NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Lynd Family Farm, Walden, VT

by Sonja Heyck-Merlin

"This land had been hayed until it was moss and strawberries," first-generation dairy farmers Geordie and Emery Lynd recounted of their early days on their hillside Vermont farm. "When we came here our 100 plus acres of grass was just enough to pasture 35 head and make 70 round bales and a few hundred square bales."

In June of 2010, barely in their mid 20's, this optimistic couple closed on the tuckered out 290 acre farm during the midst of the downward economic plunge that impelled organic dairy consumers back to the conventional cooler. The farm, located in Caledonia County, in the hamlet of Walden, is perched at 1700 feet on the north facing side of an open hill exposed to the wrath of the Northeast Kingdom's notoriously long winters and fierce gales.

The region was dubbed the Northeast Kingdom

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Profitability of Organic Dairy Farms Up Slightly in 2014

By Bob Parsons, Ph.D, UVM Extension

A study on the economics of organic dairy, involving 35 Vermont dairy farms for the 2014 tax year, found that Return on Assets (ROA) increased slightly from 1.6% (2013) to 1.9% in 2014. The study was conducted with the cooperation of the University of Vermont Extension, NOFA-Vermont, Vermont organic dairy farmers, and the generous financial support from Stonyfield Farms, Yankee Farm Credit, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, and Green Mountain Feeds.

Data was collected from farm visits and compiled to compare balance sheets and accrual income for the 2014 tax year. The farms ranged in size from 26.5 to 98.5 cows. All farms have been certified organic for at least 5 years. Only one of the farms raised some grain, and 5 of the farms did not any feed grain for at least part of the year.

For 2014, the farms in the study averaged 57.7 (56.2 in 2013) cows producing 12,765 lbs. (13,144 lbs. in 2013) of milk per cow and sold 749,955 lbs. (739,986 lbs. in 2013) of milk per farm. Average milk price for the year was $35.09/cwt, up $1.40/cwt from 2013. The farms averaged a net revenue of $47,603

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the NODPA President

The seed catalogs in the mailbox are a sure sign of spring, just like the sun setting a minute or two later each day. Winter over most of the Northeast had been mild so far, and we can be thankful for the reprieve.

The dark of winter gives us a time to reflect on the past year, and to plan for the coming season. I would also add that it's a good time to become a mentor for a young or beginning farmer in your area, if you are not doing so already. At every farm meeting I attend, it is dominated by my gray-haired peers. We are the average farmer, somewhere in their late 50's. Among these "average" folks is a great deal of knowledge and experience that could really benefit a beginning farmer. Young farmers need to feel that they have a group of experienced people to bounce ideas off, to ask questions, to express their dreams, and vent their frustrations. Many of the certifiers have mentoring programs already in place to connect people, and don't forget to encourage young and beginning farmers to use the ODairy listserv to instantly connect with other organic dairy producers, veterinarians, and industry specialists.

From all of us here at NODPA, we wish you a healthy and prosperous New Year! One of the great things that happened during the NODPA Field Days last October was the installation of Kirk Arnold to the NODPA Board as Vice-President. I have asked Kirk to briefly introduce himself to all of you here:

Hello NODPA Members, I guess introductions are in order. I'm Kirk Arnold, co-owner-operator, along with my mother Kathie Arnold, of Twin Oaks Dairy in Truxton, NY. We milk a pretty constant 125 cows year-round. We farm just over 700 acres and normally grow 40 acres of corn for high moisture shell corn along with sometimes growing some triticale. The rest is long term pasture/hay ground. I'm happy to have joined the NODPA crew and I look forward to working with the other board members on any ongoing issues of organic dairying and any new challenges that may surface. Our farm has enjoyed the recent strong demand for milk and expanding organic milk markets that have come to the northeast over the last couple of years.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the NODPA Desk: January 2016

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Welcome to 2016, I think!

For most organic dairies, 2016 promises to be one of the better years, at least economically. In our round-up of producers, it is evident that as the pay price improves, producers are able to move forward with improvements that have been shelved, since previously, there was no money left after paying for essential inputs. They see some reason for optimism. Bob Parsons has continued with his excellent long term study of farm profitability and indicates in his article, in this issue, that there is cause for optimism for those more efficient producers but still concern for those that are unable to perform well. USDA is also promising the publication of the Origin of Livestock Final Rule early in 2016 which will bring clarity to the rules around transitioning, and some uniformity amongst different certifiers. USDA AMS has published the Final Rule on the exemption of all organic operations from paying into the check-off program. They promised it in 2015 and have delivered. (Please see the press release on page 6 of this issue.) This exemption will benefit processors who will not have to pay twenty cent per hundred pounds of milk into the Fluid Milk Processor Promotion Program. This will be a great opportunity for the processors to show that they are working for producers by increasing the pay price by the same amount that they get credited from the check-off program. Certainly there is no need to divert any money into advertising since supply is not enough to meet current demand. IF there is one lesson that processors have hopefully learned from the last three years is that you can't jump start organic dairy production overnight and you need a pay price that continually reflects costs of production and an adequate return on investment. Keeping the pay price low from 2012 to 2015 didn't encourage production or give producers confidence in a future market.

For the New Year, OTA is spearheading a series of programs through the USDA that might increase income for industry or sales of organic product but will do nothing to encourage a realistic pay price for producers or a secure long-term market. Despite a long history of problems within USDA in running their programs, OTA appears to have a naïve belief that by attaching the word organic to a program, it will be administered correctly and fairly by USDA.

OTA has applied to the USDA for a hearing on changes to the Federal Milk Marketing Orders. The OTA's organic fluid milk working group's member companies of Aurora Organic Dairy, CROPP Cooperative, d/b/a Organic Valley, and White Wave have been working on a proposal for a hearing that would lower payments made to the Producer Settlement Fund (PSF). PSF is a fund maintained by the Milk Pooling Branch to adjust the differences between the amounts owed for milk by various handlers under a market-wide pool; those that market milk at a higher price to retail pay into the fund and those that get a lower price for manufacturing milk draw from the fund to maintain a stable price for producers. The intent of this pooling is to ensure that all producers are paid a fair price. In the OTA proposal's language, there is no mandate that the money not paid into the PSF will go to producers and no commitment by the individual companies that it will. OTA claims anti-trust legal fears about collaboration on pricing as the reason they cannot mandate that the monies will go directly to producers but that does not stop the individual companies from building that mandate into their contracts and cooperative agreements without collaborating with each other. History tells us that any money generated by a change to the FMMO will be absorbed by the processor, with no commitment to increase pay price to producers. OTA's claim that a change in the FMMO will increase supply is a long stretch.

OTA is also proposing to establish a Processed Verified Transitional program that will enable transitional operations to claim a differentiation in the market place. With the saturation of labels in the market, this will just add to more confusion for buyers and consumers. It will not be policed or recognized by the USDA NOP and no matter how good the intent, it will be rife with abuse and undermine the organically certified program. Buyers already have their own programs to encourage transition and see it as a necessary part of the cost of selling organically certified product. The Processed Verified Program has come under a great deal of criticism especially from the USDA Inspector General, as have the check-off programs.

The OTA juggernaut is still moving forward to push USDA to publish a proposal for an organic check-off despite clear evidence that the organic grassroots do not want yet another federally mandated program. It is clear that the increase in demand for organic product is encouraging more imports and those imports are undermining the price paid to US producers. Europe and Australasia are looking to increase their imports of organic dairy products into the US whether it is muscle meat cuts, manufacturing trim meat, milk powder, cheese and specialty products. Organic poultry are the consumers of a large amount of organic imported grain. The Organic check-off will be a tax on producers, especially those that farm commodities like dairy, grain, and livestock, where it is easy to collect at central marketing points.

We will be paying attention to the details of all these proposals and ensuring that the producer voice is at least heard. Have a happy and safe New Year. ◆

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Dairy Farm Profitability

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before any charge for unpaid owner labor and management and principal payments were made. A charge of $37,000 for family living costs was used to represent payment to the owner, leaving a Return on Assets of 1.90% vs. 1.6% in 2013.

On average, the farms are getting along, however, there is reason for concern as 10 of the 35 farms in the study failed to provide enough income for a positive return on assets (ROA) and to meet family living needs. The sustainability of these farms is highly questionable.

The largest expenses were purchased feed (34.2% of total expenses), repairs and supplies (13.3%), labor (11.7%), and depreciation (11.2%). Of the purchased feed, 92.5% was for grain supplement. Compared to 2013, farm level organic production expenses increased about $6000 while revenue increased $8800. While this helps explain the increase in ROA, some is attributed to lower grain costs by farms beginning to produce grain free milk.

To get a better analysis of the data, the herds were examined by profit groups, which shows a sizable difference between the farms. Each group was 11-12 farms, and ranked by overall farm profitability. The three groups showed returns of 5.39%, 1.69%, and -1.95%, respectively. The High Profit group averaged more cows per farm (69.0), more milk per cow (15,115 lbs.), and a mid-range milk price ($35.00/cwt) as compared to the Middle Profit and Low Profit groups.

The Low Profit group averaged only 57.3 cows producing 11,203 lbs. of milk per cow at a farm price of $34.39 per cwt. In comparison to the High Profit group, the Low Profit group produces 3,910 lbs. less milk per cow and milks 12 fewer cows.

The Middle Profit group averaged 11 fewer cows than the Low Profit group but produce 703 lbs. more milk per cow (11,906 lbs.) and have the lowest expenses on a per farm basis, with expenses $52,905 lower than the low profit group. On a per cow basis, the Middle Profit group averaged $273 lower expenses than the Low Profit group. The key to the profitability was in the High Profit group, averaging net farm revenue of $1372 per cow vs. $1010 for the Middle Group, and only $143 for the Low Profit group. When considering the High Profit group has more cows, it's no surprise the farms with more milk per cow and more cows have a higher ROA.

The High Profit group had the highest expenses on a per farm and per cow basis. It's common behavior among businesses to spend more when you have more. Thus earning a higher income allows the High Profit group to have more money available for repairs and reinvestment that the Low Profit group is likely putting off. Interest is not a major expense category for any of the groups as the highest debt/asset ratio was 29.3% for the Low Profit group and only 18.1% for the High Profit group.

Different from last year, the High and Middle Profit groups are spending more on feed per cow at $1459 and $1343, as compared to the Low Profit group at $1311.

There is another way to keep expenses under control and that is to keep expenses under control, or as described in Farm Credit's Dairy Farm Summary, being "tight with a buck." The Middle Profit group had the lowest expenses per cow for bedding, labor, repairs, supplies, and utilities, breeding, and custom hire on a per cows basis. It appears this group fits the reputation of the Vermont Yankee Farmer of being tight with their money. This strategy may not fit everyone but works for some farmers.

Purchased feed is usually the largest expense on dairy farms. Two farms in the study have not fed grain for at least 5 years and have maintained profitability. One of the farms does purchase minerals. These 2 farms milked 53.5 and 46 cows, producing 7536 and 7160 lbs. of milk per cow in 2014. However, by eliminating purchased grain, they finished the year with net farm revenue of $65,131 and $25,399, respectively, to pay for owner family living expenses. These farms ended the year with a ROA of 5.8% and -0.07%, respectively. Both of these farms are now supplying Organic Valley with grass fed milk which today is paying an average additional premium of $5/cwt.

There are several other farms in the study that have discontinued feeding grain for only part of the year so it's difficult to make an assessment for those farms. However, the ROA for these 3 farms are 5.4%, 0.9%, and -5.6%. There does not seem to be a pattern among these farms but it will be interesting to compare them in 2015 when they will receive a higher milk price premium for their milk.

There is little doubt that organic has provided a saving lifeline to Vermont's small scale dairy farms. In discussing challenges with organic dairy farmers, more than 75% believe they would not be in business today if they had not had the option to go organic.

What does the future hold? This is a big question as nearly 30% of the farms cannot pay the owner a reasonable wage for unpaid labor and management. These farms are not economically sustainable. There is less likelihood that the next generation will be interested, willing, or able to take over a farm that cannot make breakeven returns. In the long term, these farms will most likely not survive, leaving a question as to where more organic milk will be sourced.

The question of the next generation to operate Vermont's organic farms remains a challenge. During data collection, the question of long term transition came up repeatedly. We have profitable farms with no identified successor, and we have farms that are profitable for one family but not profitable enough to support 2 families during a transition process. Clearly the question of who will

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2014 Vermont Organic Dairy Farms Averages (N=35)
Reported by Profitability Group

The University of Vermont EXTENSION

	Bottom Third N=12	Middle Third N=11	Top Third N=12	All Farms N=35
Average # of cows	57.3	45.8	69.0	57.7
Lbs shipped total	637,796	536,950	1,057,368	749,955
Lbs shipped/cow	11,203	11,906	15,115	12,765
Milk price	$34.39	$35.97	$35.00	$35.09
Receipts				
Milk sales (a)	218,530	192,786	367,928	261,661
Dairy cattle sales	4,158	1,598	5,088	3,672
Cull cow sales	10,147	4,591	15,129	10,109
Bob/Veal calf sales	1,927	678	2,440	1,710
Crop sales	7,000	1,724	1,673	3,516
Government payments	899	513	1,252	899
Patronage divendends	1,483	1,226	3,023	1,930
Custom work	0	1,179	23	378
Syrup	464	1,593	1,964	1,333
Timber	0	351	5,014	1,829
Other	782	4,687	4,864	3,409
Total Cash Receipts (b)	$245,391	$210,927	$408,396	$290,447
Accrual Revenue Adjustments				
Livestock inventory	(6,523)	3,054	(3,237)	(2,386)
Breeding livestock purchases	(583)	(55)	(1,117)	(600)
Accounts receivable (c)	(565)	2,470	3,745	1,866
Hay	(5,435)	438	(2,560)	(2,603)
Grain	(2,315)	17	(33)	(800)
Total Accrual Revenue (d)	($15,421)	$5,924	($3,202)	($4,523)
Total Farm Revenue (e)	$229,970	$216,851	$405,194	$285,924
Expenses				
Auto and truck expenses	1,053	1,795	2,089	1,641
Bedding	5,535	4,314	11,934	7,345
Breeding	2,768	2,133	3,562	2,841
Chemicals/pesticides	59	0	0	20
Custom hire:	8,949	2,688	8,006	6,658
DHIA	1,150	1,347	1,864	1,457
Fertilizers & lime	5,037	1,032	5,316	3,988
Feed - purchased grain & other	65,305	61,035	98,416	75,315
Feed - purchased forage	8,403	2,955	6,205	6,112
Fuel and Oil	11,484	6,784	10,061	9,519
Insurance	4,984	4,110	5,052	4,733
Interest	11,992	4,794	7,100	8,052
Labor	25,911	17,781	39,283	27,940
Milk Marketing	4,355	3,400	6,928	4,937
Real estate taxes (farm portion)	2,795	3,009	4,890	3,581
Rent	1,502	1,801	6,426	3,284
Repairs	19,371	7,848	22,405	16,790
Seed and plants	3,940	165	1,341	1,862
Supplies	15,734	9,622	19,182	14,995
Utilities	9,324	7,227	11,470	9,401
Vet	2,527	2,227	3,754	2,853
Miscellaneous	3,622	3,072	4,945	3,903
Total Cash Expenses (f)	$215,801	$149,137	$281,321	$217,313
Accrual Expense Adjustments				
Depreciation	21,650	20,047	37,894	26,715
Accounts payable	(15,503)	(1,552)	(1,708)	(6,389)
Pre-paid expenses	58	1,400	1,131	848
Supplies	($123)	($54)	($317)	($167)
Total Accrual Expenses (g)	$6,082	$19,841	$37,000	$21,007
Total Farm Expenses (h)	$221,883	$168,978	$318,321	$238,320
Cash Income from Milk (a-f)	$2,729	$43,649	$86,607	$44,348
Accural Income from milk (a+c-h)	($3,919)	$26,278	$53,352	$25,207
Milk Income over Feed Costs	$144,823	$128,797	$263,307	$180,409
Net Cash Farm Income (b-f)	$29,590	$61,790	$127,075	$73,133
Net Farm Revenue (e-h)	$8,087	$47,873	$86,873	$47,603
Family Living (i)	$37,000	$37,000	$37,000	$37,000
Net Cash Farm Earnings (b-f-i)	($7,410)	$24,790	$90,075	$36,133
Net Farm Earnings (e-h-i)	($28,913)	$10,873	$49,873	$10,603
Off Farm income (j)	$11,725	$16,637	$12,867	$13,661
Net Family Cash Earnings (b-f-i+j)	$4,315	$41,427	$102,943	$49,794
Net Earnings (e-h-i+j)	($17,188)	$27,511	$62,740	$24,264
Average Assets	$971,107	$726,341	$1,084,621	$933,100
Average Equity	$711,112	$595,961	$900,879	$739,985
Return on Assets	-1.95%	2.43%	5.39%	1.94%
Return on Equity	-4.61%	1.91%	5.98%	1.07%
Debt/Asset Ratio	29.29%	19.31%	18.06%	22.31%

Sincere thanks to cooperating farmers and NOFA-VT in producing this summary.
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2014 Vermont Organic Dairy Farms Averages (N=35)
Reported by Profitability Group
Per Cow

The University of Vermont EXTENSION

	Bottom Third N=12	Middle Third N=11	Top Third N=12	All Farms N=35
Average # of cows	57.3	45.8	69.0	57.7
Lbs shipped total	637,796	536,950	1,057,368	749,955
Lbs shipped/cow	11,203	11,906	15,115	12,765
Milk price	$34.39	$35.97	$35.00	$35.09
Receipts				
Milk sales (a)	3,831	4,071	5,275	4,536
Dairy cattle sales	69	33	57	64
Cull cow sales	184	119	215	175
Bob/Veal calf sales	33	20	34	30
Crop sales	107	133	28	61
Government payments	14	11	17	16
Patronage divendends	27	26	49	33
Custom work	0	18	0	7
Syrup	11	29	33	23
Timber	0	7	100	32
Other	13	119	88	59
Total Cash Receipts (b)	$4,290	$4,585	$5,896	$5,035
Accrual Revenue Adjustments				
Livestock inventory	(111)	26	(31)	(41)
Breeding livestock purchases	(13)	(1)	(19)	(10)
Accounts receivable (c)	(16)	39	54	32
Hay	(92)	3	(30)	(45)
Grain	(35)	(37)	1	(14)
Total Accrual Revenue (d)	($268)	$30	($25)	($78)
Total Farm Revenue (e)	$4,022	$4,615	$5,870	$4,957
Expenses				
Auto and truck expenses	18	37	32	28
Bedding	101	88	169	127
Breeding	48	50	57	49
Chemicals/pesticides	1	0	0	0
Custom hire:	156	106	112	115
DHIA	19	27	29	25
Fertilizers & lime	78	96	74	69
Feed - purchased grain & other	1,173	1,230	1,362	1,306
Feed - purchased forage	138	113	97	106
Fuel and Oil	201	158	147	165
Insurance	88	90	80	82
Interest	196	173	108	140
Labor	434	330	565	484
Milk Marketing	77	79	103	86
Real estate taxes (farm portion)	51	56	72	62
Rent	25	40	75	57
Repairs	337	194	335	291
Seed and plants	62	53	16	32
Supplies	264	235	266	260
Utilities	166	163	164	163
Vet	44	54	56	49
Miscellaneous	63	80	76	68
Total Cash Expenses (f)	$3,740	$3,451	$4,006	$3,767
Accrual Expense Adjustments				
Depreciation	387	389	510	483
Accounts payable	(250)	(258)	(30)	(111)
Pre-paid expenses	1	24	18	15
Supplies	($0)	($1)	($5)	($3)
Total Accrual Expenses (g)	$138	$155	$493	$364
Total Farm Expenses (h)	$3,879	$3,606	$4,498	$4,131
Cash Income from Milk (a-f)	$91	$621	$1,269	$769
Accural Income from Milk (a+c-h)	($63)	$505	$830	$437
Milk Income over Feed Costs	$2,520	$2,729	$3,816	$3,127
Net Cash Farm Income (b-f)	$549	$1,134	$1,890	$1,268
Net Farm Revenue (e-h)	$143	$1,010	$1,372	$825
Family Living (i)	$678	$859	$574	$641
Net Cash Farm Earnings (b-f-i)	($129)	$275	$1,316	$626
Net Farm Earnings (e-h-i)	($535)	$150	$798	$184
Off Farm income (j)	$213	$307	$167	$237
Net Family Cash Earnings (b-f-i+j)	$84	$582	$1,482	$863
Net Earnings (e-h-i+j)	($322)	$457	$964	$421
Average Assets	$17,571	$17,601	$16,659	$16,176
Average Equity	$13,255	$14,311	$13,929	$12,828
Return on Assets	-1.95%	1.69%	5.39%	1.94%
Return on Equity	-4.61%	0.62%	5.98%	1.07%
Debt/Asset Ratio	29.29%	18.78%	18.06%	22.31%

Sincere thanks to cooperating farmers and NOFA-VT in producing this summary.
Financial supporters include Stonyfield, Yankee Farm Credit, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Organic Valley, and Green Mountain Feeds.

Bob Parsons 802-656-2109 or bob.parsons@uvm.edu UVM Extension December 4, 2015

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

No Organic Checkoff Coalition applauds USDA finalizing organic farmers' exemption from commodity check-offs

Organic farmers no longer required to pay into programs competing with the organic market.

Contact: Kate Mendenhall (585-944-2503; organiccheckoff.no@gmail.com).

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Jan. 6, 2016) – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced they will extend the organic farmer exemption from conventional commodity checkoffs to ALL organic farmers, effective February 29, 2016. A coalition of over 20 organic farmer-based organizations and organic businesses that oppose the Organic Trade Association's (OTA) proposed organic checkoff applaud the USDA's finalization of this checkoff exemption rule. Organic farmers are no longer required to pay into conventional checkoff promotion programs that promote conventional products directly competing with their organic products. This is a big win for the organic sector—checkoff programs are not a good match for independent organic farmers.

Many organic farmer organizations supported this organic checkoff exemption in the 2014 Farm Bill so that ALL organic farmers may receive equal exemption rights. Previously only farmers who made 100% of their farm business as certified organic could participate in the exemption; now all farmers and processors, even if part of their business includes conventional crops or livestock, can exempt their organic products.

"This exemption is not tied to OTA's proposed organic check-off. They are very separate. These new regulations allow for all organic operations to exempt themselves from commodity check-offs and the promotional component of some marketing orders. This will stay in effect permanently unless an organic check-off is passed," explains Ed Maltby, Executive Director of the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Association. The coalition of organic farming organizations and businesses believes that organic farmers do not need a federally mandatory checkoff program to promote organic products.

While this organic checkoff exemption will help those producers who have split organic and conventional operations, it will not affect the majority of organic farmers says organic dairy farmer and NODPA Board President, Liz Bawden. "I know of very few organic farmers who currently pay into any of the existing checkoffs. If you have been 100% certified organic, you have been exempt from the conventional checkoff. It has only affected the parallel producers which tend to be the larger scale, commercial type operations," explains Bawden. "This exemption will not change anything at all for most of us; unlike the proposed organic checkoff, which indeed will."

Over 720 people have signed a petition to exempt organic farmers from conventional checkoffs and to stop the OTA's proposed organic checkoff, claiming lack of organic industry support for an organic-specific checkoff program. Organic Washington dairy farmer Janet Baker claims, "We as dairymen have been disenchanted with the check-off programs that are national programs. We were led to believe that they would be more efficient than our local programs, but history is not proving this to be true. The current program being offered (pushed) by the Organic Trade Association does not have the support of organic producers and would be primarily to the benefit of processors, using organic producers' money."

This organic farmer exemption from conventional checkoff programs is not tied to the creation of a new organic commodity checkoff program. Organic farmers are now exempt from all conventional checkoff programs and the promotional components of federal marketing orders. The No Organic Checkoff coalition believes that organic farmers should hold onto their marketing money and invest it into their farming businesses, not commit it to a new federal mandatory organic checkoff program. ◆

For more information on why organic farmers oppose OTA's organic check-off research and promotion program proposal, see www.noorganiccheckoff.com.

The federally administered check-off programs from which organic operations may now be exempt include a variety of commodities, including milk, eggs, blueberries, beef, and more. For the complete list, see the USDA site on check-off programs. The marketing order programs from which organic operations may now be exempt can be found on USDA's website.

The No Organic Checkoff coalition is made up of over 20 not-for-profit organic farmer-member organizations as well as organic businesses. The coalition was organized specifically to support the FAIR act to exempt organic farmers from conventional checkoff programs and to OPPOSE the creation of a new federal organic checkoff program. Coalition members include: Bardessono Vineyards, Cornucopia Institute, Eden Foods, Family Farm Defenders, Food and Water Watch, Fruited Plain Seeds, Hoosier Organic Marketing Education (HOME), Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Association (NODPA), Northeast Organic Farming Association Interstate Council (NOFA-IC), Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut (CT-NOFA), Northeast Organic Farming Association of Massachusetts (NOFA/Mass), Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NOFA-NJ), Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York, Inc. (NOFA-NY), Northeast Organic Farming Association of Rhode Island (NOFA-RI), Northern Plains Sustainable Ag (NPSA), Organic Consumers Association (OCA), Organic Crop Improvement Association, International (OCIA), Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM), Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (OSGATA), Stephens Land and Cattle, Wood Prairie Farm

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Dairy Farm Profitability

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be operating Vermont's organic dairy farms in 10 years is a major question facing the organic sector.

It's also clear that some of the organic dairy farms either need a higher milk price or lower feed expenses to become more profitable. For a number of farms in the study, organic grazing rules limit the ability to add more cows as they have limited pasture availability. The milk price did increase in 2015, and may rise more in 2016. The premium for grass fed milk adds an additional option for some of the farms to increase revenue. As discussed above, not feeding grain can be done profitably. Add a price premium and it looks much more appealing but it also has management challenges.

So this brings up some big questions facing the future of Vermont organic dairy farms. Can farm milk prices continue to increase to help cover rising production costs? Will the market be able to charge more without losing customers? Can farmers find ways to reduce production costs to increase overall profitability? These are major discussion points to consider for the long term viability of organic dairy and their importance to the rural Vermont landscape.

In conclusion, organic farms are getting by. Organic production is not the road to riches for many, however it has been a key vehicle of survival for many of the smaller farms who likely would be out of business if they had not had the option to go organic. Higher milk prices are needed but can the market absorb a higher price without losing consumer demand? While the coming years likely will not see an immediate loss of organic dairy farms, there should be concern for long term viability and a sustainable and healthy supply of organic milk from Vermont farms. Without a higher price, organic dairy farms have only the same options they had available when on the conventional treadmill; add more cows and produce more milk per cow to meet rising expenses. ◆

Bob Parsons, PhD. is an Extension Agricultural Economist Professor, UVM Extension/Department of Community Development and Applied Economics, and can be reached at 802-656-2109 or by email, bob.parsons@uvm.edu

Happy New Year. Thank You For Supporting NODPA!

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

The Causes and Treatment of Diarrhea in Adult Dairy Cows

By Dr. Hubert Karreman, DVM

This time of the year, adult cows can show symptoms of digestive disturbances by having diarrhea (also known as scours). There can be various causes: nutritional, infectious, and/or toxins.

Winter dysentery is thought to be caused by an infectious agent, possibly a rota or corona virus. It mainly affects first calf heifers coming into the barn as milkers in early winter. Older cows in the herd will likely have been affected by it previously when they were first calf heifers and now they are immune. Seeing that only first calf heifers or perhaps newly added animals are displaying symptoms provides a barn diagnosis of winter dysentery. The symptoms generally are that the animals will have an explosive diarrhea of fairly watery consistency for a few days. They tend to keep eating but in a reduced manner as well as back off on milk production. But they are not overtly sick, just "slower" than normal. Most farmers will start giving some sort of probiotic product, which is definitely a good idea. However, it is not the only thing that needs to be done. Any adult cow that has diarrhea should be fed like a horse – and the Plain folk readers know exactly what I mean: dry hay and oats. Dry grassy hay, if they will eat it, will slow down the digestive tract by forming a good fiber mat in the rumen, which is the framework for dairy cow gut health. If it were pasture season, I would also recommend giving no pasture to diarrhea cows since there is not enough effective fiber in green lush pasture as compared to dry grassy hay. It's the only time I'd recommend no pasture to herbivores – simply from medical reasoning. In fact, if a cow that eats only dry grassy hay for 5 days in a row yet the diarrhea doesn't correct, then Johnes disease goes to the top of my list as a barn diagnosis. Importantly, do not feed any ensiled feeds when feeding the dry hay. Ensiled feeds, too, do not have enough effective fiber to be medically useful to a cow with diarrhea. The cow may want to eat ensiled feeds while scouring, but do not let them if you want to see them recover as quickly as possible. Feed oats, also. Oats are always good for the digestive tract…anytime. Actually, I don't think there are enough oats in dairy cow rations in general. If an animal is too loose, it will help slow things down and if too firm, it will loosen things up. It has demulcent properties (soothing and slightly coats the intestinal walls thereby protecting them) and bulks up the digestive tract in cases of constipation. They can be fed without rolling or crimping, though that would help. In a pinch, you could use human grade oats for a few days. Adding some molasses makes them more desirable, but they'll usually eat them anyway if fed as is. So for winter dysentery, if you feed dry hay, oats and probiotics you'll likely see a recovery in a couple days.

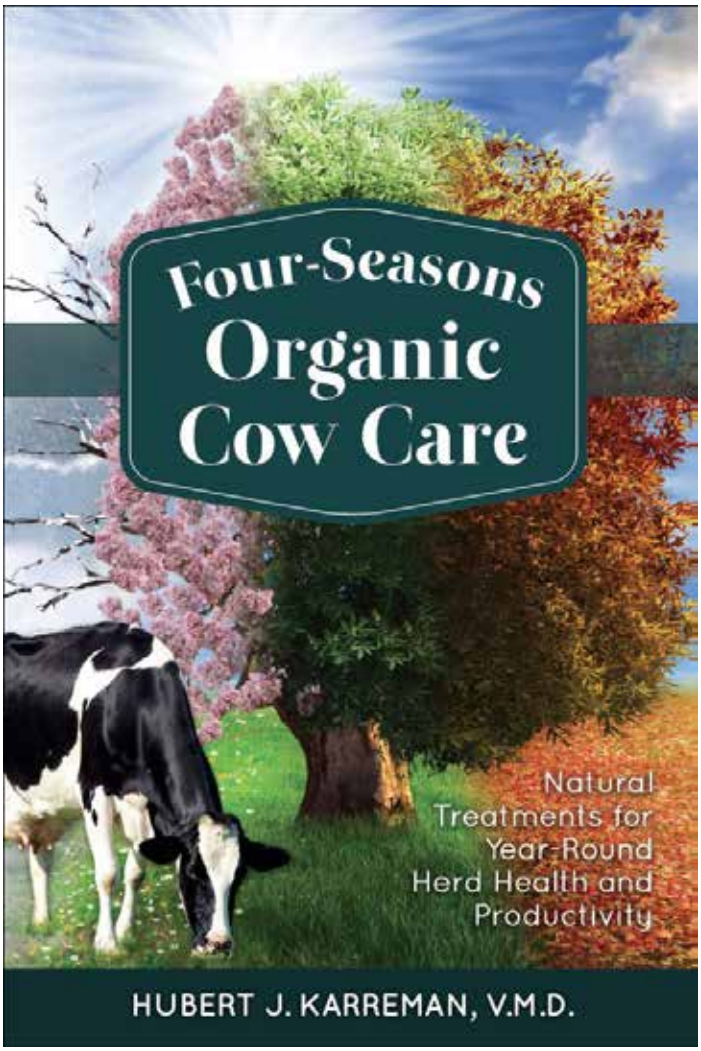
While winter dysentery is one type of bovine viral diarrhea, it is not the same as bovine virus diarrhea (BVD). Fortunately, classic BVD outbreaks are rare. I've only worked through one during 20 years of practice so far. It is a true train wreck. Cows will stop eating, break with diarrhea (sometimes bloody but not necessarily) and despite all kinds of supportive treatment they either die

in a couple days or very, very slowly return to normal. Already stressed cows (peak milk or recently fresh) will generally fare worse. If looking at the digestive tract on a post-mortem of a classic BVD case, there will be erosions and ulcerations from the virus damage throughout the whole digestive tract. In this case, since the cow doesn't want to eat, the dry hay and oats therapy is useless. The only treatment concept that would apply is to stimulate their immunity. Do this either by an injection of Immunoboost. Do not try to enhance their immunity by feeding or using aloe for diarrhea cases in general. Aloe's most widely known use for the last 100 years is as a laxative. It is contra-indicated (shouldn't be used) in cases of diarrhea of any sort.

If there is a classic BVD outbreak, a few animals will start with the symptoms and it will run its course through the herd, typical of contagious germs. Unfortunately, once the train wreck has ended, any cows that were pregnant 60-120 days will now be carrying a potential Persistently Infected (PI) calf, if it is not aborted outright. PI animals shed the virus continually as long as they are in the herd and no vaccine can overcome it. Even if no classic outbreak, a PI animal may be suspected to be in a herd if there are chronic repro or respiratory problems that don't correct with good management changes. Talk to your local veterinarian if worried about such a situation. Once a PI animal is removed, then a vaccine can prevent the situation from occurring again.

A more likely cause than BVD of diarrhea due to infection is salmonella. A barn diagnosis is made be seeing symptoms of foul smelling bloody diarrhea with some tissue sloughing of the intestinal lining. The cow will also have a fever. When checking for a fever in a cow with diarrhea, always insert a clean thermometer in the vulva to get a true temperature since you can get a false low reading if using the rectum due to much air movement with bouts of diarrhea. If you do have a cow with bloody diarrhea, a fever and off-feed, get your local veterinarian in. Treatment by tubing in mineral oil as a lubricant for the gut lining to not re-absorb toxins along with activated charcoal is essential. Also, intravenous treatment with antibodies (Bovi-Sera/Multi-Serum), vitamin C and any professionally made garlic tincture is needed. A repeat treatment may be needed the next day. Salmonella is contagious so the cow (and her milk) should be separated to not spread it. Do not consume milk from a salmonella cow.

A common cause for any adult cows to break with watery, explosive diarrhea is due to a nutritional reason. First thing that comes to mind when feeding ensiled feeds would be possible moldy feed. Ensiled feed is wonderful if it is sound. But there's basically nothing worse than feeding silages with molds in them. The problem is that the molds aren't always visible – often times it is visible but not always. The treatment here (again) would be to remove all silages and feed only dry hay, oats and probiotics for 4-5 days. This is probably the easiest situation in which to correct the digestive tract – simply remove offending feed and replace with good feed. Unfortunately there is usually a whole lot of the offending feed remaining in the inventory. Talking to your local nutritionist about if the feed is "good enough" or too poor



Dr. Karreman's new book, published by Acres USA, is available on January 15, 2016

to keep feeding is a good conversation to have. There are many "binders" out there – products which adsorb the toxins and carry them out of the animal without being absorbed. The first one that comes to mind is Dyna-Min as there are many people that are pleased with the results they see (also in cases of possible rumen acidosis). Since a binder will likely be needed for a time to come, make sure that it doesn't also rob the animal of nutrients while it carries the toxins away.

Another simple reason adult cows will scour is that there is a sudden feed change. It takes about two weeks for the rumen bugs to adjust to new materials coming into the rumen, so gradual change is always the goal. But in reality there'll usually be a completely new feed added in from one feeding to the next. It shouldn't be surprising that those animals at peak milk or just fresh are usually the first ones affected. If possible, feed some extra dry hay during the first 3-4 days of a ration change. It allow the cow to continue to chew cud, thus creating bicarb-rich saliva, which will help buffer the rumen environment to a degree while various bugs die off and others begin to be generated due to the new feed stuffs.

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Diarrhea Treatments

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Regardless of the cause of adult cow diarrhea, do not try to constipate ("plug up") a cow that has diarrhea with anti-diarrhea pills– let things work through to get rid of any toxins. The anti-diarrhea pills usually don't work well anyway, in my experience.

Notice the common thread for treating diarrhea? If they will eat, go with dry grassy hay. Unfortunately, some farms don't have any dry grass hay on hand. Truly, a dairy farm can never have enough dry grassy on hand. A handful of farms will make dry hay from a "weedy" field since those "weeds" actually have a wide variety of medicinal properties. After all, weeds can be feeds. Yes, cows will milk more when fed silages and grain but their digestive system may be a ticking time bomb. Truly, the gut is the basis for a well-functioning immune system – and basic nutritional concepts are needed to provide robust health. The main concept for dairy cows is to let them eat grass – that would be pasture when it is growing (if they aren't scouring) and dry hay all the time. It provides the effective fiber for a good fiber mat in the rumen and cud to chew for good saliva/bicarb production. That's all a cow really wants. We feed her other things to make lots of milk or we add new animals and sometimes disease creeps in. But honestly it's very simple back-to-basics for cows with diarrhea: feed dry grassy hay, oats and probiotics for 4-5 days and she should be set to go again. ◆

Grass Fed Opportunities

The 2016 conference of the Lancaster County Graziers to be held February 16th & 17th in Ronks, PA

If grass management and its potential interest you, this is a must-attend conference. This 2-day meeting will focus on setting goals and steering your farm in a profitable and healthy direction. A nationally known list of speakers, including Paul and Phyllis Van Amburgh, Alan Nation, Sarah Flack, Gilson Martin and Amos Miller, will be presenting on the opportunities and challenges of grass-based dairy.

The meeting will take place at the headquarters of Lancaster Ag, 60 North Ronks Road, Ronks, PA 17572. There will be a tradeshow, plenty of delicious local food, and lots of time to meet old friends and make new ones. For more information, and to register, contact Roman Stoltzfoos by phone, 717-278-1070, or by email, romans@springwoodfarm.com.

23rd Annual Southeast PA Grazing Conference
Tuesday-Wednesday, February 16 & 17, 2016

Lancaster Ag Headquarters - Ronks, PA
60 North Ronks Road, Ronks, PA 17572
Sponsored by Lancaster County Graziers

Tuesday - February 16, 2016

8:00 A.M. Registration - Visit with Exhibitors.
9:00 A.M. Paul & Phyllis Van Amburgh - How We Started and Developed Goals For Our Farm.
10:00 A.M. Break for snacks. Visit with speakers.
11:00 A.M. Gilson Martin - Developing Goals For Your Soil.
12:00 P.M. Lunch - Visit With Exhibitors and Network with Other Graziers.
1:30 P.M. Amos Miller - Direct Marketing Goals: What We Learned In 10 Years
2:30 P.M. Alan Nation - Golden Opportunities in Grass - Part 1.

Wednesday - February 17, 2016

8:00 A.M. Registration - Visit with Exhibitors.
9:00 A.M. Paul & Phyllis Van Amburgh - Using the Way We Farm to Market Milk.
10:15 A.M. Break for snacks. Visit with speakers.
11:00 A.M. Sarah Flack - Grazing Basics - Realistic Goals - Part 1.
12:00 Noon Lunch - Visit with Exhibitors and Network with Other Graziers.
1:30 P.M. Alan Nation - Golden Opportunities in Grass - Part 2.
2:30 P.M. Sarah Flack - Avoiding Pitfalls - Resetting Goals - Part 2.

Cost: *Preregistered - $55.00 per person; $35.00 per additional person(s) from the same household (registration must be postmarked by February 10, 2016). Late registration and walk-ins: $70.00 per person. Lunch included both days.*

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Magnesium Utilization for Better Soil Fertility: Part 1

By Neal Kinsey

There are some important foundational principles for understanding and utilizing magnesium to achieve excellent soil fertility. It is important to correctly utilize it in terms of soil fertility for the most positive effect on pasture, hay and silage crops and for the greatest benefit to the soil where those plants will be grown. The overall concept hearkens back to the definition in agronomy textbooks concerning what makes up an ideal soil. That ideal soil is described as 25% air, 25% water, 45% mineral and 5% organic matter.

Most soils fall short of the ideal in some way. Clay soils are generally too tight, and due to a lack of calcium (which can be true even on high pH soils), they contain inadequate pore space resulting in too much water and not enough air for the ideal soil environment. Such soils tend to stay wet longer and become harder to work as they dry out. Sandy soils tend to have the opposite problem – too much air and not enough water – but they will still pack down and become hard when worked too wet, especially so when magnesium levels are excessive.

So then what if a farm is such that it falls into one of the above categories? What if you don't have that ideal soil? What has to be done to achieve it? Unless the approach of systematically building soil fertility developed by the late Dr. William Albrecht (a soil scientist of both microbiology and agronomy, and in that specific order over the span of his career at University of Missouri) is utilized, I know of no program that will propose it can be done at all. And the simple answer he would give is to correct the soil chemistry, which will build as closely as possible the correct physical structure (25% air, 25% water, 45% mineral and 5% humus) which in turn supplies the proper environment for the soil biology (roots, worms, microbes, etc.). Once accomplished, this provides the nutrients required to grow the most vigorous and nutritious plants.

But the problem is, even when a soil is, or becomes, ideal for growing crops, without adding back the nutrients that are being removed, it will not remain in ideal condition. This is what has happened to so many soils in the world. Over time they have lost nutrients which have not been identified and put back, or in some cases have not been replaced in the proper amounts.

For a large majority of the soils in the world, whether or not they are being used to grow plants and crops, specifically achieving the correct percentages of calcium and magnesium provides the basic requirements for this equation. For medium to heavy soils the numbers are 68% calcium and 12% magnesium, or as close as is feasible to achieve that (for example 66 – 70% calcium and 10-12% magnesium should provide extremely satisfactory results). In such soils emphasis is placed on pushing the percentage of calcium toward the 70% mark and supplying enough magnesium to keep it above 10%, but below 12% for best overall results.

CAUTION: Soil test numbers for calcium saturation can be EXTREMELY variable and should not be assumed to mean the same based on tests done by another soil laboratory. Some labs show 75% calcium when our test numbers show 70%, others show 65% when ours is 70%. Not to say those numbers are not correctly determined, but that soils we would say are ideal from our testing would not necessarily appear to be the ideal when accepting the calcium number as meaning the same thing if analyzed by another laboratory.

When the presence of available soil calcium is correctly measured, soils that are most lacking, as reflected by lower and lower calcium percentages, will be the hardest to work. As the calcium need is determined and correctly increased to achieve the required percentage, the soil actually becomes more friable. Such soils are easier to work up, have better water penetration and possess a better relationship of air to water due to the effects of better soil porosity. This happens because calcium causes the clay particles to flocculate, meaning they will tend to clump up into tighter aggregates. Thus we show our clients that when needed, calcium (as determined by achieving the correct percentage for that soil) increases soil porosity and helps to loosen tight soils.

On the other hand, on sandy soils the problem is too much porosity – too much air space - allowing the soil to dry out more quickly and lose needed moisture for growing crops. Under such circumstances the soil needs to be treated in a manner that emphasizes attracting and holding more water. Magnesium is the answer, but not too much, and not too little. The proper amount for building the most productive sandy soils involves providing enough to supply at least 200 lbs./acre of magnesium - heavier sands may require up to 250 lbs./acre - and yet preferably should not exceed 20% saturation for that particular soil in the process.

Note that adequate magnesium for the crop on sand or clay also has great importance for fertilizer utilization. This will be covered in Part II on this subject in the next issue.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Research Update: Emergency Forage Crop Options

By Kara Lynn Dunn

Northern New York Agricultural Development Program-funded research on double cropping winter forage small grains with corn crops to boost the dairy feed supply caught the eye of Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance News Editor Nora Owens, but she asked can the data be translated for organic producers.

Before we answer Nora's question about whether the data from the field trials on the conventional farms can be converted for organic producers (the answer is yes), let's look at information from the NNYADP Winter Forage Small Grains to Boost Feed Supply report with both production data and an economic assessment of cost vs. the expected forage value of a successful double crop.

Research led by Dr. Quirine M. Ketterings of the Nutrient Management Spear Program at Cornell University is evaluating the use of winter small grains on land also used to grow corn for silage on conventional dairy farms in the northern NY six-county region. The goal is to grow a second forage crop without negatively impacting corn yield.

The farmer-driven Northern New York Agricultural Development Program funded the research to investigate double cropping as a way to improve feed inventories to cover potential emergency needs caused by weather conditions and unexpected events.

"Low forage inventories helped prompt the use of cereal rye as a risk management strategy by several farmers in northern New York in recent years," says Dr. Kitty O'Neil, NNY regional field crops and soils specialist with Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Crop consultant Eric Bever, Champlain Valley Agronomics, Peru, NY, notes, 'With our short growing season and increasing erratic weather, many growers are in need of forage supply beyond what their acreage can provide with traditional single-planted crops. The field research funded by the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program and conducted with the expertise provided by Cornell University is invaluable for providing data that crop consultants and growers can use to identify the best applications for economic return,' Bever added.

The research was prompted by a main question identified by farmers and researchers alike: how much fertilizer N is needed at green-up to grow high yielding and high quality winter cereals for forage, for fields with and fields without a manure application history (fall application).

Data from a 2011-2012 study conducted at the Valatie Research Farm in eastern NY suggested the application of N at green-up contributed to higher forage yields for both wheat and triticale. Fields with a manure history and manure applied shortly after the planting of the winter cereal are not expected to need any starter fertilizer, but the data suggest that for optimum yield, the crop might need some additional N when dormancy breaks in the spring.

Current farmer practice of applying 50-100 pounds of actual N per acre had seemed to work well, but no data were available to conclude how much N is needed at green-up for either manured or non-manured fields.

The data from field trials in 2013 and 2014 in northern NY evaluated triticale and cereal rye yield and crop responsiveness to N fertilizer addition at green-up in March and April. A broad brush summary of the data shows that while half of the participating farms in NNY did not need to apply additional nitrogen fertilizer to reach crop yield potentials, others needed to apply 75 to 100 lbs. of nitrogen per acre to reach optimum yield for the additional winter forage crop. Similar results were obtained for fields in other parts of New York state.

What about forage quality?

The report data shows that crude protein (CP) content of the double crop forage increased with increasing fertilizer N addition. Crude protein content at the optimum N rate ranged from 8.6% to 19.4% for NNY sites, comparable to an average of 13% CP without N addition and 18% to 20% CP at the highest two N rates across all NY sites over the two-year study.

However, CP levels without N addition showed a wide range among sites, from a low of 7.5% to a high of 19% CP (statewide), showing that fertilizer N is not necessarily needed to increase CP to desirable levels. At three quarters of the sites, neutral detergent fiber (NDF) levels decreased with increasing fertilizer N addition. Across all sites, NDF content at the highest two N rates was 2.1% to 3.1% lower than NDF forage content with no N addition. All other forage parameters were not significantly altered with N application, but did vary among sites in the NNY subset.

How do the economics add up?

"It was important to consider what yield levels are needed to ensure that adoption of double cropping winter cereal grains is a profitable change for farmers to make," Dr. Ketterings says.

For the NNY sites, economic analyses showed minimum double crop yields of 0.7 to 1.0 tons DM/acre are needed for a positive return on investment if the yield of corn following the double crop is not impacted and winter cereals can be grown without N input. When N applications of 75 lbs N/acre are needed to reach optimum yield and corn silage yield is reduced by 1 ton DM/acre, minimum yield ranged from 1.9 to 2.3 tons DM/acre.

"Winter cereal seed and planting costs, fertilizer use, tillage practices, machinery availability, the value of a winter cereal as a forage to the farm, yield levels, possible yield reduction for a shorter-season corn variety after winter cereals, and other factors all impact profit associated with incorporation of double crops

into corn cropping systems," Dr. Ketterings adds.

She emphasizes that double cropping decisions must be made on an individual farm and field basis, taking into account manure histories, soil fertility levels and expected spring harvesting date for the double crop and the planting date for the corn crop.

A Cornell University field technician stakes a double cropping trial for sampling. Photo: Cornell University NMSP

In St. Lawrence County, Brandy View Farm Manager Greg Hargrave grew 70 acres of triticale as part of the early field trials in the NNY region. He noted, 'Getting two crops off the same acreage makes sense for efficiency. This field research showed us that you must prepare and plan for a double crop and you need to be ready to move with your equipment in a timely manner if you are going to be successful with both crops.'

What NODPA Members Really Want to Know

New York Organic Dairy Initiative Coordinator Fay Benson with Cornell Cooperative Extension says double cropping has huge potential to help organic dairies but some critical information is needed to assure success under organic practices. For example, what organic source equivalent of nitrogen is needed to assure quality and yield of both crops in a double cropping system.

Benson suggested contacting Tom Kilcer with Advanced Ag Systems, Kinderhook, NY, to ask about his current research that will help answer the questions organic dairy farmers need to know about how well double cropping might fit their farms.

Kilcer is a Certified Crop Advisor with 34 years as a Cornell Cooperative Extension multi-county field crop and soils educator and agriculture/horticulture program leader. He has been a private consultant for three years working in multiple states.

With grants from the New York Farm Viability Institute, Kilcer is investigating the use of fall-planted forage crops and the use of red clover as a soil nitrogen builder to support winter forage production.

His current projects include quantifying fall nitrogen needs to supply sufficient N for quality winter forage production while also storing N in living tissue to support spring harvested crops.

As this is determined, manure could be substituted to meet these needs in organic systems.

"We have coordinated with Dr. Ketterings' research to calculate the nitrogen needed for fall and spring applications of dairy and cow manure to support spring forage harvest. My analysis includes the use of data from her field trials, including those in northern New York, that show good double crop yields can be achieved without negatively impacting either crops or the environment (due to nutrient loss)," Kilcer says.

He is currently calculating the conventional to organic N needs conversion to help better estimate how much organic source nitrogen would be needed by the planting dates to support double cropping on organic dairy farms.

"We also know that the fall planting date is a critical factor for success. Planting late versus earlier can have a huge impact on how much nitrogen is available and taken up by the plants," Kilcer notes.

An extreme dry spell in 2015 prevented the collection of useful data. Kilcer has requested extended NYFVI funding to repeat field trials to determine the best combination of fall/spring nitrogen supply based on planting date.

Kilcer is also developing the use of short rotations using red clover

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Organic Production

Emergency Forage Crop Options

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plowed down in August to support spring triticale harvest. "Outside the box thinking" is how he describes a related third project.

"Corn crops require a lot of cultivating that can really beat up the soil. I am suggesting that triticale could be grown as grain to replace corn crops," Kilcer says. "I am also bullish on winter triticale as a forage option for organic livestock and dairy producers. Feeding a maximum amount of high quality forage provides organic producers with cost efficiency."

As of late December, Dr. Ketterings was evaluating the results of field trials statewide to develop nitrogen fertilizer guidelines for double-cropped winter grains. More information is expected in the spring of 2016.

Learn More

On February 9, 2016, Tom Kilcer will be the featured presenter at the New York Certified Organic (NYCO) meeting at 10 am at the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY. He will talk about double cropping for organic farms. NYCO meetings are free, include a bring-your-own dish potluck lunch, and draw grain and dairy farmers from across New York state. For more information, contact Fay Benson at 607.753.5213, afb3@cornell.edu.

The Northern New York Agricultural Development Program provides research and technical assistance program to farmers in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties. Funding for the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program is supported by the New York State Senate and administered through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Where to Find More Information

- Northern New York Agricultural Development Program: www.nnyagdev.org
- Find double-cropping research reports under Field Crops: Cover Crops.
- Cornell Nutrient Management Spear Program: http://nmsp.cals.cornell.edu
- Advanced Ag Systems: http://advancedagsys.com/
- New York Certified Organic: Contact Fay Benson at 607.753.5213, afb3@cornell.edu
- New York Farm Viability Institute: www.nyfvi.org

Kara Lynn Dunn is the publicist for the Northern New York Agricultural Development Program. She can be reached at 315.465.7578, karalynn@gisco.net,www.nnyagdev.org.

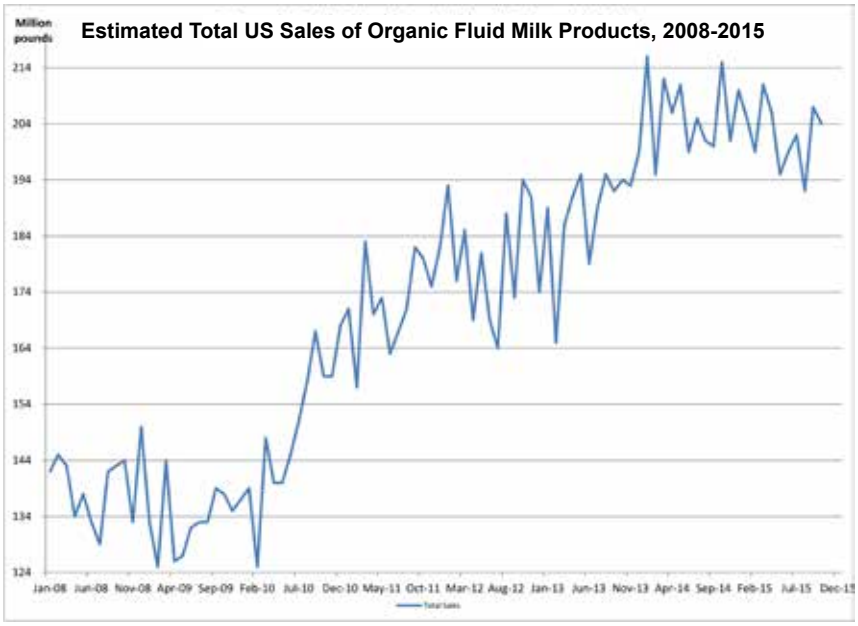
ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

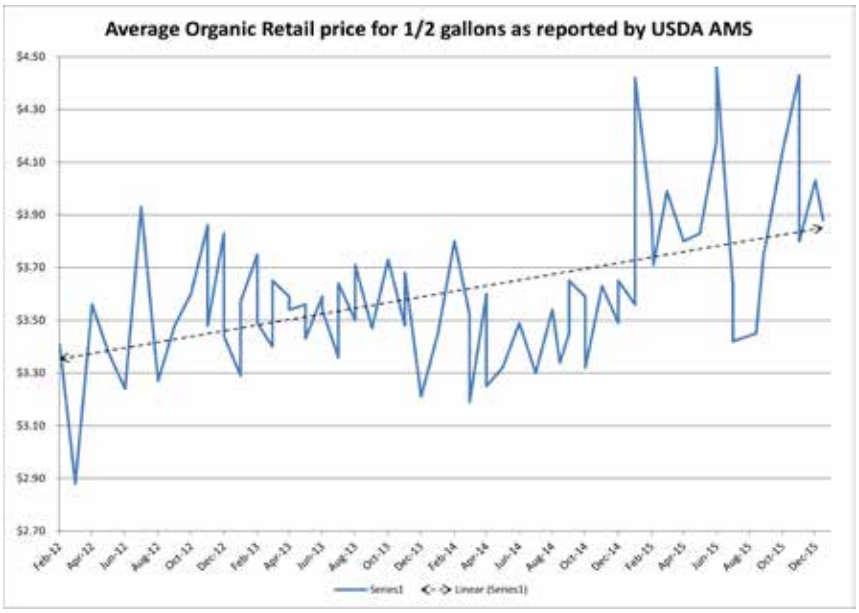
Organic Milk Pay, Retail and Feed Prices for January 2016

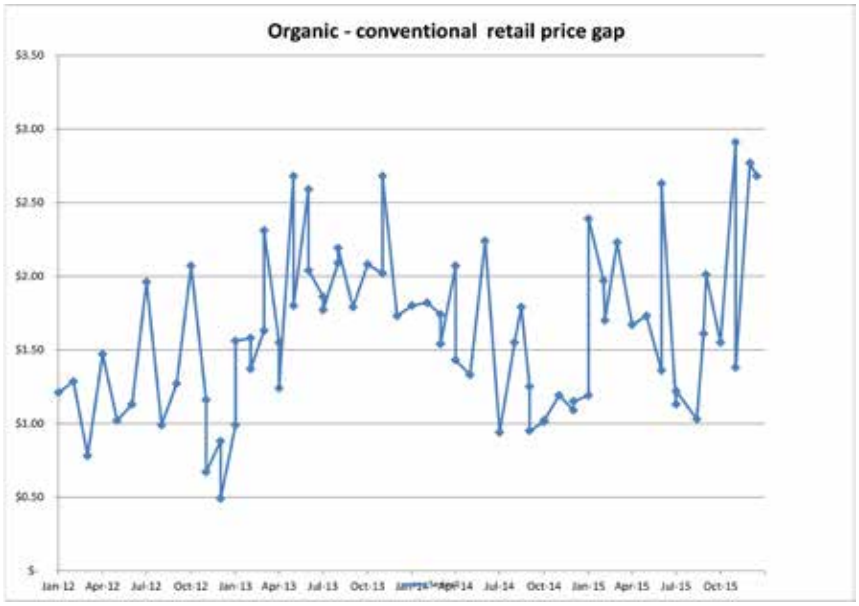
By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Recent data published by the USDA AMS show a continuing slight reduction in retail sales of organic non-fat fluid milk for October 2015, and a small increase in sales of full fat and 2% fluid milk. While retail fluid sales have declined, the retail price has increased and there are still shortages on supermarket shelves. The drop in sales can be attributed to a shortage of supply and milk being diverted to manufacturing as demand for the higher margin organic dairy non-fluid products is increasing. Producers are continuing to use the end of their contract and cooperative agreements to move to other buyers, especially more regional buyers in the northeast. Conventional producers are examining their ability to transition to organic production, especially with the lower conventional price in 2015, which has resulted in enquiries to NODPA from Farm Credit about the state of the organic dairy market, as there is no independent data at the USDA. The only Federal Milk Marketing Order to publish data on organic utilization is Order 1 (Northeast) and their data show that utilization of organic whole milk had increased by 25% to 13,068,122 lbs. in November 2015 compared to 10,452,276 lbs. in November 2014. Non-fat and Reduced Fat organic milk utilization only increased marginally by less than 1%. Those transitioning to organic and their advisors should always be aware of the learning curve on livestock husbandry skills and practices and also pay close attention to restrictions imposed by their land base, plus the increased cost of organic dairy production as clearly expressed by Bob Parsons' ongoing study.

The request by the Organic Trade Association (OTA) to change the Federal Milk Marketing Order to exempt organic milk from some of its provisions to facilitate an increase in supply of organic milk has brought a number of different comments. In response to OTA's argument, the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) commented, "If current pricing arrangements are indeed failing to bring forth an adequate supply of organic milk to meet consumer demand, then elementary economic theory would sug-





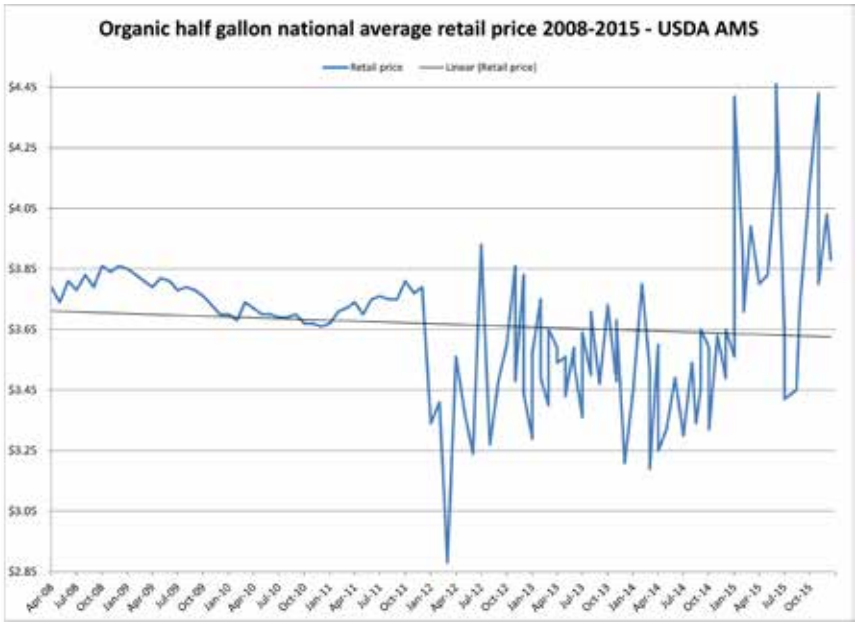


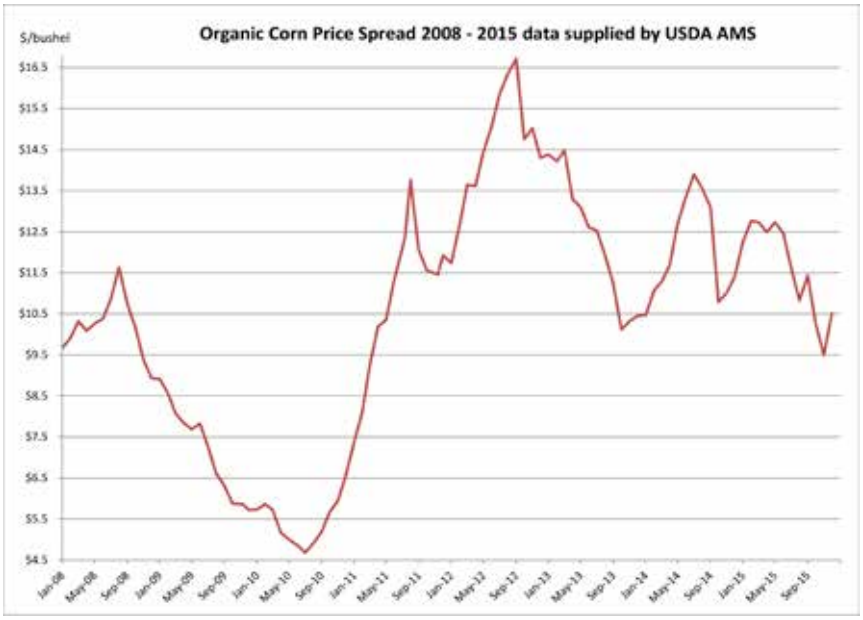
gest that adjustments to the pricing structure for organic milk at retail are called for. OTA's proposed solution to eliminate producer settlement fund obligations effectively proposes that dairy farmers should subsidize the production of organic milk in lieu of rectifying the mispricing of it." OTA says it is petitioning for the change to benefit producers pay price but can't make any firm statement because of anti-trust laws. Today, the OTA's Organic Fluid Milk Working Group's member companies are: Aurora Organic Dairy, CROPP Cooperative, d/b/a Organic Valley, and White Wave Foods. It's not often that we agree with the NMPF, but their comment is a no-brainer and they are as skeptical of processors intent as producers are.

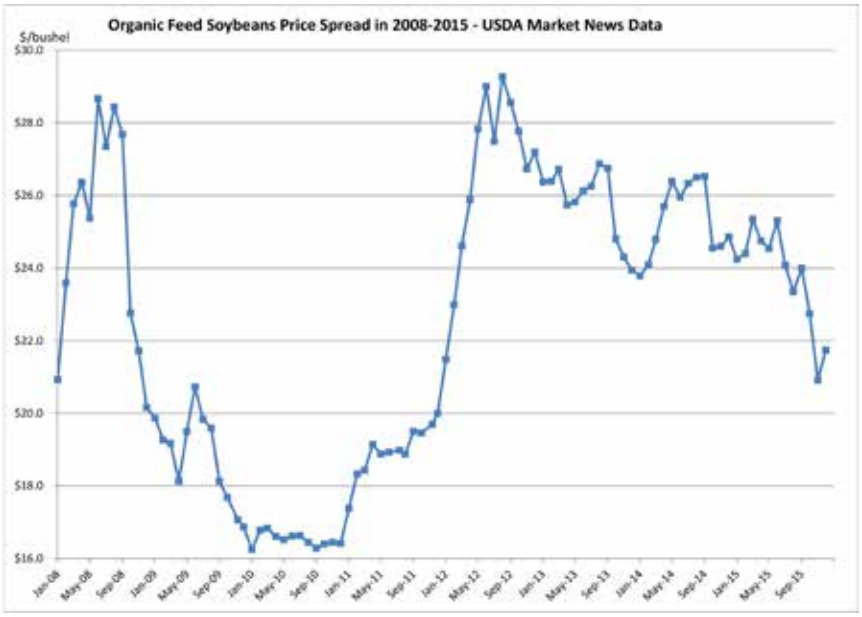
One question that USDA AMS asked OTA that we could answer easily is, "Please provide any alternative solutions that OTA considered that may increase the supply of organic milk." The obvious answer is to increase pay price to a level that reflects an adequate return on investment and living wages with an automatic cost of living accelerator. None of OTA's members have ever tried that. Currently, the USDA AMS is considering OTA's reply to the questions the USDA has raised about who would benefit from a change in the FMMO; we will see if this makes it to a hearing.

On the grain front, organic growers are finding the market distorted by cheaper imports and are unable to obtain long term commitments. This is similar to the pressure on organic beef and organic milk powder and cheese from imports. The strength of the dollar obviously complicates any assessment of the situation but it's a sign of the times that organic buyers of many commodities are treating producers as they would conventional producers. It's no wonder that there is no rush by domestic growers to transition to organic, despite the price differential of $8 or $9 per bushel. Obviously, they are increasingly aware that the different price will soon get eaten away with the cost of transitioning, the resulting change in production practices and the change in market conditions. ◆

NODPA has three publications, available on NODPA's website Resources page, to help producers in making decisions on their contracts. They can be downloaded for free or we can send you copies if you do not have online access.







"We spray it on prefresh heifers for better letdown ... better milkout."

— Andrew Dykstra

DYKSTRA FARMS
Andrew and Sandy Dykstra
BURLINGTON, WASHINGTON
260 cows grazed organically
50 lbs/cow/day with SCC 150,000

"We've been using Udder Comfort™ for 4 years. We spray it on prefresh heifers to improve milk letdown when they calve. We run our heifers through the parlor before they calve, and spray the udders with the yellow spray," explains Andrew Dykstra, who serves as WODPA president.

He operates a 240-cow organic dairy near Burlington, Washington where cows milk mainly on pasture and grass hay, along with hydroponic barley fodder instead of grain.

"All of our fresh cows also receive Udder Comfort after they calve, especially if we see firmness in the udder.

"This product works better than anything else. Heifers come in more comfortable with less swelling, better milk letdown, and they milkout better when they get Udder Comfort.

"Udder Comfort is a piece of the puzzle, a tool we rely on with good results. Along with clean, dry bedding, good milking procedures and smart culling, it is part of our routine for producing high quality milk."

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Regional Round Up January 2016

Aaron Bell | Tide Mill Farm, Edmunds, Maine
Horizon | 45 cows in milk

Other than dreaming of a vacuum drone under the Christmas tree which would put strewn feed back in Tide Mill Farm's feed bunks, Aaron Bell reports that his farm is in better straights than this time last year. Fleshing out his milk checks are year-round fresh poultry sales enabled by the farm's new processing facility. Low fuel costs have also had a noticeable effect on the farm's current economic situation.

He recently heard from Horizon that the current $3/cwt. market adjusted premium (MAP) will continue on through June 30, 2016. Aaron was unsure of his exact price per/cwt. but suspects that it is hovering around $40.

With no plans to expand the herd size, he has sold some young stock which will hopefully alleviate the need to buy supplemental forage this winter. Aaron has 200 round bales ($42.50/bale before delivery) reserved if he needs to supplement. He is currently feeding 8-10 pounds of grain per cow in a TMR.

Winter plans include fixing broken free stalls in the barn. Aaron anticipates that this will reduce the amount of purchased bedding.

Tide Mill hosted its 10th annual Caroling to the Cows on Christmas Eve. What began as a casual barn sing-a-long has turned into a popular community event with approximately 20 to 50 people in attendance.

Kirk Arnold | Truxton, New York
Upstate Niagra | 125 cows in milk

Kirk said he is feeling relatively positive about the farm's economy as they close in on 2016. They have enjoyed the higher milk prices of the past few years. It has allowed some overdue upgrades to both their equipment and barn.

They purchased a used JD 7430 and added a front mounted three-point hitch and PTO which allows them to use twin mowers. This has greatly increased their ability to produce high quality forage efficiently.

New mattresses and mattress covers were added to their tie-stalls

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Regional Round Up January 2016

Kirk Arnold, *continued from page 19*

this year. The old rubber alley way puzzle-piece style mats were removed and replaced with a continuous roll of rubber flooring. The greatest challenge was unrolling the unwieldy 3700 pound roll.

Kirk reported that the organic milk market in central New York is strong with both the Upstate Niagra co-op and Byrne Dairy procuring milk. Byrne is a local conventional processor that has recently added an organic line. Kirk was aware that Byrne is making organic Greek yogurt and possibly their own line of fluid milk. Despite the demand for organic milk in his area, he has not heard of any transitioning conventional farmers in his area.

Kirk follows organic dairy policy somewhat and stated that he is against the check-off and hopes that the Origin of Livestock Rule is a fair one with no loopholes.

The dairy ration as of early winter consists of a TMR of 3rd crop haylage, high-moisture ear corn and 4 pounds of flax meal per cow per day. Free choice dry hay is also available.

Liz Bawden | Hammond, New York Horizon | 55 cows in milk

Our farm is in a better situation than last year. Feed quality is much better, contributing to higher milk production. Lower fuel prices and slightly lower grain prices give us a bit of breathing room in the monthly bills. We did think seriously about changing milk buyers but in the end decided to stay where we are.

We look to keep roughly the same herd size as we bring our son into the business. We had two large building projects last year, so we are in a "paying this off" mode before we consider the next building phase, which will be improving our heifer-raising facilities.

The huge costs associated with the purchase, maintenance, and repairs of essential machinery continue to be a major issue. Most farms near us have a big problem in finding good employees, and find that the additional costs of workman's comp and federal taxes on top of an employee's salary make it a huge financial burden to pay good workers a decent wage.

The organic industry is certainly not stagnant, and since there is money to be made, there are companies who try to confuse consumers with "almost-as-good-as-organic" marketing claims. So it's probably up to us to keep telling the story about what it means (and doesn't mean) to be organic. Imports are definitely headed this way, and that's a worrying thing.

I'm not in favor of the organic check-off but it appears that it may be rammed down our throats in the future. It's just another layer of bureaucracy that we don't need and don't want to pay for.

John Amey | Indian Stream Farm | Pittsburg, NH Organic Valley | 43 cows in milk

John reported that he's been telling everybody that there's never been a better time to be a farmer. He survived the Hood thing because of Organic Valley. We're on the end of the line; there are five of us in the county and we're not going to rock the boat that feeds us. My trucking route has been affected by some producers that have gone to Stonyfield. He was lucky Organic Valley was there to pick up the pieces when Hood exited. We're very thankful to Organic Valley.

If the conventional farmers were a little more healthy it would be more of a safety net for organic producers. Organic and conventional farmers share the same infrastructure in many ways with supplies and equipment. If the conventional farmers fail or nearly fail then they can't help support the infrastructure. Everybody's boat rises with the tide. He would rather live in a state with a few hundred successful conventional producers than see only 15 organic producers and ½ of the conventional producers in trouble.

John explained that all of his children have careers. They want the farm to continue but don't want to take it over. They may have some interest in the woodland or maple but as far as being dairy farmers they aren't interested. They want the farm to continue beyond them so they're bringing in a person. He's not a dairyman

but is a great mechanic and hard worker. They'll see how it goes. They can still do a lot of the work but not enough to make the farm as profitable as it should be. They bought some cows this year and are raising a lot of heifers and hope to get the herd up to 60 milkers. No one person is going to do this alone. John is 66 and tries to think 50 as much as he can. It keeps the numbers lower.

The other part of the problem is that much of his land is wooded and 26 years ago they sold a conservation easement to the state of New Hampshire. He wishes they could sell the farmland and retain the wood land. If they could break it up into two parcels it would make the transition easier.

He's been farming a very long time and still doesn't get enough forage early enough to take full advantage of it. If he could change that it would be a positive direction for the farm. He just can't take off first crop fast enough. He ends up with too much heifer hay. He loves round bales but needs to figure out how to get first crop out of the way faster.

George Wright | Wright Dairy, Hermon, NY
Upstate Niagara | 50 cows in milk

Here in northern N.Y. we are experiencing above normal temperatures for the fall and looks like they will continue on into the winter. This has been great as the cows have been able to spend more time outdoors than usual. I am just worried how this will affect next year's hay crop. The forecast is for NO snow on the ground for Christmas.

Financially, it looks like the farm did better this year than it has the last couple of years. Fuel and electricity cost are down considerably from last year and other expenses seemed to have evened out some. The next big problem could be the governor's proposed $15/hr. minimum wage.

As the wife and I are getting on in years we are faced with the problem of how to retire as there are no family members to take over. We would ideally like to see the farm stay organic, but the MEGA farms around us will most likely pay more for the farm than anyone could afford who would keep it organic. This is a growing problem in farm transitions these days and we are starting to look at what options are available.

I believe there is a future in the organic business if the government will enforce the rules and if the processors and their stakeholders don't get too greedy then the consumer should be able to buy with confidence. Let us never forget that organic is third party certified by the USDA and that grass-fed or natural are not. Grass-fed and natural have no real set of guidelines and no USDA distinction what so ever and until they do they should be NO real threat to organic farming.

The biggest threat I see to the organic farm system in the near future is the organic check-off being promoted by the OTA. This may not do any immediate damage but it will do no good either. Look at the state of conventional agriculture, they have a ton of check-offs and are not making as much money as organic agriculture. That alone should be enough of an obvious reason to NOT have an organic check-off.

Back to the USDA, I think they have dragged their feet about long enough on the Origin of Livestock rule. This should have been passed and put into effect within a year after the pasture rule as it was being proposed and discussed in the same time period. I can hardly wait to see the watered down version that will most likely be approved of by the USDA.

Roman Stoltzfoos
Spring Wood Organic Farm, Kinzers, PA
Natural By Nature | 200 cows in milk

Roman reported that the economic situation on his farm is better than last year but feels that realistically that pay price is $5-10/cwt. lower than it should be. And actually, it should be more than that. The mild fall and winter have been beneficial – the grass continues to grow as of Christmas time and cows are still out, day and night. It has been a dry fall which has been easy on their bedding supply.

The price of cows is up with offers on the table for $2800 for a springing heifer and $3200 for a bred second lactation cow. It seems like if the Origin of Livestock Rule can be kept tight, to the one time transition, there will always be a good strong market for cows. The cost of raising an organic heifer is astronomical.

Demand for organic dairy products has softened but mostly because processors don't have the supply. There would be more business if people could have the product consistently through

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Organic Industry News

Regional Round Up January 2015

***Roman Stolzfoos**, continued from page 21*

the winter. Pay price lags behind the cost of production. We can afford to pay producers more, it's about our combined future (processor and farmer).

Roman closed by saying that keeping farmers informed about all these issues is important, rather than in the dark and feeding them misht (Amish for manure) like mushrooms.

Rick Segalla | Canaan, Connecticut
Organic Valley | 115 Cows in Milk

Rick reported he will change processors in March. He will be switching from Organic Valley to Calabro cheese. Calabro Cheese was the first company that bought his organic milk and he's going back. The pay price is higher. Currently, Calabro produces a conventional line of mozzarella and ricotta but wants to get back into organics. Customers want it, too. Rick recounted a story about the price of conventional milk going up during his early years with Calabro, and owner said that he should be paying organic farmers more and he did.

Other than that change, Rick said he needs to find more land but land is tight with numerous conventional farms in the area. One farm a few miles away is milking 300 and another 250. There's also a 1300 cow dairy nearby. The biggest farm is traveling over 30 miles to find land. He's not in a flat area; land is difficult to find.

No major infrastructure improvements are planned at this time. Maybe in a couple of years he might do something depending if his children decide to get involved.

In closing, Rick noted that he has been fighting for a fair Origin of Livestock Rule from the very beginning. He's been to Washington D.C. on the issue. As for the check-off, he acknowledged that organic milk must be advertised but the check-off seems to be at the benefit of large western farms. We don't really need to push the sale of organic milk in the northeast. "Why should the farmer be paying for it when the handlers, processors and sellers are making money off it?"

Jeep Madison | Shoreham, Vermont
Horizon | 60 cows in milk

Jeep happily reported that the garlic tincture he produces, Jo's Jo's Elixir, just got listed by OMRI.

Jeep said that things are better than they have been in quite a few years. They're short on feed but usually plan on buying feed anyway. They have a good source that they've been buying from for many years. They're hoping to get up to milking 73 cows by mid-January.

They've recently taken their 22 year old son on. Jeep is of retirement age. They've added a heifer and dry cow barn so they can all eat. He had an older son that wanted to farm with him a while back but they were small and not yet organic. They timing wasn't right for him. Since then they've added land, transitioned and gotten bigger.

Equipment costs and repairs are getting out of scale for smaller farms. Even the smaller equipment is pricey; they buy used.

He has trouble with supporting the check-off. He doesn't think it has worked for beef or milk or anything. They've been doing it for years with conventional milk but conventional fluid milk consumption continues to decline. The guys at the top make big dollars on the check-off. He also thinks replacements should be born on an organic dairy farm. It doesn't seem right to transition conventional animals. It's another nail in the little guy's coffin.

Life's great. Jeep closed by saying that the older he get the greater it gets. He couldn't do any of this without his wife and family. ◆

VT Pasture Network

'Baby, it's Cold Outside': Watch out for Livestock!

By Juan P. Alvez | Pasture Technical Coordinator, Center for Sustainable Agriculture – UVM Extension

Livestock animals can bear cold weather. But even if we want to extend the grazing season, keeping our animals outside, as much as possible, there are some kinds of cold weather that we must pay very careful attention to. When it comes to protecting our animals' health and ensuring their productivity it is important to know a few facts.

Fig. 1. Limousin Beef Cattle at Venner Farm, IA. Excellent body condition is key.

(http://vennerlimousin.com/about/are-your-cows-this-tough/)

Extreme winter has not been a major concern for Vermont (and Northeast) livestock farmers because, in general, cattle can tolerate the elements … unless two primary circumstances are present: (1) poor body condition and, (2) wet, windy weather with subzero wind chill temperatures (Fig. 1).

Cattle livestock endure 'comfortably' in temperature ranges between 0C (32F) and 24C (74F). Production does not get significantly affected in this temperature range as long as they have sufficient hay, feed and water to keep their body condition. Unlike the weather, fortunately this is something farmers can control.

On the other hand, relative humidity plays a big role during degraded weather circumstances. Animals will suffer greatly (and you will notice!), when extreme temperatures are accompanied by wet and windy conditions. Thus, extreme cold weather can take a toll on your herd, particularly taking down animals with previous health problems, or the ones that don't have at least periodic access to enough food and/or a shelter.

What can farmers do?

Fig. 2. Wooded pastures or silvopasture (an agroforestry practice where cows graze under trees), are great shelter alternatives for cows enduring cold or warm weather.

In extreme cold like much of the northern US is currently experiencing, if proper facilities exist, animals should be guarded and sheltered indoors (e.g. barn). A bedded pack barn, is probably the best alternative for that.

However, if you chose to keep them outside, please plan ahead of the bad weather and establish a "forest barn" in a wooded pasture area (Fig. 2). If we assume that most of the cold comes from above (cold air is heavier than warm), and that animal heat is thinner and escapes, then covering your animals is a good idea.

Fig. 3. Herd flocks together to keep warm. During winter, provide enough hay and bedding area

Cows compensate temperature differences with a 'coat' for every season and they can generate metabolic heat, and heat from

continued on page 26

Classified Ads

ANIMALS

For sale: 140 Certified Organic Cows, Jersey/Jersey Cross, $2700 each, 40 heifers. Contact: Jeff Browning, email: jeff@alliedengineering.us, phone: 573-470-7447

Location: Curryville, MO

Seeking two certified organic Jersey cows, currently milking or about to freshen, to add to established organic herd. Will need to see certification, health and quality records before purchase. Price negotiable. Contact: David Bright, email: dbright@brioghtberryfarm.com, phone: 207-234-4226

Location: Down East Maine

EMPLOYMENT

Quality Systems and Information Technology (IT) Manager, Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO), Spring Mills, PA The ideal candidate will have education and experience in quality systems, information or business management, including but not limited to: auditing, document control, and quality and IT systems. We are looking for a well-organized and self-motivated person to join our team-oriented environment in Spring Mills, Pennsylvania.

Position will remain open until filled. A full job description is available on our website at http://www.paorganic.org/jobs. Please send resume and cover letter to Lia@paorganic.org.

Seeking Assistant Herd Manager, Brookford Farm, Canterbury, NH. The assistant herd manager would be expected to milk 5 shifts per week, feed out bales and bed down barns through the winter, monitor herd and calf health, set up and move temporary fencing during the grazing season, and assist with construction projects. Those with tractor experience (preferred) may expect to help with mucking out, turning compost, cropping, and haying. Once settled in, the candidate will be expected to anticipate and execute tasks on their own or with the livestock team. Previous animal husbandry experience is required, and dairy experience is preferred, but not absolutely necessary. We are looking for patient individuals who are committed to low-stress livestock handling. The ideal candidate would be observant and organized, possess strong communication skills and a positive attitude, and be proactive and hardworking. Must be capable of lifting 50lb bags multiple times a day and working through inclement weather. There is no staff housing at this time, but the farm hopes to find a house to rent nearby in the coming months. Ideal start date is January 1st, but we could wait until as late as March 1st for the right candidate. Email: brookfordherdmanager@gmail.com, Phone: 603-418-4985

Location: Canterbury, NH

POSITION: Southeastern Sustainability Hub Programs Manager, The Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), AVAILABILITY: February 2016

The Hub Manager will lead the development of a Sustainability Hub in southeastern Pennsylvania that will serve as the focal point for PASA's new program initiatives in Farmer Training and Development, Farm-Based Research and Farmer-to-Farmer Exchange. The

successful candidate will recruit collaborators for these initiatives and will serve as a liaison between host-farmers and apprentices in our Farmer Training programs. For more information, go to https://www.pasafarming.org/files/se-hub-manager.pdf APPLICATIONS: Please send cover letter and resume to jobsearch@pasafarming.org. Applications will be accepted continuously until the position is filled, but interviews will begin from among the first pool of candidates identified by Friday, December 11, 2015.

POSITION: Southeastern Sustainability Hub Programs Associate (PASA). AVAILABILITY: February 2016. The Programs Associate will support development of a Sustainability Hub in southeastern Pennsylvania that will serve as the focal point for PASA's new program initiatives in Farmer Training and Development, Farm-Based Research and Farmer-to-Farmer Exchange. For more information, go to https://www.pasafarming.org/files/se-hub-program-associate.pdf APPLICATIONS: Please send cover letter and resume to jobsearch@pasafarming.org. Applications will be accepted continuously until the position is filled, but interviews will begin from among the first pool of candidates identified by Friday, December 11, 2015.

Herd Manager or Herdsperson: SideHill Farm is an organically managed grazing dairy in western Mass, producing yogurt and raw milk. We are seeking a skilled cow person to manage our milking herd. Responsibilities include milking, milk quality, feeding, herd health, monitoring heats; maintenance of milking equipment, calf and barn chores. Minimum 2 years' experience, preferably with organic dairy and grazing. Calm and gentle with animals, skilled with tractors and equipment. Observant, patient, responsible, clean, fun to be around. Year-round position. Competitive pay, 5.5 days/week, paid time off. Visit http://www.sidehillfarm.net/jobs/ for a full job description. Contact: Amy Klippenstein,Email: amy@sidehillfarm.net, phone: 413 339 0033

Location: Hawley, Massachusetts

Full time help wanted on organic, grass-fed dairy. Milking, feeding, cleaning, field and fence work. Dairy cow knowledge and experience necessary, but will train for all other aspects of the job. Contact: Adam Tafel, email: tafelam@gmail.com, phone: (h)607-263-5774 or (c)607-434-6440

Location: Laurens, NY

FarmFest Coordinator, Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO) is seeking a FarmFest Coordinator to serve in coordination with our Education and Outreach Team. The part time contracted position will be responsible for planning and management, with guidance from the PCO, of the Pennsylvania Organic FarmFest, held July 29-30, 2016 at the Grange Fairgrounds in Centre Hall, PA. We will accept applications until the position is filled but encourage applicants to make their submission by January 15th to be included in the first round of reviews. To apply, please visit our website at: www.paorganic.org/jobs and complete our Request for Proposals.

FORAGES, BEDDING & GRAINS

For Sale: Certified organic shell corn, large quantities. Delivery available or pick up. Contact Bob Blackston, email: Bob.blackston@live.com or phone: 740 416 9105.

For Sale: NOFA-NY Certified Organic Products: BALEAGE 4x4 Round (Alfalfa, Clover, Grass Mix, Oatlage). DRY HAY - 4 1/2 x 4 Round (1st and 2nd Cut) BEDDING HAY 4 1/2 x 4 Round and Large Square Bales. Also Organic CLOVER SEED and TIMOTHY SEED. Cleaned and bagged on farm. Contact Jeff at 607-566-8477 or Mitchellorganics@hotmail.com. Mitchell Farm, Avoca, NY - Steuben County.

Organic Production

Baby It's Cold Outside

continued from page 23

movement. If cold, these gregarious animals will flock together and alternate places and benefit from the heat exchange released by the herd. Animals in the outer circle will try to find a warm spot and 'force' themselves into the center, pushing the ones in the inner (Fig. 3).

If your farm doesn't have facilities that can accommodate your animals, it may not be a bad idea to build a rustic shelter (perhaps adjacent to the forest barn), re-using inexpensive tarps and rope (Figure 3).

Always keep enough bedding in the barn or in the woods, so that cows can lay down in a relatively dry spot. If your cows are in a "forest barn", try changing the areas where they stay periodically, to avoid erosion and nutrient runoff during the 'mud season'.

Temperature Humidity Index (THI)

In hot weather, monitor temperature and appetite. Take note of the Temperature Humidity Index (THI), an equation that indicates that when relative humidity at a given temperature increases, then comfort factor decreases. For example, if temperature is around 92 and relative humidity is 85, THI should read 89, which is almost borderline for severe stress. However, in dairy cows, milk production starts being affected when THI reaches beyond 78. (See chart).

In sum, yes, beef cattle can withstand subzero temperatures for a few days but, they may die (or significantly lower production), if they present poor body condition and wet, windy low temperatures bump into them.

Take-Away Ideas

1. Be aware that animals whose general health is poor may need special attention to survive or remain productive during extreme weather conditions.
2. During temperature extremes, take special care that your animals have access, at least periodically, to shelter and adequate feed.
3. If the temperature is below 32F or above 74F, consider providing your herd shelter in a barn, Bedded Pack barn, or "Forest Barn" in a wooded area.
4. Remember, cold air is heavier than warm air and mostly comes from above so, protect your animals and stay ahead in production!

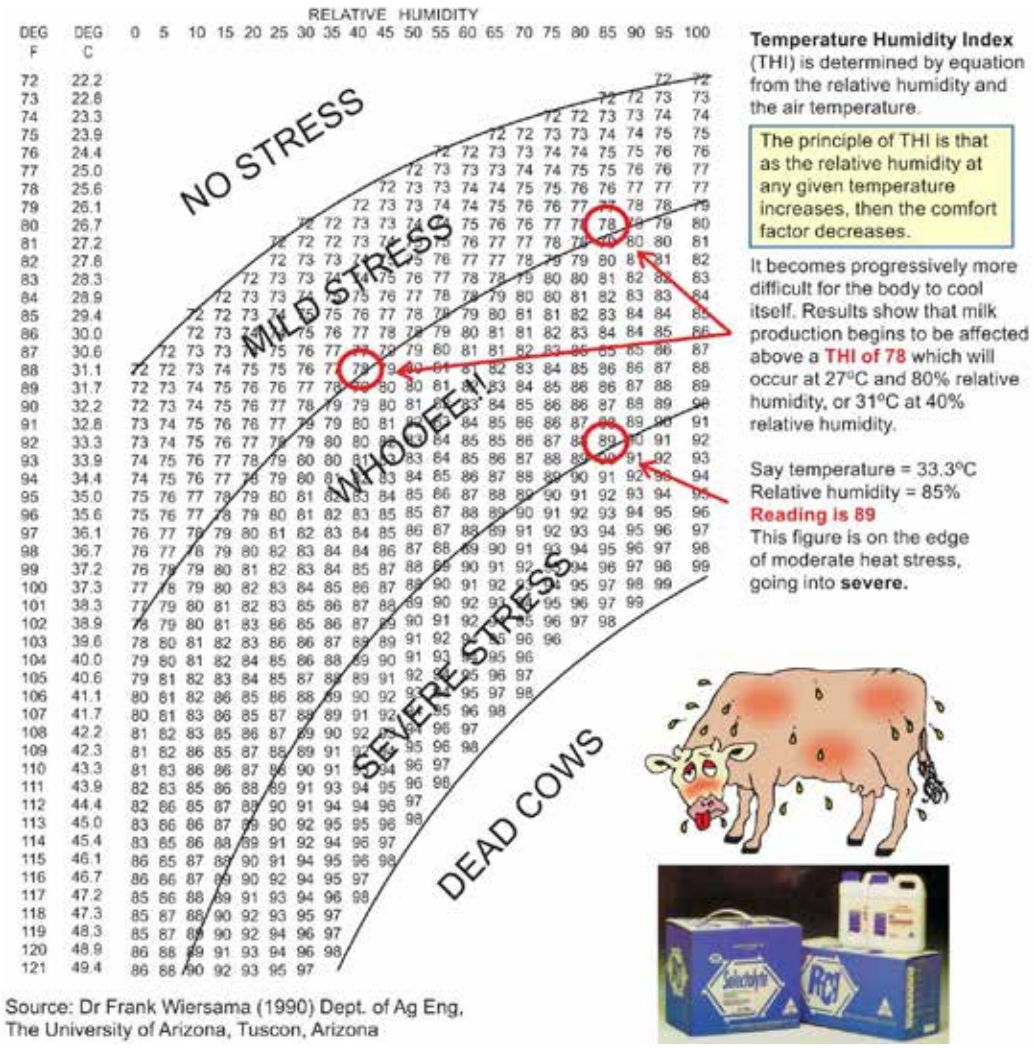
Sources:

Dr. Frank Wiersama, 1990. Dept. of agricultural Engineering. Univ. of Arizona. http://www.heatstress.info/heatstressinfo/TemperatureHumidityIndexCattle/tabid/1232/Default.aspx

Venner Farm, IA. http://vennerlimousin.com/about/are-your-cows-this-tough/

Article originally appeared on the VT Pasture Network website blog at: http://blog.uvm.edu/pasture-vtpasture/category/uncategorized/

Temperature and Humidity Index Cattle



Source: Dr Frank Wiersama (1990) Dept. of Ag Eng, The University of Arizona, Tuscon, Arizona

ORGANIC PRODUCTION: FEATURED FARM

Vermont Organic Dairy Farmers Geordie and Emery Lynd
Lynd Family Farm, Walden, VT

continued from page 1

(NEK) by the late Vermont Senator George Aiken in the 1940's. The naming came at a period when this geographic enclave, backed up against the Quebec border to the north, cut off from the rest of New England by the Green Mountains to the West and the White Mountains to the east, was struggling to establish its identity in order to market itself to tourists and business development.

For generations, these hillside dairy farms have helped define this remote part of Vermont but the successful branding campaign has disadvantaged small farms as the burgeoning population of the eastern seaboard seeks the seclusion and beauty of the NEK. Development pressure is pushing the cost of farmland up and forcing farm families off the land. Purchasing farmland is a nearly insurmountable financial challenge for undercapitalized beginning farmers.

Prior to the purchase of the farm by the Lynds, the land had been under ownership by the same family since the 1930's. These farm families have clung to their small pieces of paradise with determination and Yankee ingenuity. Although neither is from a dairy family, the Lynds embody this spirit and worked tirelessly to purchase the farm and acquire start-up capital.

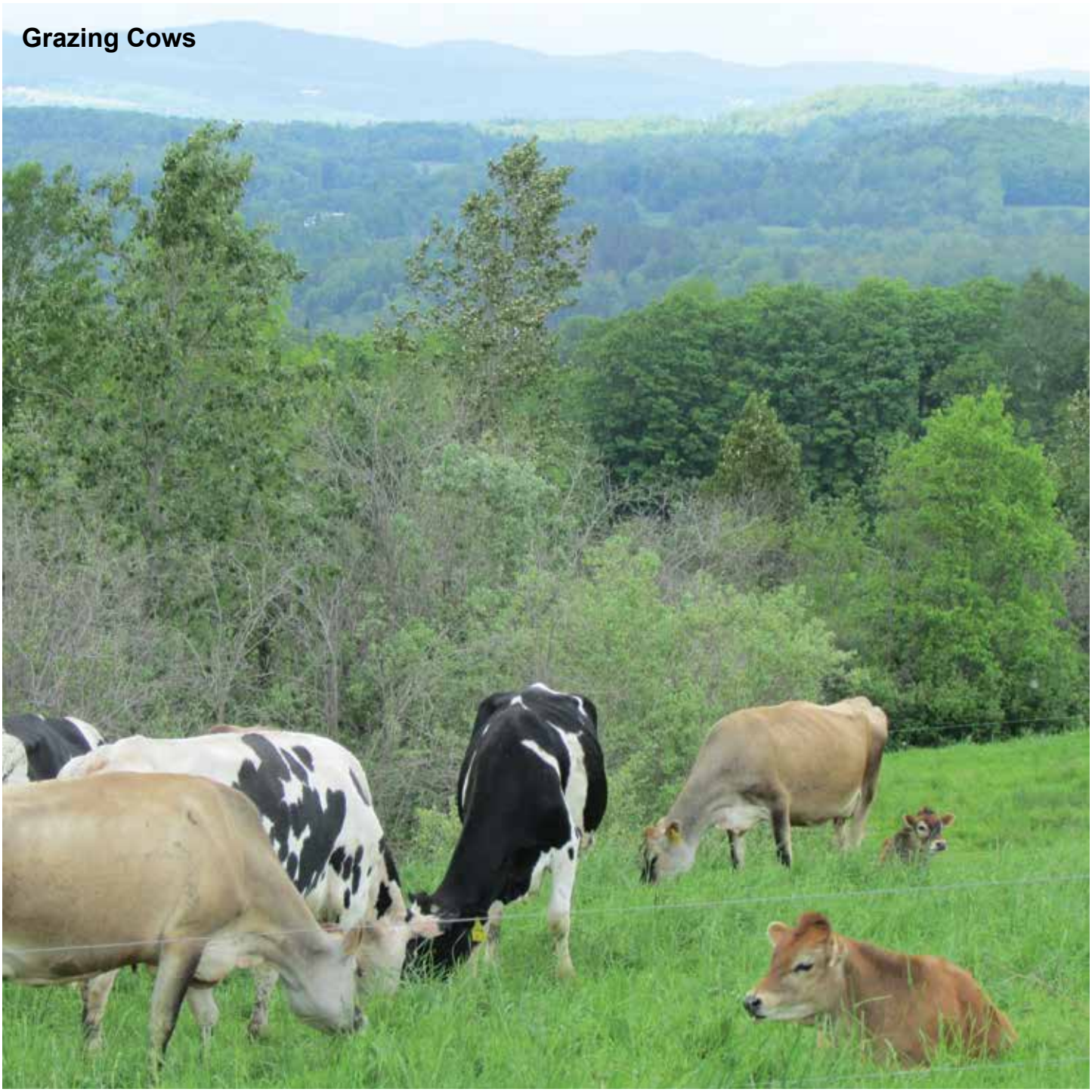
Lenders were reluctant to finance inexperienced operators with high debt-per-cow figures in the dairy business climate of 2009-2010. A conventional savings bank financed the Lynds after the agricultural lenders said no. They also sold the development rights to the property to the Vermont Land Trust to bring their debt load to a manageable level.

Ownership completed, the Lynds faced a fury of endless work and difficult decisions. The only useable infrastructure available was a house and garage and a 30 by 132 foot 2-story Unadilla-style Jamesway tie-stall kit barn built in 1955. The buildings had been maintained but the functional part of the dairy infrastructure was long gone, the former family having sold their herd in the mid 1980's. In October of 2010, the couple began shipping conventional milk and they remained in the old stable for a year and a half as they transitioned to organic their fifty head, at that point mostly Jerseys with a spattering of Holsteins.

"Our first winter was rough. That barn was difficult to manage well. It had no gutter cleaner and we were doing everything by hand. It would have been very difficult to mechanize anything in that barn," Geordie explained. Located in the environmentally sensitive Lake Champlain watershed, the Lynds were fortunate to obtain NRCS cost sharing early in their farming career to begin a long-line of necessary improvements.

In 2011, they dug a 165,000 gallon concrete-lined, slope-walled

Calves on Pasture at Lynd Family Farm



manure pit next to the original barn. The earthwork produced about 13,000 yards of dirt which they used to create more level space in their heavily-sloped barnyard. Simultaneously, a 52 by 120 foot hoop building was being added to the farmstead area. During this rapid phase of infrastructure construction and improvement, the Lynds also built a milking parlor and milked in less than half of the old stanchions. A pole shed feeding area was added on to one edge of the concrete barnyard the next summer and the herd is free to move between this pole shed feeding site and the bedded pack hoop building.

The milking parlor is a swing six pit parlor located in half of the original dairy barn. It is designed after Iowa State University Extension dairy field specialist Larry Tranel's TRANS Iowa low-cost milking parlors. Tranel has published designs for converting existing tie-stall milking barns into more efficient facilities. "It was home-made and inexpensive," they noted, but "there are things we wish we'd done differently. We feel that we can keep making it more efficient with minor adjustments, though."

Their herd hit a stable size in 2012 and they are currently milking around 55 cows which they attempt to freshen seasonally in spring

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FEATURED FARM

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and fall. It's roughly half Holstein and half Jersey genetics with a quarter of the animals cross breeds. In retrospect, the Lynds think it would've been cheaper to buy an organic herd rather than transition their heifers but Emery chimed in that "we can't complain because conventional milk prices were pretty good during our transition."

The malnourished 130 acres of pasture mimicked the conditions of the old milking barn, useable but inefficient. Geordie noted, "It had been hayed until it barely got a green color to it. You'd drive out of the manure pile with manure on your tires and leave a green streak in the brown. It wasn't worn down from tillage or letting the trees grow up. It was just a lot of years of cutting hay and no manure or fertilizer. The one good thing you can say is that it would have been much worse had this been the type of farm that you could wreck with row cropping. At least it was in grass all that time."

He continued, "About the only thing we've been sure about as we've been trying to learn how to farm is that pasture is important and we were going to focus on it. We depended on purchased feed for the winter, so we knew that pasture was what was going to fund any progress we made here."

There was no grazing infrastructure in place and their first spring they turned the cows out into a complete poly-wire system. Since they planned to purchase all of their stored feeds, they were able to focus their attention on setting up grazing infrastructure and rotational grazing. Laneways, water pipe and 2-strand high tensile perimeter fencing were also funded through NRCS cost-share.

In five years, the Lynds have seen the productivity of their pastures improve tremendously. The couple explained that, "the second part of the grazing season has gotten better and better. We always had some grass in May and June but as we've worked on fertility the pastures have produced better, longer. A little dry weather doesn't stop the grass growing the way it did."

In their early years there was a fairly typical mix of grasses and clovers; no pastures had been reseeded in recent history. The lighter soils contain an early heading orchard grass that is not very palatable but other soil types have Reed canary grass and Timothy. Bringing in some wood ash into the pasture program has also improved fertility. "The wood ash has a lot of potash and raises pH. When we started spreading wood ash it seemed like the clover

came out of nowhere. We haven't felt like seeding clovers much when manure, lime and some wood ash seem to support it getting stronger all the time," Geordie said.

The pasture fertility program is bolstered by spreading as much manure pit liquids as they can with a 4" irrigation pump run by a 75 horse Deutz diesel. It is pumped through 5" aluminum pipe and fire hose to lightweight sprinkler guns on the pastures which can cover a 300-400 foot circle and can be manually moved. The pump sucks air when the manure is pumped down enough you can get a tractor in it and solids are removed once a year with a side slinger. "If we could invest time and money in making it better," the couple elaborated, "we would bury 6" PVC mainlines with risers along a couple of our cow lanes out from the barn to spend less time on pipe moving and blowouts."

In late August of 2014, University of Vermont Extension planted a number of on-farm forage plots on the farm. Very little rye grass is currently used in Vermont pastures and researchers hope to learn more from the Lynd's 1/4 acre test plot. Six varieties of perennial rye grasses were selected in order to compare winter hardiness, maturity, yield and quality: Garibaldi, BG-24T, Tivoli, Mathilde, Remington NEA and BG-34. Some Italian ryegrasses were also trialed. Working with UVM Extension agent Dan Hudson, they seeded four acres of Italian ryegrass. "It grew well, made milk and the seed is inexpensive," he said.

On-Farm Forage Plots planted by University of Vermont Extension

A Meadow fescue was also included because it is re-emerging in the marketplace as a high-quality winter-hardy species and little is known about how it may fit into dairy forage systems. Kura clover was also selected for the trials because it can be high-yielding and

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Organic Milk Sought

CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley

CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley is the nation's largest farmer-owned organic cooperative. With members throughout New England, the Northeast and Southeast, we offer a stable, competitive organic milk pay price to members. We are forecasting solid growth in these regions and welcome the opportunity to talk with producers about joining our Cooperative.

We offer veterinary support, quality services, organic food, the Organic Trader buy/sell newsletter and inclusive communications from a farmer-owned cooperative with over 25 years of organic farming and marketing experience. Our Feed Department sources organic feed purchases for our member operations. Please contact our Regional Managers or Farmer Relations for further details.

- In New England, contact John Cleary at (612) 803-9087 or john.cleary@organicvalley.coop or Steve Getz at 207-465-6927 or steve.getz@organicvalley.coop.
- In New York, contact David Hardy at (608) 479-1200 or david.hardy@organicvalley.coop.
- In the Southeast, contact Gerry Cohn at (919) 605-5619 or gerry.cohn@organicvalley.coop.
- Central to Western PA, contact Solomon Meyer at (814) 515-6827 or Solomon.meyer@organicvalley.coop.
- In Southeast Pennsylvania and Maryland, contact Terry Ingram at (717) 413-3765 or terry.ingram@organicvalley.coop.

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

Upstate Niagara

Upstate Niagara is a member owned dairy cooperative dedicated to high quality dairy products. We are currently seeking new organic member milk. Upstate Niagara offers a highly competitive organic pay program with additional premiums for milk quality and volume. For producers interested in transitioning to organic production, we also have programs to assist you in the transition process.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please contact Mike Davis at 1-800-724-MILK, ext 6441. www.upstateniagara.com

Natural by Nature

Looking for an organic milk market? Natural Dairy Products Corporation (NDP) was founded in 1995 as a family owned and operated organization producing organic dairy products under the Natural By Nature brand name. Natural By Nature organic dairy products are produced with great care and distributed nationwide.

We are actively seeking organic, grass-based dairy producers in the southeastern PA, northern MD and DE areas. NDP pays all hauling and lab costs, and we are currently offering a signing bonus, so this is the time to call! We'd be happy to answer your questions … please call 302-455-1261 x221 for more information.

Maple Hill Creamery

Seeking 100% Grass Dairy Farmers! Maple Hill Creamery, located in Stuyvesant, NY is a small manufacturer of 100% grass-fed organic yogurt. We are growing rapidly and are looking for more 100% grass-fed farms in the NY state area to join us.

We offer:

- Six month winter premium
- Grass fed premium paid OVER organic milk price
- Grass fed dairy technical assistance / mineral program
- Organic transition payments possible

Requirements:

- No grain, no corn silage
- Just pasture, dry hay and baleage
- Certified Organic

Please CALL US with questions! Phone: 518-758-7777

Dairy Marketing Services Organic

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!

Stonyfield Farm, Inc.

Stonyfield Farm, Inc is looking for producers to support their comprehensive line of organic yogurt and diversified portfolio of organic dairy products. We offer a stable price platform with competitive premiums for components, quality and volume. In addition, we offer a comprehensive technical assistance program designed with producers to help them achieve their unique business goals. We are actively seeking producers looking to grow their business today and for the future.

Please contact our Farmer Relationship Manager, Kyle Thygesen for further details at kthygesen@stonyfield.com or (802) 369-0267.

To be listed, free, in future Organic Milk Sought columns, contact Nora Owens at 413-772--0444, noraowens@comcast.net.

NET UPDATE

Recent ODairy Discussions

By Liz Bawden, Organic Dairy Farmer, NODPA President

Facial warts on a heifer were concerning a farmer who asked the group for suggestions on how they could be removed and prevented. It was suggested to give 1cc/200 lbs of Immunoboost under the skin; repeat in 10 to 14 days if needed. Another farmer noted that the warts often grow, and then fall off with no real ill effects; she also suggested that the sap from milkweed (applied topically) will reduce the size of warts – but this requires time and lots of applications. Another farmer uses milkweed tincture topically or internally with good success. He suggested that warts are a sign of a struggling liver, so fix the liver and the warts will disappear. Homeopathic Thuja 30C and Calcarea carbonica were also recommended; a few doses over a few days, then watch.

A farmer wanted to set up a vaccination program for a herd, and asked what the group thought were the most important vaccines to give. Several producers chimed in that the best form of disease prevention is good nutrition, fresh air, dry bedding, and sunshine! Vaccines are like a band-aid, although they are needed at times. A vet suggested that a vaccine protocol should be based on herd health history and blood work. His example was for Lepto; if it is present on your farm, it makes sense to vaccinate for it. Another producer reported that he had far more pink eye in his herd when he vaccinated that when he didn't, so he did not recommend that vaccine. One vet said that his favorite vaccines were for rabies (for obvious reasons) and the intranasal vaccines. We also heard from farmers that were on the opposite ends of the spectrum: One producer sticks to a classic modified-live 9 or 10-way vaccine to cows and heifers before breeding, and a booster at 100 days bred. Another producer suggested that many farmers are finding regular vaccines to be unnecessary.

A farmer uses the computer program PC DART to keep track of his breeding records and other information. It is tied to using DHIA services, and the farmer is searching for a record-keeping system that would allow him to cut out testing costs. He asked what other farmers used for record-keeping. There was a range of answers, including farmers who used pen and paper records and simple spreadsheet programs like Excel. One farmer has used Scout, a version of Dairy Comp for herds with under 200 cows. He downloads test results directly, and has used it for years. Another producer questioned the wisdom in cutting out regular testing. He felt that regular testing, "is not cheap, but it pays" in the long run by avoiding milk quality "train wrecks". ◆

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:

www.nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml

FEATURED FARM

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persistent once established. Kura is slow to establish but researchers are hoping to discover how much the plants need to be coddled during the establishment period.

In spite of their grazing enthusiasm, the Northeast Kingdom is known for its long challenging winters. Although climate change is moderating the climate and lengthening the growing season, the weather has also become more unpredictable. "On one hand, we love grazing. The low-overhead New Zealand-style grass farm model appeals to us," they explained. "We like that mindset, that it's all about cows, milking systems, grass, and grazing infrastructure. On the other hand, winter happens here and you are running a confinement operation for a good part of the year whether you want to or not."

The Lynds would like to become forage independent during the non-grazing part of the year and they recently signed a lease on one hundred acres of adjacent hay ground. Up to this point they have only been producing about one quarter of their own stored feed which is supplemented by a ten to fifteen pound ration of grain per cow per day, a mash of barley and corn. They said, "Buying feed, we have no control over the quality. It costs too much when it's available. The trucking has been hard to arrange. We are taking on more work and headaches leasing ground, but we hope we can keep up, on top of everything we are already doing."

While they acknowledged the future need for a more serious mowing machine and efficient wrapper, for now the Lynds must rely on their humble line of equipment which includes a beat-up eight foot 3-point hitch mower, a borrowed tedder, a new Kuhn V-shaped pinwheel rake and a cumbersome old bale wrapper. They will continue to rely on custom round baling. The added workload of putting up summer forage makes the couple nervous but Geordie laughed and commented that, "one way to help is to not build a barn every summer."

Winter is in the air and the snowball that this beginning farm represents continues to gain downhill momentum. In 2014, Geordie and Emery were awarded a competitive grant through the Vermont Farm and Forest Viability fund to build a 40 by 60 foot hoop structure with an attached concrete barnyard for their heifers and young stock. They Lynds also added baby Crosby to the mix in mid-November of 2015; their hillside dairy is now truly a family endeavor. If the flurry of activity hasn't made you dizzy yet, throw 30 breeding sows into the pot, a few thousand maple taps whose sap goes to a neighbor's sugaring operation and the sale of fifty to seventy cord of tree length firewood from their 150 acre woodlot.

The Lynds conjure up one of those idyllic farm family images that can be found on the side of a half-gallon carton of organic milk – vivacious, committed, trying their best to care for their cattle, pastures and forests. Hesitantly, Geordie spoke, "We're not the most efficient place they (Horizon) are going to buy milk from. If they want farms like us to make it, we would like a little more money. But you don't get into an old hill farm and get it going if you are used to thinking somebody owes you."

He added, "I'd like to believe that the pay price is good enough to support not just established farms but also start-ups that have mortgages and operating debt. We can't use what we're getting as a standard for whether the pay price is good enough but we do see established farms on our milk route with a lot of equity that still skimp on the basics such as liming fields and building maintenance. At the size most of these farms are, even the good ones that are 'making,' it seem like their belts are pretty tight."

Bob Parsons, a farm economist for the University of Vermont, has been conducting research on the economic viability of organic Vermont dairy farms for several years. He says that organics have been a life savor for many of Vermont's small dairies but according to his research, profitability has been declining and the question he asks is whether these small organic farms can last another ten years. Another question that needs to be asked is how young families like the Lynds can gain a foothold in an industry where even veteran organic producers often struggle.

"We're first generation dairy people and we spend most of our time just feeling grateful for the luck we've had to try it. We don't spend much time wishing we were doing anything else; it never occurred to us to do anything else," closed Emery and Geordie.

"We wake up every morning and do what we can. The projects are slowing down enough that it's starting to feel more like farming. We've been on the run all the time for a few years." This is the spirit and attitude that has defined these rugged hills of Northern Vermont for generations; we must work together to find ways to maintain the viability of small-scale dairy in the Northeast Kingdom. ◆

Calendar

January 12th, February 9th, and March 8th, 10 am
New York Certified Organic 2016 Winter Programs
Jordan Hall, New York State Agricultural Experimental Station, 630 West North Street, Geneva, NY

New York Certified Organic (NYCO), a group of grain and dairy farmers meeting together since 1994 to increase their practical knowledge and expertise with the organic production of crops and milk, has announced its Winter 2016 programs. There is no cost or need to register to attend the meetings. Participants are asked to bring a dish to pass at the potluck lunch.

January 12: Three Sessions on Organic Crop Management In Good Years and Bad

February 9: Four Sessions on Managing Soil Health with Crop Rotations and Forage Production with Tom Kilcer

March 8: Four Sessions on Changing Markets for Organic Grain and Dairy

For more information, contact Fay Benson at 607.745.3807, afb3@cornell.edu and details will be listed in the February and March issues of the NY Grazing Coalition (NYGC) Grazette for each of the above meetings.

January 16, 2016
NOFA-MA Winter Conference
Worcester State University
Sheehan Hall, 486 Chandler Street, Worcester, MA 01602

For more information on this one day conference, visit the NOFA-MA website, www.nofamass.org or contact Christine@nofamass.org

January 22nd to 24th, 2016
NOFA-NY 34th Annual Organic Farming and Gardening Conference – "Good Hard Work: Ecosystems, Economics, Energy & Equity"
Saratoga Hilton & City Center, Saratoga Springs

The keynote is Rosalinda Guillen of Community to Community Development in Bellingham, Washington. We are also proud to announce our Farmer of the Year, Kathie Arnold, of Twin Oaks Dairy LLC in Truxton, NY. Online registration and more information about the conference can be found online at www.nofanyconference.org.

January 30, 2016
Grow Well, Eat Well, NOFA NH 14th Annual Winter Conference
Rundlett Middle School, 144 South Street, Concord, NH

For more information and to register, visit:

http://nofanh.org/events/winter-conference/?utm_source=October+2015+NOFA-NH+ENews&utmcampaign=October+2015+Enews&utm_medium=email#sthash.QsEvFfi6.dpuf

February 3-6, 2016
PASA's 25th annual winter conference: Farming for the Future Conference
The Penn Stater Conference Center, State College, PA

Farming for the Future Conference is PASA's signature event and main vehicle for community building. Widely regarded as the best of its kind in the East, this event brings together an audience of over 2,000 farmers, processors, consumers, students, environmentalists and business and community leaders annually. For more information and registration, go to: http://conference.pasafarming.org/

February 8 & 9, 2016
5th Annual Soil & Nutrition Conference
Kripalu Center, Stockbridge, MA

A Conference that is gathering Farmers, Researchers, Nutritionists, and Food Activists, bringing forward the interrelatedness of Soil Health, Plant Health, Human Health, and farming best practices for improved crop quality. To learn more and register, please visit the Soil and Nutrition Conference webpage:

http://www.bionutrient.org/soil-and-nutrition-conference

February 12-13, 2016
Winter Green-Up Grazing Conference
Century House, Latham (Albany County, NY)

Excellent speakers will discuss their dedication to local food and local economies and the struggles they face in purchasing consistent high quality meats in the region. Please contact Tove Ford at Cornell Cooperative Extension, (518) 765-3518 or tff24@cornell.edu, Tom Gallagher at tjg3@cornell.edu, or Morgan Hartman at morgan@blackqueenangus.com to get more information.

February 13-15, 2016
Our Soil, Our Health, 34th NOFA Vermont Annual Winter Conference
University of Vermont, Burlington, VT

The NOFA-VT Annual Winter Conference is Vermont's largest agricultural conference, bringing together more than 1,500 farmers, gardeners, homesteaders, educators, policy makers and consumers for three days of workshops, networking sessions, meals and celebration. For more information, visit: http://nofavt.org/annual-events/winter-conference

February 16-17, 2016
Grass Fed Opportunities, Lancaster County Graziers 2016 Conference
Lancaster Ag, 60 North Ronks Road, Ronks, PA 17572

For program information and to register, contact Roman Stoltzfoos, 717-278-1070, or by email, romans@springwoodfarm.com .

February 25-27, 2016
Get Ready to Grow Inspired, MOSES Conference
La Crosse, WI

For complete conference information and to register, visit https://mosesorganic.org/conference/

Saturday, March 12, 2016, 7:45am - 5:30 pm
4th Annual Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference
Northeastern University, Boston, Mass

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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.

_____ $40 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: _____

Calendar

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The annual Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference (UFC) is designed to advance the opportunities and address the barriers involved in cultivating a resilient and thriving Urban Farming sector.

For Panel/Workshop information, contact Rose Arruda at MDAR: Rose.Arruda@state.ma.us

For further event information and to register:

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/4th-annual-massachusetts-urban-farming-conference-tickets- 19937468505?utm_source=eb_email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=order_confirmation_email&utm_term=eventname&ref=eemailordconf

Wednesday, March 16, 2016
NOFA-NY Organic Dairy and Field Crop Conference
Holiday Inn, Liverpool/Syracuse, NY

The keynote speaker this year will be John Kemp, the founder and CEO of Advancing Eco Agriculture (AEA), a leading crop nutrition consulting company. With results proven on his own farm, John will share his success and insight that healthy crops do not require chemical treatments or genetic modifications. More information will be available soon at http://www.nofany.org/dairyconference.

Upcoming Webinars

January 14th to February 18th – 6:30 to 8:00 pm
Grazing Management – Improve Your Triple Bottom Line through Better Grazing (BF231)
Thursday evenings –– webinar course through the Northeast Beginning Farmer Project

In this course, you'll learn the key concepts of successful grazing operations. This course is designed for livestock producers who have already initiated grazing practices on their farm, and who have at least a basic knowledge of the grazing behavior of their animals and of their pasture ecosystems. Course fee-$200, scholarships available for veterans. MORE INFO AND REGISTRATION:

http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/online-courses/all-courses/grazing-management-bf-231

Tues. January 19 - February 23, 2016, Webinars each Tuesday evening from 7:00-8:30pm
Grain Production: Is it right for you?

http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/online-courses/all-courses/small-scale-organic-grain-production-bf-140/

This course is intended to make grain production more accessible for small-scale farmers. Information from pre-planting to post-harvest will help aspiring grain growers determine the feasibility and profitability of integrating a grain enterprise into the farm. This course will enable the aspiring grain farmer to carefully weigh the challenges and rewards of small-scale grain production before investing time, energy and resources. Farmers outside of the Northeast US region are welcome to register but should do so knowing that some of the information presented may not be relevant for their bioregion. For more information and registration:http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/online-courses/all-courses/small-scale-organic-grain-production-bf-140/

January 20 - February 24, 2016, Webinars on Wednesday evenings from 7-8:30 pm, EST
Holistic Financial Planning (BF 203): Building Farm Profit Into the Picture

You will learn how to make financial decisions toward farm & family values and goals, and how to build profit into your plans up front, rather than hoping there is something left once expenses are subtracted from income. For more information and registration: http://www.nebeginningfarmers.org/online-courses/all-courses/holistic-financial-planning-bf-203/

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the MODPA Treasurer

Hope this finds everybody in good spirits after the long never ending holiday season. Winter here in my part of the country has been rather warm and easy so far, with minimal snow; just enough for a white Christmas. We have had way more rain than snow. Looks like El Nino is definitely making its mark. Now have to wonder what it will do to the upcoming growing season. If history is right it will mean some changes in the overall season, the question being how much change. The weather is much like the organic market. Know it will change just never sure how much or where.

There appears to continue to be good demand for milk in my area. The price is the best it has ever been but there is still an uneasiness about where we are headed. The talk of imports and exports leaves a person wondering what is coming around the next bend. I am hoping that our organic marketers have learned enough from the conventional market to avoid some of the hard lessons already learned by our conventional counterparts. I am not sure that they have though. If they truly want to take organic to the next level for all of us they are going to have to step out of their comfort zone along with the farmers. I am all for a global economy but we cannot do it at the expense of sacrificing others to do it. We must protect what we already have in the process. It can be a winning situation for everybody if done properly. We as farmers must hold our marketers accountable and do everything in our power to make sure that it is done right.

We are now also into the conference season. This is a great time of the year for many of us. It often is an opportunity to catch up with old friends and to hopefully make some new ones. I have never attended one without coming away with a few new ideas and a few new friends. If you get the chance make sure to take the time an go. I usually make sure I am wearing tall boots to deal with a lot of the bs that goes on there. Hope to see some of you there and catch up on life as we know it.

As always be safe. Take a little time for yourself. The spring rush will be here soon enough.

Bruce Drinkman, MODPA Treasurer
3253 150th Avenue
Glenwood City, WI 54013
715-265-4431

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

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." To ensure a fair and sustainable farm gate price.

1. Keep family farms viable for future generations.
2. Promote ethical, ecological and humane farming practices.
3. Networking among producers of all organic commodities.
4. Promote public policy, research and education in support of organic ag.

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Organic Producers: We Need Your Help

The American College of Veterinary Botanical Medicine (ACVBM) is in the process of applying for status as a specialty college within the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and we need all organic producers to send in letters describing the importance of botanical medicine in the management of your organic herd, and the importance of having veterinarians trained in the use of botanical medicine.

The ACVBM was established in 2014 by a group of veterinarians devoted to the use of botanical medicines in order to increase veterinarians' knowledge and competence in the use of medicinal plants, ultimately leading to diplomate status in the specialty of veterinary botanical medicine.

Please take a few minutes to write a letter describing your dependence on botanical medicinal plants for your organic herd, and for your need for knowledgeable veterinarians trained in the use of botanical medicines.

Please send your letter to Dr. Cindy Lankenau, DVM, by email to: cyndvm@gmail.com; by fax: 716-944-0164, or by US post: Dr. Cindy Lankenau, DVM, 9002 Sunset Drive, Colden, NY 14033.