
Retail and Feed Price Updates

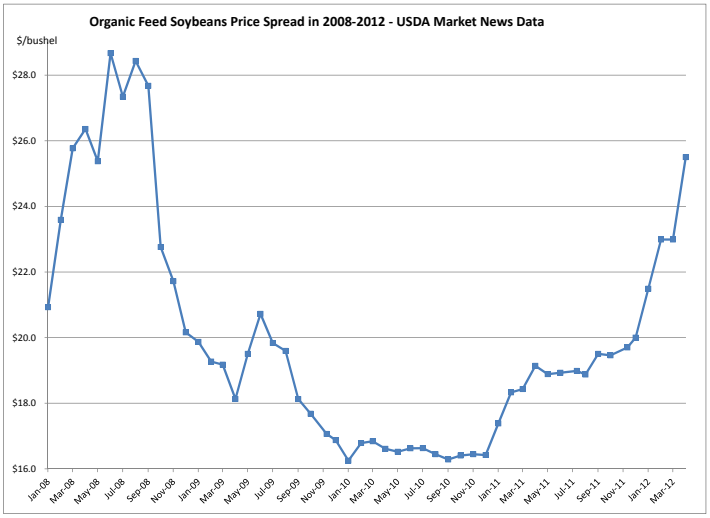
continued from page 14

Sales of organic fluid milk in February were 12% higher than in February 2011 with an average retail price 20 cents higher than February 2011. Processors report that with an early spring flush there is a slight surplus in milk across the country but there is no expectation that this surplus will continue. Sales of private label continue to grow as some consumers move away from the higher priced branded product to store brand. Aurora and Organic Valley are the top two suppliers private label milk. ◆



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS





Don't Miss The 2012 NODPA Field Days, Sept 27 and 28, in Brattleboro, VT

Go to page 23 for more information.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

OTA proposes legislative language for an Organic Check-off

continued from page 1

an amendment was introduced to the Senate version of the 2012 Farm Bill proposing an organic check-off program. On April 26, 2012, the senate agriculture committee released their Farm Bill that required the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a feasibility study on an organic industry check-off program that would mandate industry fees to fund marketing, promotion and research projects aimed at boosting the value of the sector. This rapid movement from investigation to legislation was a surprise to most of the organic community, especially as the OTA-proposed program lacks any detail about who will be assessed and how the monies will be spent.

All of the organic community supports a technical correction of the law that will allow split operations that produce "any agricultural commodity that is certified as "organic" or "100% organic" to be able to exempt their organically certified product from paying into any existing (conventional) check-off program. While support for a technical correction is overwhelming, backing for regulatory language for establishing an organic commodity program needs further consideration and definition by the whole organic community before submitting it to Congress. Some have characterized it as 'not ready for prime time.' Farmers generally do not trust existing commodity programs. Existing check-off programs have not been shown to keep family farm producers (organic or conventional) in business and we have seen declining farm numbers and increasing concentration in agriculture, including organic, while commodity programs are in effect. For example the well-known 'Got Milk' campaign has done nothing to reverse the decrease in consumption of fluid milk and the loss of dairy farms across the country. Once we have industry wide support for an organic commodity program with clear, defining regulatory language and accountability to its contributors, the chance of obtaining congressional approval will improve. Any check-off should be voluntary; implemented by vote of organic stakeholders, including all producers; and subject to referendum renewal at least every 5 years or sooner but, not in perpetuity once initiated. Any referendum should be decided by one vote for each certified entity selling "organic" or "100% organic" products.

Technical correction

Most producers will support the first section of the regulatory language proposed by OTA that provides that correction and makes the process to opt out easier:

> *"(e) EXEMPTION OF CERTIFIED ORGANIC PRODUCTS FROM ASSESSMENTS-*
>
> *"(1) IN GENERAL- Notwithstanding any provision of a commodity promotion law, a person that produces, handles, markets or imports organic products shall be exempt from the payment of an assessment under a commodity promotion law with respect to any agricultural commodity that is certified as "organic" or "100 percent organic" (as defined in Part 205 of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations)(or a successor regulation).*
>
> *"(2) APPROVAL - The Secretary shall approve the exemption of a person under this subsection if the person maintains a valid organic certificate issued under the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 6501 et seq.)."*

OTA has proposed that this language be included as part of the 2012 or 2013 Farm Bill and will need support within Congress to have it included in any final regulation. The proposed language is titled "to allow organic producers to participate in an organic promotion program." The provision for organic operations to opt out of conventional check-off programs already exists, so there will be little opposition to the technical correction from the non-organic community. However, it is widely anticipated that there will be widespread opposition from the existing conventional programs to an industry-wide organic check-off program. Combining the technical correction with a proposal to form an organic check-off program may well prevent the passage of the technical correction, especially with a title that does not mention the technical correction.

In order for the organic community to coalesce around a proposal for an organic check-off program and petition the Secretary of Agriculture to establish an organic research and promotion program there are many questions that need answering. The USDA, which administers the promotion programs, has a well-established procedure they follow when a commodity applies to establish a commodity program. The USDA procedures ensure that the constituency to be assessed is the one consulted in any referendum, and requires definition of the commodity's governance system. It relies on the commodity to define themselves and their goals for the program. The proposal for an Organic Check-Off program by OTA lacks specifics and raises many questions that need to be answered prior to writing any regulatory language. Some of the areas that need further discussion can be summarized under the following headings:

Governance and accountability:

a. How do we decide the geographic parameters of the program (state, regional, national) and the governance system? Who decides the criteria for using the money, who is eligible, and how is the governing committee chosen?

b. How do we ensure that farmers have a decisive and effective role in decision making on the use of funds?

c. How do we ensure timely and independent accountability of spending of funds – do we need an annual outside audit that is public, the ability for farmers to file complaints with an auditor, or something else?

d. How does such a diverse sector respond to the varying needs for both promotion and research? Does money, or a proportion of that money, stay with the commodity or region to be used for specific regional research or commodity promotion? How much money goes to a national promotion campaign similar to the one now being run by OTA?

e. Promotion and research in some sectors may lead to overproduction and a reduction in pay price to the farmer.

f. A large number of organic farmers are exempt from being certified because of low sales of organic product. The current language excludes them but will they be represented within the governance and fund allocation process as they are an important entry level for the next generation of organic farmers?

Who is the program for – producer, handler or everyone?

a. The title of the proposed regulatory language talks of organic producers, whereas the exemption from paying into the conventional programs references producers, marketers, handlers and importers. Some information has been produced by OTA that says that producers would not be assessed. Whoever the program is for would be those voting for its adoption, for example if the program is only for handlers, only handlers would vote to petition the Secretary to set the program up.

b. If it is only handlers and producers are exempted, farmers would inevitably be paying into the program 'by the back door' as the check-off cost would be an expense to handlers and buyers and would affect any potential price the farmer would be paid.

c. Does it involve farmers who are not currently in commodity programs?

d. The current language exempts importers from paying into the conventional program. Will an organic promotion program involve imports at the point of entry?

Where is the money deducted and for what?

a. Existing commodity programs pay in either at the state, federal or handler level – what is the best level for the deduction to happen for organic?

b. Will the level of deduction be uniform or commodity specific? (For conventional programs it is: $1 per head of cattle marketed to National Cattleman's Beef Association each time an animal is sold; 15 cents per cwt. of milk marketed; 10 cents/30 dozen eggs, .75 cents per pound of honey; soybeans, ½ of 1%; corn, .5-1.5 cents per bushel depending on state; wheat, up to ½ of 1% of sale price).

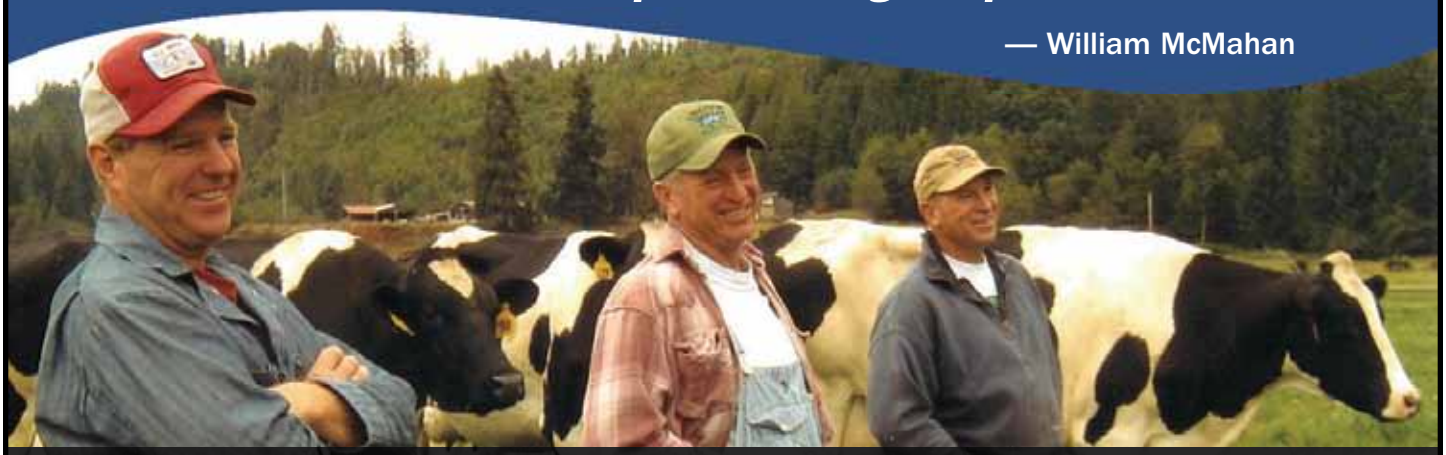
c. c. Does the check-off get added at every level of processing and commerce, for example soy bean and soybean meal; added at cow calf operation-feeder-finish and slaughter auction?

OTA has presented a draft idea to the organic community and has promised more levels of investigation and discussion, which is transparent in its process and outcome. As part of its Phase 2 investigation, OTA needs to lead the Organic Industry as a whole in a discussion of different models for promotion programs rather than attempting to pre-determine an outcome based on the immediacy of a Farm Bill. Farmers from many commodities and parts of the country have questioned the need for an organic promotion program. The argument that 'we don't control our check-off money now so any improvement is better than the current situation' is not worthy of an organic industry that has redefined the farm and food system. Assessments need to come from all levels of the supply chain, and allocation of funds needs to be decided transparently and be responsive to the needs of all levels of the organic community. In the end, there are many ways that the organic industry can fund generic organic advertising, promotion and valuable research rather than enter into the long and costly struggle to set up a FRPP and have it administered through the Federal government. ◆

National Dairy Quality winner

"Udder Comfort is essential part of the good practices we use..."

— William McMahan



COWLITZ MEADOWS DAIRY, Inc. #1, Randle, Washington
THE MCMAHAN FAMILY: 50 cows (Certified Organic)
SCC average: 51,000
2011 Gold Level National Dairy Quality Award

"We've been using the Udder Comfort™ yellow spray for 2 years now. It works better on somatic cell counts (SCC). Our SCC has been under 100,000 for 3 years. But last year, we were able to get it down to 51,000. We're on DHIA, so we monitor cows, and when we see one with a high count, we use Udder Comfort and check the quarters regularly with the California Mastitis Test (CMT). It's always a blessing when they clear up," says William McMahan.

He and his brothers Ross and Jake and two nephews Wade and Joel, operate Cowlitz Meadows Dairy 1 & 2, Milking 50 cows at both locations.

Farm #1 near Randle, Washington was recognized as a 2011 Gold Level National Dairy Quality Award winner. Producing high quality milk is very important to the McMahan family, and it earns them high premiums through Organic Valley.

"With Udder Comfort, our cows have better udder condition and they milk out better. It helps to start their lactations with that extra stimulation, and they let their milk down better.

"I'm a big believer in essential oils. Udder Comfort is an essential part of the good practices we use to keep our cows more comfortable and producing high quality milk."

SAVE THE DATE

The 12th Annual NODPA Field Days, September 27 & 28, 2012

Planning has begun for NODPA's 12th Annual Field Days that will be held at the Vermont Agricultural Business Education Center in Brattleboro, Vermont. In a year of grain shortages, high feed prices and dramatic weather patterns, a terrific committee of New England-based organic dairy farmers, educators, and experts came together in February to identify the meeting's theme: 'A nutrient and energy dense agenda to help farmers be more self-reliant by growing more of their own feed in healthy, rich soil'.

Cheyenne Christianson, an organic, no-grain, grass-based dairy producer from Wisconsin and this month's Feature Farmer (pg. 1) has accepted NODPA's invitation to be the Field Days Keynote speaker. We are lining up speakers to talk about innovative grazing strategies, the latest research and information on soil health, and producing great pastures and energy rich forages, to name a few.

In addition to a strong educational agenda, there will be a farm tour on Thursday morning; our annual social hour, banquet, featuring local, organic food, NODPA's Annual Meeting on Thursday evening and our producer-only meeting on Friday morning. You will be able to visit the diverse trade show throughout the meeting, and will have many opportunities to catch up with old friends and meet new ones. More information on the agenda will follow in the July NODPA News and online at:

http://www.nodpa.com

For now, SAVE THE DATE!

Look for Sponsorship and Tradeshow information in your email and mailboxes in the next few weeks. For more information, or if you have questions about sponsoring or exhibiting at the NODPA Field Days, contact NODPA Field Days Coordinator Nora Owens anytime at:

noraowens@comcast.net

413-772-0444.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION: FEATURED FARM

Cheyenne and Katy Christenson, Grazing Acres Farm, Chetek, WI

Vibrant Grass-Based, No Grain Oranic Dairy

continued from page 1

Being a 100% grass-based farm, the milk production is a strong reflection of the growing season, the quality of the pasture, and stored feed. In an ideal growing season they have produced as much as 12,000 lbs of milk per cow, but for the past few years, as a result of the extreme weather conditions and a younger herd, their production has been closer to 9,000 -10,000 lbs per cow. They push the limits on their grazing system, putting their livestock into pastures when the forages are taller and more mature, and often have some calves running with the milkers for the first 2-3 weeks of life before they join the nurse cow group.

They milk a total of 65 Holsteins and have an additional 20 cows whose job is to feed the calves in a nurse cow/calf system. Calving takes place from April to November, with a greater percentage of their calves born in spring when forage production is at its highest in quantity and quality. Milk quality is usually between 250-275 SCC, with butterfat at 4.21% and protein at 3.1%.

History of the Farm and Organic Transition

Cheyenne and Katy started farming in July of 1993 at the ripe old age of 21 and 19, respectively. That first year they rented the farm from FSA and by the spring of 1995, they bought the farm. They had quite a lot of work ahead of them as the fields were run down and the buildings needed improvements. "It was a given when we bought our farm that it would be organic," reflects Cheyenne, "I truly believe organic farming is the only future for agriculture!" They began transitioning to organic right away and started shipping milk to Organic Valley in 1999 with MOSA as their certifier.

Over the last 19 years, Cheyenne and Katy have grown a workforce, and rebuilt their farm from the soil up. Their nine children range in age from 19 years to 6 weeks of age. "The older 4 teens [Cody (19), Sadie (18), Kirsten (16), and Kenneth (14)] help a lot with milking, moving animals, and some tractor driving," says Cheyenne. "We have no off farm labor hired. We own all of our equipment and do our own repair work. Most of our machinery is newer, so breakdowns aren't as often, but it still happens."

Milk production has never been the primary focus of Grazing Acres Farm. One of their approaches to having a profitable enterprise is by increasing the organic matter and biological activity of their soil so that nutrients are cycling through more efficiently, creating a more nutrient dense feed and a forage crop that is resilient in times of excessive rain and drought. Over the years they have applied macro and micro nutrients to their pastures and hay crops in the form of rock minerals, foliar applications and composted manure making their land more productive, and allowing them to increase their production of meat, milk and livestock on a per acre basis.

Financially, their system is working well. "Paying the debt down was a goal from the beginning", says Cheyenne. "Rotational grazing was instrumental in accomplishing that goal by keeping costs low, and the organic stability and premium has helped to update the farm and equipment."

Grazing System - Grazing Tall(er)

There are no set pasture acres on Grazing Acres Farm; all the acreage can be grazed, hayed or planted to spring and fall annuals. Pastures are usually in full grass by the middle of May and Cheyenne likes to transition their grazing groups to fresh grass by feeding baleage or hay at night on the pack and pasture during the daytime. This transition period will last for 2-3 weeks while the majority of the pastures are growing and helps give the cows more time to adjust, avoiding watery manure that lush grass can bring.

Cows grazing Japanese Millet

Just over ideal maturity for the milk cows.

Pastures are grazed when the clover blossoms are showing and the grasses are just starting to head out. Cheyenne runs four grazing groups on their farm; milk cows, nurse cows & calves, heifers, and bulls. The groups are moved twice a day, usually checking the cows and heifers in the middle of the day to be sure they have enough feed. "We try to give them just what they need, so sometimes they need a little more. I want them to eat all they can since this is 100% of their diet", he explains.

If pasture forages get too rich, they will feed a little bit of hay to the cows, and by late September or October, they will start to supplement the pasture with a few pounds of hay. By November the cows are getting half of their ration in hay or baleage. In times of drought or excess rain, feed quality can be compromised and with a no-grain system, this reflects quickly in the bulk tank. As the farm soils become more biologically active, balanced and nutrient dense, Cheyenne is convinced that his forage system will become more resilient in times of stress. To complement their forage diet, all the animal groups are supplemented with kelp and Sea-90 salt; both are provided free choice in a stock tank with kelp in one half and the salt in the other.

In the winter time, the milk cows are fed hay and baleage. The feed is mixed and matched according to manure and consistency. Heifers get more dry hay and baleage depending upon the time of year. Younger heifers and calves get dry hay.

Annual Crops for Spring and Fall Grazing

The Christiansons got into annuals in the late 90's when they decided to grow wheat for their chickens and for personal use. The cows grazed the crop once, the forage grew back and set seed, and was turned under with a great production response. Today they are in their 12th year planting annuals for pasture and baleage.

Thirty to forty acres of annuals are seeded down each year in the spring and fall. Half of this is new acres that continue growing several annual crops for a couple years. The manure from the bedded pack gets spread on the tilled fields, mixing it in the same day using a Rotovator for tillage. They save their own Oats, Rye and Triticale seed and purchase their Japanese Millet. Aside from the millet seed, the nutritional supplements, forage bedding and grass seed that they purchase, their farm is a closed system - pretty inspiring.

"I always seed down under oats and graze the oats off before they head," explains Cheyenne." He notes that he only grazes the cows once a day on the annuals to make sure the cows have a more consistent diet. "The only time my cows wait at the gait is when we graze oats. We tested our fall oats in early November this past fall and they were 344 RFQ, .80 NEL, and 81.58 digestibility on the 48 hour test. That is some awesome feed." The last few years, they have mixed Rye or triticale with the fall oats so that they could have something fast growing for early spring. Turnips also work well for a late fall feed planted with the oats or by themselves.

Japanese Millet is another crop that they like to grow for mid/late summer. The forage is very drought tolerant and keeps them grazing in the worst of the dry conditions. It also makes good baleage, but can be tough to dry down on a wet year.

Livestock Housing

Cows are housed in two Cover-All buildings during winter. One is a bedded pack that they add new bedding to each day (about one round bale per day) and the other Cover-All has two feeder wagons where round bales are fed. There is an additional round feeder outside the coverall buildings allowing for additional access to feed in the winter months. For a herd of cows with horns, the more feeding space the better.

All of the youngstock from the previous growing season are kept in a big pole shed with a pen on the outside. Nurse cows are brought into the calf pen at milking times and then returned to the Cover-Al buildings, benefitting from the added space and receiving the best forages. Keeping the nurse cows in a different location also allows for the calves to have more space and the pens stay cleaner longer. From May-November the nurse cows and calves are together all the time on their own pasture rotation. Big heifers and bulls are kept outside all winter with access to windbreaks to keep them comfortable.

Livestock Genetics and Animal Numbers

The Christianson's milk Holsteins and have been using their own bulls

FEATURED FARM

The Christiansons: L-R (back) Cody, Kirsten, Sadie, Kenneth, Katy & Eva, Cheyenne (front) Anna, Benjamin, Daniel, Mark

continued from page 25

for over 10 years, selecting bulls from cows that perform the best in their grass-based system. Traits that Cheyenne selects for include a wide deep body, good legs, and an udder high off the ground. Horns are kept on their animals (cows and bulls alike), and they have thought about using polled genetics to reduce the occasional issues that they have with horns and injuries.

When they were first building their herd, they kept all their heifers. Once they achieved their desired herd size, they had calves to sell each year. For the past 8 years they have been keeping all their replacement stock so that they can cull some of their high count cows, grow a string of nurse cows, and add a few more milkers to their herd, making sure the farm can support a couple more households in the near future.

With closed herd since 1993, their animal numbers have grown from 100 head (milking 55 cows) in 2005 to 230 head today. They have reached the point where their farmland has maximized the number of livestock it can support are considering cutting back the bull group, which would allow them to grow more of their own bedding. There is more room for fertility improvement on the land and Cheyenne is considering some small-scale irrigation, as it seems they are having more dry spells and their light soils dry out pretty fast.

Nurse Cows with Calves:

Cheyenne started using nurse cows to feed his calves in 2009. That first year, the calves were kept in a pen by the shed and the selected cows would go in there two times a day to feed them. In 2010 and 2011 they changed their system to keeping the calves on pasture with the cows. It is a 'free for all'; younger calves and older calves will share the cows (1 cow to 2-3 calves on average) and the calves do incredibly well. In the wintertime, calves are housed in the pole shed and the nurse cows will visit and feed them twice a day. Calves stay about 4 months in the nurse-cow program.

Since the cows and calves are moved twice a day on pasture, they have a positive experience with people and are friendly and relatively easy to handle. When weaning time comes, the cows and calves are separated by a 2-strand electric fence. With this system, calves get nicer grass and don't fuss about the separation.

Animal Health – Preventive Strategies

Keeping animals healthy is a top priority at Grazing Acres Farm. A key management practice on the farm is the art of observation. Cheyenne spends time monitoring and watching his animals; he looks at manure, body condition, milk production, hair coat etc. and makes adjustments in feed and management based upon what he sees. In the past 12 years, they have only had a veterinarian on their farm for calving issues; the last time a vet was on their farm was 3 years ago.

The livestock have been fed kelp for the past 15 years and are given probiotics and vitamin boluses during calving to give a boost to the immune system. The calves have never been treated for parasites; their body condition is always good and pastures are grazed tall (about 2 feet) leaving a residue of about 4 inches. Grazing rotations are also longer than the parasite life cycle and calves are given new ground whenever feasible.

Resources that Cheyenne has found valuable over the years include *Acres USA's* monthly magazine, *Stockman Grassfarmer,* Arden Anderson's 'Science in Agriculture', and Pat Coleby's 'Natural Cattle Care'. All of these resources have helped Cheyenne in his quest for a healthy, vibrant farm. "Think beyond the Bandaid", says Cheyenne.

Organic Dairy Needs to Stay True to its Path

Cheyenne would like to see lower grain consumption on organic farms overall, and no-grain milk should be marketed as 'food as medicine'. He also feels that organic dairy needs to stay true to its cause. Too often he sees organic products following the conventional path by 'fortifying' the food with additional nutrients, or skimming other important ingredients from the whole food product. He feels that the organic industry should be keeping to the philosophy that 'simple is good', and less ingredients is good. If you are going to put a picture of cows or chickens on pasture on the milk or egg carton, make sure you are raising them the way that they are being portrayed. "The consumer is paying enough for their products; we have to make sure the farmer is getting more of the retail dollar for their product", says Cheyenne. ◆

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Managing For High Quality Forages, Part 2

continued from page 5

extending the grazing season by using summer annuals like sorghum sudan grass, small grains and even a grazing corn may fit the rotation. They do add better digestibility during the hot summer months, too.

As I write this it is April 3 and our cows have been grazing for a week (that's not normal for Wisconsin). This early grazing is on winter cereal rye. It has a two week advantage over our normal pastures. We can then let those get a little taller and become more ideal forage before we start grazing them because the rye was ready first. When we move to the regular pastures, the rye will be torn up and a summer annual planted. Following that, or on a pasture we want to rotate, we will plant a fall grazing crop by mid-August. Oats, forage peas, turnips, with a little added rye grass, and come mid-October, when the other pastures have really slowed down, we have beautiful forages to graze for at least another month.

> "My observation for what works best in a pasture is two-thirds grasses and one-third legumes with other plants like chicory or plantain added in at a low percentage."

In order to make this type of pasture management work on our farm, we need to cut and bale some fields, especially early in the season. Also, at least twice a year we clip pastures to get back to a uniform, better grazing sward.

As graziers we know that managing pastures isn't as easy as growing forages for harvest. It's easy to get quality hay by cutting forages at the right stage of plant growth. It's easy to plant alfalfa with a small amount of grass, and after a few years rotate with corn. Successful grazing and pasture management, on the other hand, is intensive, requiring lots of planning and thinking ahead. It can certainly be profitable, however, and like so many things the fun and challenge is the opportunity to use your skills to make it successful. ◆

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Chris Cardner (Mid Atlantic and Pennsylvania) 303-656-5138
Richard Klossner (Midwest) 303-319-6899
Larry Hansen (West) 303-927-9143

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- 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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More milk is needed by Northeast organic customers! Dairy Marketing Services can help you facilitate the transition from conventional to organic production. Count on DMS Organic specialists for organics, transition stabilizers, pasture requirements, pasture supplies and more. Call David Eyster at DMS: 1-888-589-6455, ext. **5409 for more information today!** ◆

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

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

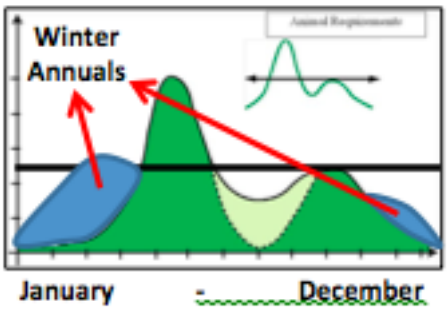
Filler Forage

continued from page 17

tion to you, it is important that you know and understand the management and expected returns from each crop before selecting your crop. Planning forward is important to the development of a successful pasture rotation that will keep high quality forage in front of your high producing cattle as many days of the year as possible.

Winter Annual Production

While summer annuals fill in the gap of the 'summer slump', winter annuals fill in the gaps that occur in the fall and late winter. Since the ultimate goal is to have a living forage crop on the land as many days of the year as possible, it makes sense to develop a program that incorporates winter annuals.



See the winter annual options below that are best for grazing:

Annual Ryegrass + Small Grain Mix - The ryegrass in this mix adds the quality forage that we look for in a winter annual, and the small grain provides winter cover/protection. This can be grazed or harvested in the fall as well as in the spring. The spring grazing/harvest will consist of primarily ryegrass, depending somewhat on the species of small grain and the severity of the winter weather. Oats, Triticale, Spelt and Wheat are all options for mixing with ryegrass. Carefully consider how you will kill the annual ryegrass before utilizing this option. In an organic situation, a rotovator or a moldboard plow should work fine. Chisel plow and/or discing will not work.

Winter Rye - Rye has the potential for both fall and early spring grazing if the conditions allow. When grazing in the fall, it's important to make the appropriate management decisions according to the desired spring yield. The heavier the pressure in the fall, the less regrowth should be expected in the spring. Overgrazing during cold, wet conditions will do considerable damage to the spring growth. While rye may not be the most palatable option, it grows aggressively in the spring, provides quick feed and then is done. This may be beneficial depending on the desired rotation.

Crimson Clover (Option for Warmer Climates) - Crimson is a great option for both forage and for nitrogen production for the next crop. It's usually mixed with a small grain or annual ryegrass for maximum yield and quality.

Medium Red Clover - This is a high yielding, high quality clover that grows well for two years and then starts to decline. It is fast growing and very winter hardy, handling the northern climates well.

Ladino Clover - Ladino clover is great for seeding alone or for seeding with medium red clover. The mix of the two provides aggressive, high quality forage for two years, then as the red clover plays out, the ladino clover still develops into a long lasting stand. This clover is typically very resistant to grazing, depending somewhat on the variety selected.

Brassicas- While brassicas can be used for quality grazing in the heat of the summer; they're also a great option for extending the grazing season into late fall/early winter. Planted in late summer/early fall, they provide a feed that is high in protein and very low in effective fiber. Cattle tend to go through an adaptation period before aggressively grazing brassicas. Don't be discouraged if they don't immediately begin grazing.

Based on the options above, you can extend your grazing season and increase production on your acreage. While the options discussed are based on a constant livestock requirement, the requirements of your livestock will change throughout the year, changing the graph somewhat. Additionally, the options discussed above are representations of the options available to you for extending the grazing season. There are many species or mixes of species that could be utilized. Before committing to these crops, work with an agronomist to understand the ins and outs of managing these forage crops. ◆

Joshua Baker is the Assistant Marketing Manager of Kings AgriSeeds, Inc. He can be reached at: Phone - (717) 687-6224, Website: www.KingsAgriSeeds.com

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Graziers - Be on Alert for Increased Number of Ticks in Your Pastures

This year has not been a typical year for weather - usually we still have snow until mid May, but not this year. The warmer weather is cause for concern because it has increased the number of ticks out so early in the season. Ticks usually emerge during early summer, not spring, but because of the warm weather they are showing their biting heads early.

Livestock producers need to be on the lookout and use prevention to protect their herd or flock from the diseases spread through tick bites. The tick-borne diseases that are spread to livestock include Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, tularemia and equine encephalitis. These diseases can cause a range of problems from mild fever, fatigue, lameness, head tilt, blindness and/or reduced appetite which can result in death if not treated.

Submitted by Megan Weidner, Morrisville State College Grazing Intern with USDA-NRCS

NODPA MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance is to enable organic dairy family farmers, situated across an extensive area, to have informed discussion about matters critical to the wellbeing of the organic dairy industry as a whole.

Description and Seeding Rate For Forages Grown in New England

Written by Sid Bosworth, UVM Extension Agronomist, this document covers over a dozen forages that are commonly used in Vermont and New England, plus some that hold promise for increased usage. Go to:

http://pss.uvm.edu/vtcrops/?Page=pasturegrazing.html

and click on:

Description and Seeding Rates for Forage Plants Growing in Vermont

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Valley Award Winners

Knapp Family of Preble, New York, win award for Exceptional Leadership in Organic Farming

Organic dairy farmers Paul and Maureen Knapp of Cobblestone Valley Farm in Preble, NY, were recently named the 2012 Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY) Farmers of the Year for their outstanding stewardship of the land and their contributions to the New York organic community. The couple and their three sons were recognized at the NOFA-NY Winter Conference on January 22nd in Saratoga Springs, NY. "Paul and Maureen Knapp had the vision, the commitment, and the guts to take their farm and steer it onto a completely different course—organic," says Maryrose Livingston, vice president of the NOFA-NY board of directors. "They work constantly to spread the word about organic agriculture and are active in helping preserve farmland for future generations."

"We believe in healthy soil and healthy families," said Maureen Knapp. "We take our role as stewards of the land seriously and unite with other young farmers to educate the public about organic. Paul and I are proud to raise three sons who maintain our values and will continue to do so as fifth-generation farmers on this very land."

Paul and Maureen Knapp's Cobblestone Valley Farm is situated on 300 acres of land that have been farmed by the Knapps for four generations. Paul, Maureen and their three sons live in the 1896 farmhouse Paul's grandfather built, farm 80 acres of USDA Certified Organic pasture and milk 80 organic Holsteins. Today, the farm includes dairy production, u-pick strawberries, pastured poultry, pork, beef and free-range eggs. The first in their community to transition to organic, they became members of Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative in 2000. Since then, the Knapps have become instrumental resources for organic and fellow farmers in their area. Most recently, Maureen established a local compost collaborative, and sons Casey and Blaise joined Organic Valley's Generation Organic™ 2011 "Who's Your Farmer?" Tour down the West Coast.

Meyer Family of North Hardwick, Recognized for Exceptional Commitment to Quality for Eighth Consecutive Year

Organic dairy farmers Taylor and Nick Meyer of North Hardwick Dairy in Caledonia County have been awarded Vermont's 2011 Highest Milk Quality Award for the eighth year in a row. The Meyers, who ship milk to Organic Valley Cooperative, were recognized at the Dairy Farmers Banquet held during the 78th annual Vermont Farm Show on January 26, 2012.

Seventeen Vermont nominees representing six cooperatives, independent farmstead cheese makers, and independent handlers from both conventional and organic farming backgrounds are judged on five quality categories. The farmer's records are provided by their milk handlers and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets. After laboratory analysis, farm inspection, sensory evaluation, and milk samples for judging flavor, the winners are chosen. The Meyers became Organic Valley farmer-owners in 2003 and have taken home the title every year since 2004.

Brothers Taylor, Nick, and Andrew Meyer took over their family's hillside farm in 2001, transitioning from conventional to organic farming soon after. With a strong focus on nutritional content, they practice rotational grazing on their 350 acres, switching the cows to fresh pasture every 12 hours after milking. The brothers continuously work to improve the self-sustainability of their land, including building a wind turbine in 2008 and growing their own hay and feed crops.

"When we first started, conventional dairymen told us we wouldn't be able to make good quality milk if we went organic," says Taylor Meyer. "We went ahead and transitioned anyway. Then in our very first year of production, the state of Vermont awarded us the Highest Quality Dairy Award. Our hard work and sound practices paid off. Eight years and eight quality awards later, we are proud to be organic dairy producers and farmer-owners of Organic Valley." ◆

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Fly Control And Pinkeye

continued from page 13

copper based super oxide dismutase (SOD), which prevent tissue damage by performing as an anti-inflammatory and antioxidant. Manganese is a raw material for another SOD enzyme system as well as increasing anti-body titres. The point is that thousands of enzyme systems run the body, including an alert, invigorated and organized immune system. These enzyme "cascades" require comprehensive nutrition.

Build up the fertility of your soil with all the macro and micro elements while not forgetting about the biological fertility either, which is to be sure you have good managed swards of biodiverse grasses, legumes and forbes growing upon mineralized and aerified (not compacted) paddocks so that you can grow roots and build humus. Eliminate or reduce as much as possible the "stress" that hammers immunity and the "terrain" that invites the opportunistic Moraxella bacterium to thrive. In other words, it's a systems approach that requires one to connect as much as possible those very important, seemingly insignificant "dots." ◆

Jerry Brunetti is the founder of Agri-Dynamics, which provides ecologically sound agronomic and nutritional consulting services, as well as offers a line of holistic animal remedies for farm livestock, equines and pets. Jerry educates and consults with farmers who made the choice to transition to ecologically responsible and sustainable farming, and today advises farmers, ranchers, communities and individuals on creating healthy, regenerative and profitable outcomes and solutions.

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Cornell Small Dairy Team Produces New Resources

The Cornell Small Dairy Team has released a series of 6 new resources to help small dairy farms. The team, whose members include farmers and Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) educators, received a grant from the Cornell Small Farms Program in 2011 to provide new educational resources and tools to small dairy producers.

"Small dairies have borne the brunt of the exodus of dairy farms from New York State. The goal of the project was to provide resources for dairies looking to adapt to ever-changing market factors," says Fay Benson, leader for the team.

The new resources and tools include:

- **Financial Bench Marks for Small Dairies:** Helps dairies identify the strengths and weaknesses of their farms compared to other farms of similar size in New York State
- **Off-Farm Processing Start-Up Fact Sheet:** Suggests first steps for dairy farmers considering adding direct sales of value-added dairy products to their business mix
- **Web based Geo-Map:** Shows all the small dairy processing plants in New York state
- **Small Dairy Case Studies:** Highlights unique solutions of how four small dairy operators made decisions to keep their farms profitable
- **Production Record-Keeping Book for Grazing Dairies:** Formatted and distributed to Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) offices statewide by Cornell Small Farms Program Small Dairy Team; printing funded by New York Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative; books are available to grazing dairies at no cost through local CCE office.
- **Organic Dairy Forage and Grain Survey:** Due to fluctuating precipitation in 2011, many farms were short of forage and grain. This is particularly stressful to organic dairies since they have limited options for buying replacement feed.

To download, visit http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/resources/small-dairy

Small Dairy Team member Dana Markley operates a 100-cow dairy in Philadelphia, NY. Markley says, "As a small dairy farmer, it can be challenging to find time to explore new ideas and concepts. This project compiled information to provide small farms with easier access to important resources. The information helps us take advantage of alternatives that can make our farms more cost-effective and helps us fill niche markets that larger farms may find difficult to reach."

For example, the new Off-Farm Processing Start-Up Fact Sheet lists business planning, dairy production, direct marketing, licensing, and food safety resources. It also includes links to a directory of cheese-makers and small-scale food processors.
Benson, author of the "Off-Farm Processing Start-Up Fact Sheet" says, "Direct-to-consumer retail sales of cheese, yogurt and other value-added dairy products by dairy operators seems like an easy way to increase profits, but research shows very few on-farm processors enjoy those increase profits. Through off-farm processing, there is less start-up cost in both capital and time."

Benson suggests that farmers interested in direct marketing also use the new web-based geo map showing the on-farm processing locations in New York State to help find processors close to their farms.

Looking ahead to 2012 small dairy programming, the Cornell Small Farms Program is collaborating with educators and farmers to host a series of small dairy field days through late Spring and Summer. Topics include everything from incorporating new value added products to improving nutrition to producing on-farm biodiesel. To view the schedule or register, visit http://smallfarms.cornell.edu.

For further assistance, contact your local Cornell Cooperative Extension office, go online to the Cornell Small Farms Program website: http://smallfarms.cornell.edu/resources/small-dairy, or contact Fay Benson, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cortland County, 607-753-5213, afb3@cornell.edu.

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance Producer Milk Check Assignment Form

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

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

deduct the sum of :

_____ $0.02 per hundredweight to support the work of NODPA

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

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

as an assignment from my milk check starting the first day of _____, 201____. The total sum will be paid monthly to NODPA. This agreement may be ended at any time by the producer by sending a written request to their milk buyer with a copy to NODPA.

Milk handlers please send payments to:

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

Producer signature: _____ Date: _____

Producer number/ member no: _____ E-mail:_____

Number of milking cows: _____ Tel #:_____

Certifying Agency: _____

Farm Address: (please print) _____

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.

Subscribe to the NODPA News and support NODPA!

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 (http://nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml); visit our web page (www.nodpa.com) or benefit from farmer representation with the NOP and processors that NODPA provides, please show your support by making a generous contribution to our efforts.

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

_____ $35 to cover an annual subscription to NODPA news

_____ $50 to become an Associate member (open to all)

_____ $100 to become a supporter of NODPA

_____ $150 to become a Business Member

_____ $300 to $500 to become a Friend

_____ $500 to $1,000 to become a Patron

_____ $1,000+ to become a Benefactor

Name: _____ Farm Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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

Number of milking cows _____ Milk buyer _____

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

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

Credit card: Master Card Visa Card #: _____

Name on Card: _____ Expiration Date: __ __ 201__ Security Code on Card: _____

NET UPDATE

Recent ODairy Discussions

By Liz Bawden, Organic Dairy Producer, NODPA President

In the last issue, we reported on a discussion of a farmer's concern for his pregnant cow that was unusually large for her time. He described her as "absolutely enormous" and was still eight weeks from her due date. Dr Hue Karreman kindly emailed the following suggestion after receiving the newsletter in the mail. He suggested that the cow was "most likely suffering from hydrops allantois, a rare condition where fluid keeps pathologically accumulating in the uterus. It is generally a grave prognosis. Could be triplets, though. The 2 months prior to the due date is the tip off." He added that there is a photograph of this condition in his book.

A producer was concerned about a close springing cow that was overweight. He asked for advice, not wanting to complicate her problems by grazing early pastures that would be likely high in potassium. The responses generally agreed that the exercise and nutrition on pasture out-weighed the concerns over possible milk fever after she calves. But he was advised to be prepared with supportive care and calcium. Another producer reported that she has never had milk fever in her cows once they are out on pasture, even if they were overweight.

There was quite a lot of discussion after an article was posted on the internet focusing on the recommendation by the government's Office of Inspector General that organic livestock feed should be tested for GMO contamination. Even though they found no contamination, they felt it was a possibility. Farmers rejected the idea of paying for routine GMO testing of their organic grains and forages. One producer recommended that the polluter (Monsanto and their ilk) should pay for the testing since they are the source of the contamination. Another producer pointed out that the organic standards were written as a method of agricultural production, not a food purity standard. Contributors generally agreed that we all need to be working upstream to prevent genetic drift, comingling, and other sources of pollution.

A farmer has a heifer that is covered in warts. It was recommended to treat the heifer with Immunoboost injections at a rate of 1cc per 200 lbs once a week for 3 weeks. Other suggestions included giving homeopathic Thuja, Calcarea, Sulphur, Sepia, or Staphysagria; sometimes a nosode is made from the warty tissue; and selenium injections. Making a vaccine is possible, but one vet said it was not terribly effective.

A producer was treating a fresh cow for toxic mastitis. The day after calving, she was off feed, showed mastitis in her udder, had cold ears, and a temperature of 106 degrees. She was treated with oral Ca/P/K/Dextrose solution with 10ml each Echinacea and St John's Wort tinctures. Also added was cayenne and cider vinegar. She was given an injection of 3ml each of B complex and ADE. She was also given

continued on page 38

Website & E-Newsletter Advertising

NODPA is pleased to provide additional advertising opportunities for our organic dairy supporters and resource individuals through our Website and our monthly E-Newsletter.

Website Advertising

Three ad spaces are located at the top of the home page and at least 10 other pages on NODPA's website. NODPA.com receives over 2500 visits each month navigating to an average of 3 pages per visit.

Ad Design: Display-ready ads should be 275 pixels wide by 100 pixels tall. Your ad can link to a page on your website.

Cost: Display-ready ads are $125 per month.

E-Newsletter Advertising

Two ad spaces are located at the top of each E-Newsletter, going out monthly to 2,000 individuals through our E-Newsletter, the NODPA-Odairy discussion forum, and NODPA's Facebook page.

Ad Design: Display-ready ads should be 300 pixels wide by 125 pixels tall. Your ad can link to a page on your website.

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 FREE, 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

May 12, 2012
Grass Fed Beef Workshop, Hardwick, Massachusetts

NOFA Massachusetts kicks off its summer workshop series on Organic, Pastured Beef, Dairy, and Pigs with "Save the World, Grow and Eat more 100% Grass Fed Beef." Instructor Ridge Shinn will clearly explain the steps for success raising cattle on a 100% grass diet, discussing genetics, management, grass and harvest and handling. The event includes a talk with photos in the morning, and hands-on demonstration in the afternoon. For more information, Link: http://www.nofamass.org/programs/extensionevents/beef-dairy-pigs.php

May 16, 2012
Rural Vermont's 2012 Annual Celebration,
The Wilder Center, Wilder VT

Featuring keynote address by Ben Hewitt on the theme of "The Future is in the Dirt: Growing the Culture of Ver- monters Feeding Vermonters, Rural Vermont's Annual Meeting, Farm Fresh Five Raffle, Awards Ceremony, and Board Elections. Free for members, $5—$10 for all other guests. For more info or to join before the event, contact Rural Vermont at (802) 223-7222 or www.ruralvermont.org.

May 18-19, 2012
Foraging Ahead Grazing Workshop, Sequatchie, Tennessee

This is a 2-day high-density grazing school and holistic management workshop at Sequatchie Cove Farm, with Ian Mitchell-Innes, for farmers interested in advancing their farms and their lives. Ian will be covering all the critically important steps in implementing high density planned grazing. Mark Bader will explain rumen function on grass in herbivores and the relationship of grass growth to animal performance. There will be classroom sessions in the mornings, and pasture walks at Sequatchie Cove Farm covering all aspects of mob grazing in the afternoons. Contact Bill Keener, Phone: 423-942-9201, or go to: http://bit.ly/HP14hz

May 20-23, 2012
Holistic Management Grazing Planning: An Intensive Workshop for Mobs, Partial Mobs & Non-Mobs
Ligonier, Pennsylvania

Through a mixture of pasture walks and classroom time, this comprehensive course, a PASA Intensive Learning Program, teaches participants how make decisions to get the animals to the right place, at the right time, for the right reasons. Learn to understand ecosystem processes and how technology, rest, fire, grazing, and animal impact (mob grazing) can be managed to improve the triple bottom line. Over three and a half days, participants will complete a 2012-season grazing plan and understand how to operate and update the plan to improve ecosystems, animal performance and profitability. Contact Rebecca Robertson, Phone 814-349-9856, or go to: http://bit.ly/HYiOcZ

May 22-25, 2012
National Organic Standards Board Spring Meeting
Albuquerque, New Mexico

During meetings, the NOSB listens to public comments, discusses their agenda items, and then votes in a public forum. Meetings are free and open to the public.
http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateJ&page=NOSBMeetings

June 5-11, 2012
52nd Annual Convention of the American Society of Dowsers
Lyndon State College, Lyndonville, VT

For more information, call American Society of Dowsers: 802-684-3417, or go to: www.dowsers.org

June 8th, 2012
Adding Income Streams to a Small Dairy, Bloomville, NY

Ernest and Barbara Hanselman will present Adding Income Streams to a Small Dairy. The Hanselmans milk 75 Registered Holsteins and Brown Swiss in the fertile valley of the Delaware River. They have been in the dairy business for over 30 years and have gradually added enterprises that diversify the farm into various income streams. They will discuss making the best use of on-farm resources and trends to create a diversity of income streams that add to farm income and farm viability. To register, contact Mariane Kiraly, 607 865 6531, mk129@cornell.edu

continued on page 39

RESEARCH UPDATES

U of Minn Research Update

continued from page 9

raising organic dairy-beef steers. Dairy steers will be harvested when they reach an estimated 1 cm of subcutaneous fat at the 12th rib. The organic and grass-fed dairy steers may take an additional 3 to 5 months to finish compared to conventional dairy steers. The additional time to finish is an important aspect to evaluate. As an objective of the study, this information will be used in the economic evaluation. A sensory panel evaluation will be conducted at the University of Minnesota Sensory Center, and judges will be recruited and will be asked to rate juiciness and tenderness of strip steaks, among other meat quality characteristics. This study is of critical need because there is a lack of available research on the performance and management of organic livestock, especially dairy steers. This project is part of Elizabeth Bjorklund's master's thesis in Animal Science.

Effect of Organic Grain Supplementation on Economic, Behavior, and Pest Management Strategies of Organic Dairy Cows.

During the summer of 2012 and 2013, we will be evaluating grain supplementation levels in our organic dairy herd. Collaborators on this project include Dr. Marcia Endres (U of MNAnimal Science), Dr. Roger Moon (U of MN Entomology), and Jim Paulson (U of MN Extension). Lactating cows from our organic dairy will be assigned to a grain supplementation treatment (no grain, low grain, and high grain). Cows will be fed the following dietary supplementation levels, 1) no grain supplementation (100% pasture), 2) low grain (6 lb of grain supplementation per day), or 3) high grain (12 lb per day). Pasture herbage production will be assessed for each group of supplemented cows during the grazing season with an electronic rising plate meter. The typical pasture grasses that comprise the pastures at WCROC are alfalfa, smooth bromegrass, timothy, orchardgrass, red clover, and kura clover. Most importantly, an economic comparison will evaluate the costs and benefits of various supplementation strategies. We will develop an Excel-based worksheet in which dairy producers will be able to enter their own values for input costs, milk production projections, and feed value, and compare them with results from grazing research trials. Grazing behavior will be assessed monthly in 12 cows from each treatment for five consecutive days each month using IGER behavior recorders. Grazing behavior will be described five times (once per month) during the grazing period (May to November) for one week time periods. Behavior measurements include grazing and ruminating time (minutes/day), number of grazing and ruminating bouts, number of grazing bites, and number of grazing and ruminating chewings. For the pest management evaluation aspect of the project, effects of grain supplementation on pasture pest flies will be determined by comparing the numbers of horn flies and face flies produced from the dung of herds on the three supplementation regimes during each grazing season. This project is funded through the CERES Trust.

Production and Economic Effects of Select Herd Characteristics of Minnesota Organic Dairy Farms

We have been monitoring nine organic dairy herds to identify production and economic effects of select herd characteristics in Minnesota herds. Farms have been monitored for milk production and SCC, pasture and stored feed intake and quality, and health and reproductive indicators of herd management systems. Through simulation modeling we have developed guidelines for optimal management of organic dairy systems. We will continue to estimate the long term production and economic benefits of the minimum, mean and maximum levels of herd characteristics observed across the herds through simulation modeling. For these organic herds, herd size, gross profit, disease treatment, and reproduction costs declined as replacement, death, and culling rates increased. The economic influences affecting organic dairy producers (feed costs, health costs, etc.) necessitate specific research into the profitability of organic dairy farms.

An Investigation of Cattle Health and Management Practices on Organic Dairy Farms.

Very little is known about disease prevalence on organic dairy herds, their best management practices or effective treatment options. Dr. Ulrike Sorge (U of MN Veterinary Medicine) and Brad Heins are collaborating on the study that will survey organic dairy producers in Minnesota and Ontario, Canada about their management practices, herd health concerns, as well as commonly used treatment options. Because organic dairy producers cannot use antibiotic treatments, the identification of effective treatments without antibiotics will also benefit conventional dairy production systems, which are under ever increasing pressure from consumers and political bodies to decrease the use of antibiotics in food animal production systems. Through this project we will survey North American organic dairy producers about their management practices, disease prevalence and treatment options and compare the practices with those of conventional dairy farms in the United States. We will compare management practices on American organic dairy farms with those of Canadian organic dairy farms and identify associations between disease prevalence and management practices on organic dairy farms. ◆

Classified Ads

Livestock

Fly Parasites: Fly parasites prevent adult fly emergence. These tiny beneficial insects kill fly pupae and use the killed pupae as "nurseries" to grow new parasites. Natural! Reduces Chemical Use! IPM Laboratories, Inc., Email: orders@ipmlabs.com, Phone: 315-497-2063

Feed, Seed & Bedding

Certified Organic HAY - Round 4 1/2 X 4, 650# bales. Timothy, and Alfalfa/grass mix - stored inside and out. Also Organic TIMOTHY SEED. Contact Jeff @ 607-566-8477 (Avoca, NY)

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 100 bales of baleage for sale. Mostly grass, harvested the first week of June, 2011. $55/bale, Twin Oaks Dairy LLC, Truxton, NY, Phone: 607-842-6631, Email: randkarnold1@JUNO.COM.

Wrapped Round Bales, certified organic by VOF, 1st, 2nd and 3rd cut round bales available , $40 each. Contact Jack Lazor, Butterworks Farm: 802-744-6855 or cell: 802-999-7722 or email: Jack@butterworksfarm.com

Open Pollinated Corn Seed - Silage, Grain, Wild life plots * Available Certified Organic * Early Varieties, Wapsie Valley 85 Day, Dublin 87 Day MN (13) 87 Day, Reid Yellow dent 90 Day, Silver King 100 day Reid Yellow Dent 100 day and Lancaster sure crop 120 Day, Golden Bantam Sweet corn, Black Jack pop corn, Japanese Hulles Pop corn*Free Catalog * Green Haven Open Pollinated Seed Group 607 566 9253, www.openpollinated.com

Employment:

Part time help needed on an organic dairy farm in Randolph Center,Vermont. Work will include some vegetable production, and there is the potential for full time employment. For more information, contact Chet Abbot at 802-279-3276 or email: cdabbot@gmail.com

Equipment:

Covar Drag (weed tiner for corn crop), located in East Central Wisconsin, Dodge County. For more information call Gordy Giese at 920-904-4962

Organic Dairy Herd, Parlor, Computerized Milking System….
If some brave family with unpaid family labor or an R.N. or preferably a doctor would like to move to Beautiful Maine and ship organic milk, the Horizon and Organic Valley trucks go by every other day. We will sell you an excellent herd of approximately 80 Holsteins and 30 bred heifers, presently milking over 70 lbs per day and are Fall claviers. We have oceans of excellent haulage and corn silage. Also a double 6 Herringbone parlor, 12 units, computerized automatic take-off, Boumatic, nice milk room, and free stalls. If you have the desire to do things right and neat, contact me. No harm in having natural gas money burning a hole in your pocket. First class school system 1.5 miles away. Contact at 207-754-3871 or caldwellfarmsmaine.com or rvccow@megalink.net.

NET UPDATES

Recent ODairy Discussions

continued from page 35

3 liters of oral electrolytes and homeopathic support with Aconite, Apis, Phytolacca, and Belladonna given 3 times a day for that first day. Other farmers suggested that she "strip, strip, strip" to clean out her udder, apply Dynamint cream on the udder, give immune boosting boluses like Crystal Creek's Super Boost, and offer aloe pellets. One farmer proposed that she call the vet since there could be several things going on at once.

A farmer shared a classic technique for determining subclinical milk fever: pinch up the skin at her withers, and look to see if she opens her mouth and sticks out her tongue. Some farmers shared that if the cow was not down, they would administer the calcium under the skin for a slower release (but never dextrose under the skin). One farmer would give an extra bottle under the skin after administering a calcium IV. Generally, the sub-Q route is too slow if the cow is down. A farmer asked about giving a bottle in the peritoneum: three vets responded that this was a dangerous procedure for the cow, and there is no advantage over administering calcium solutions sub-Q. The risk of serious infections is too great to consider this a reasonable practice. Their advice: stick to IV or sub-Q administration of calcium gluconate. One of the vets went on to suggest that CMPK solution should not be used for milk fever cows -- only calcium gluconate. He said cows only rarely need magnesium; the phosphorous in these mixes is generally unavailable to the cow, and milk fever cows don't need dextrose.

A producer had a calf diagnosed with tetanus. Symptoms came on suddenly: flat out, breathing hard, 104 degree temperature, and stiff muscles. Another producer had a calf with tetanus recently and added symptoms such as "holding the tail out like a pump handle", a stiff gait, and the third eyelid kept covering part of its eye. That producer had to treat with penicillin to save the calf. ◆

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

eOrganic Updates

Join eOrganic's dairy team for two upcoming webinars. These web-based seminars are free and open to the public. The presentations are available to you as a live broadcast or as a recording about a week following the live version.

- **May 15, 2 pm ET.** Organic Weed Management on Livestock Pastures with Dr. Sid Bosworth, University of Vermont
- **June 19, 2 pm ET.** Breeding and Genetics: Considerations for Organic Dairy Farms with Dr. Brad Heins, University of Minnesota
- **Did you miss the April 19 live broadcast** of the Fly Management for Organic Dairy Farms workshop? No worries, the presentations are posted on eOrganic's webinar page.

Information on all can be found at: http://www.extension.org/pages/25242/webinars-by-eorganic

Calendar

continued from page 37

June 8, 2012
Rodale Institute Farmer Training: Transition to Organic Farming
Kutztown, Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Women's Agriculture Network presents its annual tour of Rodale Institute. Tour Rodale's newly established apiary; learn about Organic Dairy Transition; and take a wagon tour of Rodale's livestock production and composting facilities. contact Patty Neiner at 814-865-7031, or go to: http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/node/2710

June 20th, 2012, 1-3pm.
Staying Small Through a Century of Dairy Farming
Brooktondale, NY

Aaron and Calib Snow will present Staying Small Through a Century of Dairy Farming. The farm has been in the Snow family for three generations. A year and a half ago Calvin (father) and Aaron (son) started producing cheese from a small percentage of milk to sell locally. Snofarm is milking 35 cows, primarily Holsteins, a few Dutch Belts and a few Brown Swiss. The afternoon will consist of field, barn, and cheese making facility tours and discussion. (Snofarm Dairy. 644 Buffalo Rd, Brooktondale, NY 14817). To register, contact Monika Roth, 607-272-2292, mr55@cornell.edu

June 21-23, 2012
NFU Women's Conference: Empowering Farm Women
NFU Education Center, Bailey, Colorado

Based on the well-respected "Annie's Project" education program, a conference for farm and rural women is being organized by the National Farmers Union. The event, set for June 21-23, will provide participants with tools and information to confidently manage risks in their farm or ranch operations. More information and registration details are available at http://nfu.org/education/adult-education, or contact Maria Miller Director of Education, National Farmers Union , Cell: 202.697.0128, mmiller@nfudc.org.

June 30th, 2012, 11 am – 2 pm
Achieving Low Somatic Cell Count on Small Herds
Ancramdale, NY, (Hudson Valley)

Lowell "Jim" Davenport will present, Achieving Low Somatic Cell Count on Small Herds. The Davenports consistently produce high quality milk from their herd of 60 cows with average somatic cell count less than 100,000. Due to this low somatic cell count, Jim has been able to capitalize on working cooperatively with some other dairy producers to process and market their milk under the Hudson Valley Fresh label. Their milk has gained a reputation of being high quality and marketing

continued on page 40

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

Become a Member of MODPA!

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Certified Organic Dairy? Yes No # of cows: _____

Transitioning: _____

I wish to support MODPA (check whatever applies):

___ By becoming a state rep or director.

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

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

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

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

Prsrt Std
US Postage Paid
Permit 8
S. Deerfield, MA

CALENDAR

continued from page 39

of the milk under this label continues to expand. Jim also is a firm believer in feeding a high forage diet to his herd and has developed a system to take advantage of the soil resources at the farm to consistently produce high quality forages. To register, contact Stephen Hadcock, 518-380-1497, seh11@cornell.edu

July 11th, 2012, 10 am – 2 pm
On Farm Energy Production (Oilseed Press/Grass Pellet Demonstration) Groton, NY, (Cortland County)
Ed and Eileen Scheffler will host On Farm Energy Production (Oilseed Press/ Grass Pellet Demonstration). Ed& Eileen have purchased an Oilseed Press through an Organic Valley project. They will demonstrate the oilseed press. The Schefflers will talk about how their plans have evolved and what their goals are now for the oilseed press. Other farmers will join in leading the discussion as well. John Stoker an organic dairy farmer from Cazenovia NY will talk about his business pressing oilseeds for human consumption. Matt Dedrick, a crop Farmer form Lansing NY will bring his homemade grass pellet maker for demonstration. To register, contact Fay Benson 607-745-3807, afb3@cornell.edu

July 25-27, 2012
Mid-Atlantic Dairy Grazing Conference and Organic Dairy Field Day Chestertown, MD
Contact: Steve Washburn, Email: Steve_Washburn@ncsu.edu