

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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2017 NODPA Field Days: September 28 & 29, 2017



Early morning producer meeting in 2016

EMBRACING CHANGE IN ORGANIC DAIRY Truxton Community Center 6337 Academy Street, Truxton, NY 13158

The 17th NODPA Field Days is just around the corner and you won't want to miss this year's meeting. There will be two farm tours and an educational program packed with internationally renowned speakers who will focus on strategies to help organic dairy farmers be as

resilient as possible in the face of unpredictable weather conditions, challenges brought on by advances in technology, and, perhaps most significantly, the current over-supply of organic milk and low pay price.

Learn more on page 19 >

Organics under Attack

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The integrity of the USDA Organic program is currently in a precarious position. It is under attack from Congress, the NOP, and from organic advocates. The organic dairy pay price, and subsequently family farm income, is collapsing under the strain of a surplus brought on by poor supply management by milk buyers, poor implementation of existing regulation by the NOP and certifiers, and the failure of the NOP to pass regulations to

uphold the integrity of the organic standards. The unique process of organic certification that has held consumer confidence and allowed organic products to stand out in the marketplace is also under attack and the results could well be more long-term and devastating than a drop in pay price.

The threats come from three distinct areas: the 2018 Farm Bill; from the bureaucratic in

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Message from the NODPA President

Today as I write this, the world seems to be a little upside-down. The partial solar eclipse brings about silent, puzzled behavior in the birds and small mammals on our farm. All the critters know that there is a change happening, and it evokes uncertainty and fear; they don't have the longer view that these changes will only last a short time, and then everything will come back to normal. I feel a sense of comradeship with these small frightened creatures; those of us who make our living as organic dairy farmers are facing a time of uncertainty as we watch our pay prices fall, have limits on production, and hear mixed messages about how to keep integrity in the organic label. We are like the sparrow, watching the sky getting darker, and not sure where it will end.

And then, there has been the weather. We have all seen dry years and wet years, but I can honestly say I've never seen a year like this one. In my area of northern New York, we have experienced

near constant rain, and those rainfalls are measured in inches, not tenths of inches. The stress of getting crops planted, getting feed off, trying to dry hay when the land is saturated, cows that are really tired of the mud, worrying about the feed quality, and trying to limit the compaction and damage we are doing to some fields.....well, I look at the Horizon calendar on my kitchen wall, and see the smiling faces of farmers and their families. I imagine that many of your faces, like ours, this summer will instead be etched with worry and frustration.

And some folks in Washington seem to have organic agriculture in the crosshairs. Some members of both the Senate and House Ag Committees, both openly antagonistic toward organic agriculture, took aim at the NOSB and the organic regulations. Ed Maltby leads us through the details in his article, "Organic Under Attack from Congress" on page 1.

It is a time for coming together again. It's imperative that we understand the issues, have a common voice, and steer events where we can. I want to invite you to the NODPA Annual Field Days on September 28th and 29th in Truxton, NY. Later in this newsletter, you can see the line-up of great speakers and farm

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the NODPA Desk: September 2017

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

On a recent NODPA conference call with Board members and state representatives, the conversation centered on the weather, pay price and potential Congressional activities tied either to the Farm Bill or to Federal budget appropriations. I can predict that these will be the topics of conversation at the upcoming NODPA Field Days and are reflected within this edition of NODPA News. When NODPA first started their Field Days 16 years ago, there were very few opportunities for organic dairy producers to meet and especially at each other's farms. Now there are very many opportunities for organic producers with full calendars of on-farm learning opportunities and mentoring. This year, the Northeast welcomes the Grassfed Exchange conference to Albany with a good selection of speakers that is geared to a more generalized theme around grass-based farming opportunities at a great price for attendees of around \$400. The NODPA Field Days is geared to organic dairy producers and production, reflecting the challenges and opportunities for organic dairies in the next years and reflects the reality of organic dairy at a cost of \$50 for producers. We hope you join us in Truxton, New York at our regularly scheduled date of the last week in September. This year, the date for the 17th Annual NODPA meeting and Field Days is September 28 and 29th.

Some will argue with the title of the article on page one, Organic Under Attack, as being nothing new but this year we have a convergence of attacks from different directions. Organic certification in the US has always been under attack from many different interest groups, from conventional agriculture trade groups, non-organic producers and many competing standards based brands. Before OFPA, it was mostly tied to the consumers' and producers' confusion with different certification standards. In 2002, there was the birth of the National Organic Program and we could transfer a lot of our frustrations to a federal bureaucracy that was set up to handle a small niche market. In 15 years, the NOP has grown to around 30 employees and, hopefully, a \$15 million Federal budget. Certified organic sales have grown from approximately \$18 billion in 2006 to \$47 billion in 2016. The NOP program now certifies 33,300 entities through 80 certifiers. Given the scale and the rapid growth of the organic industry and the pitifully small budget for policing the program, we must expect problems with certification to be highlighted by the media. The NOP should make itself the solution to abuse of regulation but instead they have failed to find the political will to use all the powers at their disposal and have become one of the underlying causes of the dysfunction. With large profits being earned by processors and manufacturers, we should have expected many attempts to maximize profitability through abusing and

misapplication of the regulations. At the beginning of the NOP program there was a strong emphasis on the integrity of the NOP organic label and a collegial interaction in deciding policy and sometimes, unfortunately, pay price. The NOP was open to some change and grassroots influence, especially under Kathleen Merrigan's tenure as Deputy Secretary. That has changed as Big Organic, represented by the OTA, now dominates the political dialogue in Washington DC. Now, we are at a turning point where the growth and opportunity for organic sales is becoming more important than the long term integrity of organic production. A prime example of this is hydroponics, growing plants in a soilless medium. Hydroponics is a great growing method that conserves water and increases production on ever decreasing available land but it clearly should not be certified organic as it does not grow plants in soil. The fact that some hydroponic operators are being certified by a small group of the larger certifiers, and the NOP is allowing it to continue, emphasizes the slow descent of organic integrity to the lowest common denominator.

As producers, we are looking for organic regulations that are consistent yet allow viable production practices that can be applied in many different geographic and climatic conditions but not necessarily in every location. We have become painfully aware of the lengthy process necessary to change and implement regulations that can be enforced under federal law but we trade that for the ability to be part of that change. Currently, we are losing that ability and losing any influence over the work plan of the NOP. This is evident with downgrading the importance of the Origin of Livestock Final Rule and the upgrading of the organic checkoff. Members of Congress, advocates for single issues, such as organic hydroponics and organic porch poultry, and the trade groups have seen the weakness of the NOP and are now poised to ignore the established process and impose their priorities by changing laws rather than allowing those changes through regulation.

Organic certification is not the only qualitative standard available to producers and manufacturers. There is a bewildering array of alternatives in the marketplace. Those that can't grow to organic standards can always promote or be part of other claims. Organic standards should always be open to change, as new techniques are learned and inputs improved, but that change should not seek to weaken the core values of the organic certification that consumers recognize and value. For example, tree fruits that need to be treated by antibiotics may be great sustainably grown products but should not be allowed under organic certification.


Of course, at Field Days, pay price will be a top priority during our producer-only meeting because the buyers are using their leverage to drive the price down to new lows. We will also look at tactics and strategies to protect the integrity of the NOP seal from Congressional action since we don't have the political standing to determine the outcome by using riders and amendments to gain our priorities. If Congress or others do look at opening OFPA to make changes to organic laws, we will also need to plan on how to respond. I hope to see you at Field Days as we tackle these vitally important issues. ♦

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

MYCOTOXIN ALERT 2017!

By Mary-Howell Martens, Lakeview Organic Grain

**Just In!
Mycotoxin
Update
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Mycotoxins are toxic chemicals produced by certain types of fungi that grow on plant material, both in the field or in storage. Mycotoxins are a common problem worldwide, indeed, it is estimated that globally, over 25% of field crops are affected annually with mycotoxins. In Europe, Napoleon's defeat in Russia may not have been due as much to cold or military skill, but rather to mycotoxin-contaminated grain fed to horses and men.

At a recent meeting with other feed mill operators and regulators, mycotoxins are definitely on everyone's mind, as a feed and food hazard that is increasing with changing weather patterns and especially with the amount of distillers' grain from ethanol production that is fed on conventional dairies. Mycotoxin levels can be significantly concentrated and increased in distillers' grain. Conventional dairy farmers are also concerned about all the corn for silage that was planted late and 'muddled in'.

This year's extended wet cool spring created nearly ideal conditions for mycotoxin development in small grains, forage and possibly silage. At Lakeview Organic Grain, we test all incoming grains in-house before taking delivery, rejecting loads that test above 3 ppm vomatoxin. In all the years we have

been buying and testing grain, we have never seen such high levels as this year in New York-grown organic grain, especially in triticale. The loads we rejected at harvest are probably still out there, looking for unsuspecting buyers, some with levels of vomatoxin that were literally "off the charts" for our testing protocol.

This is not a new risk, several years ago a study from Vermont estimated that over a 10 year period, nearly all dairy farms in that state will experience mycotoxin-related issues, even though most will not connect symptoms to actual cause. Increasingly erratic weather, though, has caused significant crop stress, making it difficult for many of American farmers to ignore mycotoxins, especially as they see more low-grade and serious animal health problems, poor quality forage and rejected grain. The fact that the Midwest also experienced an excessively wet spring this year suggests that much of the American grain crop, especially small grains like triticale, wheat and barley, is at risk.

Many types of feedstuffs can develop mycotoxins, including grains, haylage, baleage, silage, dry hay, and high moisture corn. Infection is most common on plants grown under stress, especially when damaged by insects, birds, mites, hail, early frost, heat and drought stress, windstorms, and other unfavourable conditions.

vorable weather. Mycotoxins can also form or increase when grains and forages are harvested and stored at undesirably high moisture levels, when grains are put into storage dirty, if plastic ag bags get torn or damaged, or if storage facilities leak. Forage mold inhibitors, acids or bacterial inoculants generally do not reduce mycotoxins already present in baleage or silage, and though drying or roasting grains will stop further development and may blow off some surface contamination, it will not deactivate the toxins that are there.

Experts estimate there are over 300 fungal toxins which can contaminate crops, but several are distressingly common and damaging. In the Northeast, the common soil fungus, *Fusarium*, causes ear-rot in corn, and scab or head blight in wheat, barley, oats, and rye, and produces several mycotoxins, including vomitoxin (DON), fumonisin, T2, and zearalenone. *Fusarium* can also infect ensiled/bagged forage and silage. The risk increases when corn/forage is harvested late (especially after frost), gets moldy or lodged in the field, is rained on or sours in the windrow, or is not adequately packed to exclude oxygen. Silage corn cut after a frost or late in the season is often too dry to pack well, impairing normal fermentation and allowing *Fusarium*, already present on the corn, to proliferate. *Fusarium* and its toxins can continue to increase if grain is put

into storage above 14% moisture.

Several species of the *Aspergillus* fungus produce aflatoxin, which is most commonly seen in hotter, drier areas of the South and southern Midwest. Though we rarely see aflatoxin on Northeast-grown grain, last year's drought resulted in aflatoxin in some New York ear corn that was not fully mature when harvested; the plants had died of drought stress before the kernels finished developing. The cow health issues and strange milk test results were very confusing until the farmer tested the ear corn remaining in the crib and found significant aflatoxin. Aflatoxin is extremely potent, at the parts per billion (ppb) levels.

Greenish-colored *Penicillium* is most commonly seen in silage and can produce several different toxins. Ergot toxins (from the mushroom fungus *Claviceps*) have also caused problems mostly on rye (St. Anthony's Fire). Byproducts can also contain mycotoxins, with products containing peanuts being notorious for aflatoxin problems.

How do you know whether your grain/forage contains mycotoxins? If feed is visibly moldy, that is a pretty good clue. Just as you wouldn't eat moldy food, neither should your animals.

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Organics Under Attack

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ertia at the NOP; and by single-issue organic advocates who are looking to bypass the established process and change regulations through Congressional action. This article will explore how and why these areas of threat are so important because the defense of organic integrity and the changes to Federal regulations happen in many different ways and we all need to understand how an action in one area will affect a possible solution in another.

Threats to Organic: The Farm Bill

Negotiation has begun for the 2018 Farm Bill. Every four years, Congress goes through a somewhat archaic process of having a Farm Bill. It's archaic because over 80% of the Farm Bill deals with anti-poverty spending and a significant part deals with funding of mandatory programs. It usually makes amendments and suspensions to regulations; reauthorizes, amends, or repeals provisions of temporary agricultural Acts; and puts forth new policy provisions for a limited time into the future. The Farm Bill also draws attention to the policy preferences of individual lawmakers and their ability to redirect funding over the next four years. It allows for the introduction of amendments to existing laws from highly organized and well-funded lobbying groups while at the same time opening the door for hundreds of advocates to introduce and promote their own priorities. For example, in the last Farm Bill, the Organic Trade Association (OTA) employed an influential lobbying firm to introduce and pass, with a bi-partisan vote in a divided Congress, an amendment to the Commodity Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 1996 that allowed for an organic check-off to be formed.

The Farm Bill process can be completed quickly in a year or can stretch over a couple of years, depending on priorities in Congress. Some have predicted that the 2018 Farm Bill may become a priority since it will be easier to pass than other bills in our current highly partisan government. The 2018 Farm Bill process has started with hearings around the country, with presentations mostly from conventional agriculture and attacks on organic regulations. An example of one of the most vocal attacks is coming from Senator Pat Roberts (Republican – Kansas), who chairs the Senate Ag Committee and controls the Farm Bill process in the Senate. He is attacking the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) which, despite its failings, is unique to the organic sector because it ensures that all stakeholders with an interest in organic food and farming have equal access and input into the USDA process for setting organic standards. On July 13, 2017, the Senate Ag Committee held a hearing focused on organic agriculture and specialty crops. In his opening statement during this hearing, Chairman Roberts declared that the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) and organic regulations were “plagued by uncertainty and dysfunction.” “These problems create an unreliable regulatory environment and prevent farmers that choose organics

from utilizing advancements in technology and operating their businesses in an efficient and effective manner,” Roberts stated. His anti-NOSB statement is misinformed and dangerous, but will distract from and make more difficult funding for core organic programs like organic research, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Organic Crop Insurance, Organic Production and Market Data Initiative, and cost-share.

The House Ag Committee Chairman, Congressman Mike Conaway, has also been antagonistic toward organic programs and the NOSB, including at a House Agriculture Committee hearing on specialty crops. With the chairs of both House and Senate Agriculture committees openly questioning the regulatory process of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA or Act) it seems likely that they may want to use the Farm Bill as a vehicle to make significant changes to the Act. These changes would take place without the input of the organic community or any stakeholders. If large scale changes are made to OFPA, for example changing the make-up of the NOSB, many believe that Congress and lobbyists will use the opportunity to introduce amendments that will undermine the high standards necessary to maintain organic integrity and the transparency in defining organic standards. This will directly affect the trust of consumers and ultimately the pay price for producers. The organic label is already threatened by large scale operations that are advocating for lower standards to increase low cost supply and access to a larger market share, and this could further undermine its integrity.

Threats to Organic: Trump Administration

The Trump Administration's attitude to organic certification remains relatively unknown but there are a number of indicators. The Trump budget cut the NOP by three staff positions; the Origin of Livestock Final Rule is no longer a priority for 2017-2018; the Animal Welfare Rule implementation has been postponed; and very few appointments have been made to the next tier of Administrators and Under Secretaries at USDA. It is also concerning that on a webinar on hydroponics on August 14th, Miles McEvoy, the head of the NOP, suggested that organic regulations are flexible enough to certify products for which there are no standards, which directly contradicts one of the purposes specified in the OFPA. (The Act states: §6501. Purposes..... (2) To assure consumers that organically produced products meet a consistent standard.) This attitude will undermine confidence that the NOP will implement changes recommended by the NOSB, especially with hydroponics.

Threat to Organic: Riders to Bills

A rider is an additional provision added to a bill or other measure under the consideration by a legislature, which has little connection with the subject matter of the bill. A rider often results in the measures getting less scrutiny and enables their sponsors to avoid responsibility for pushing them through. A current example is where riders have been added to the Appropriation legislation to

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allow the EPA to bypass existing regulation. For example, the House Interior and Environment Appropriation (Sec. 434) would prohibit EPA from writing any rule that would require the largest industrial animal farms (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, or CAFOs) to properly store, transport, or dispose of their wastes. It is feared that large scale organic poultry operations and conventional poultry operations could use this process to change the access to pasture requirements of the Livestock and Poultry Practices Final Rule. It is also feared that the Coalition for Sustainable Organics, which represents growers in favor of organic hydroponics and has a considerable presence in DC, could use riders AND the opening up of OFPA to push their agenda. The growers in favor of using antibiotics in organic tree fruit are also well organized for similar action to achieve their particular goals.

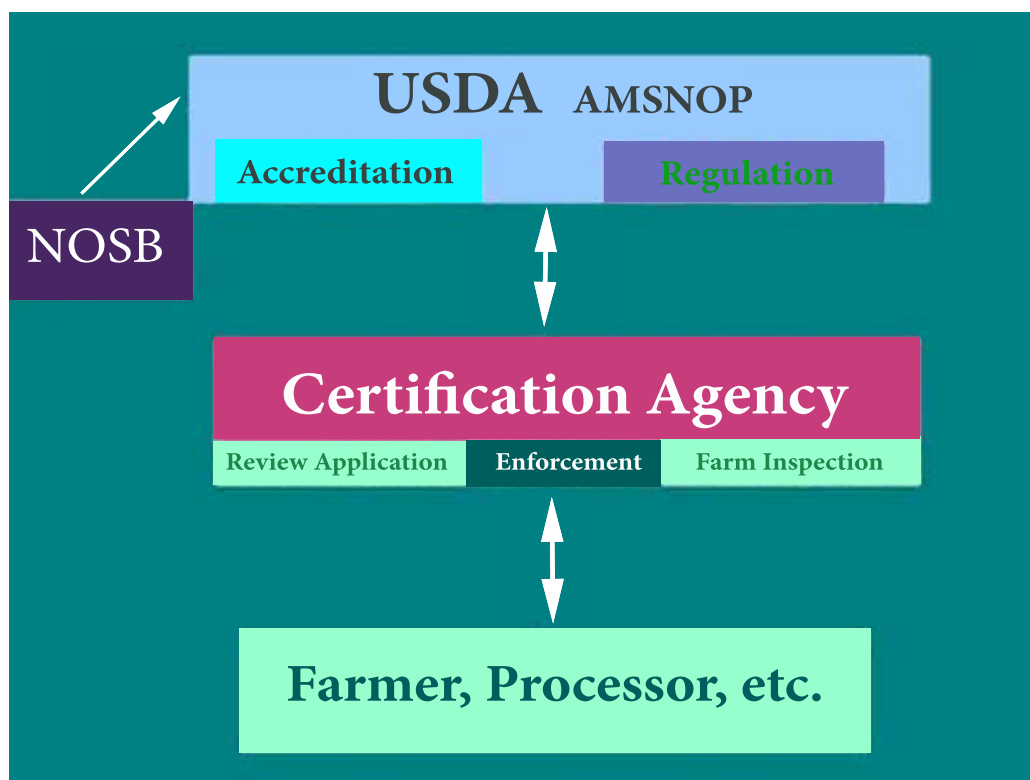
What are the best ways to achieve change? Using USDA administrative measures or Opening OFPA?

USDA Administrative Measures to achieve change:

The NOP has many challenges, and on many levels, when it comes to maintaining the integrity of the organic program, such as preserving the role of the NOSB; enforcement of regulations; and publishing regulations that keep pace with the rapidly changing marketplace for organic products. Here is a summary of the different ways to obtain change by administrative measure:

- **Through recommendation from the NOSB to the NOP to the Secretary of Agriculture.**

The role of the NOSB is to ensure that all stakeholders with an interest in organic food and farming have equal access and input into the USDA process for setting organic standards. This is done at open public meetings, by written comment, by public testimony and detailed work within committees. This transparency has two effects. It allows for well-informed recommendations that reflect the practicality of implementing change into production methods. The transparency of the process also gives consumers the confidence to know that the integrity of the organic label is being preserved. Unfortunately, publishing regulations from



NOSB recommendations can take decades depending on the political will of the administration, the skill of the drafter of the regulation and the ability of the regulatory language to satisfy the requirements of federal regulations. The USDA as an institution does not appreciate the powers of the NOSB. All administrations have sought to restrict the power of the NOSB and control their work plan and agenda, with many complaints about it being unwieldy and unscientific.

- **Guidance documents and training by the NOP of their certifiers on how to interpret and implement the regulations to ensure consistency and a level playing for all certified operations.**

Guidance documents can be used to act quickly to address identified problems from the certification process. The training sessions can ensure that all certifiers follow the same interpretations of the regulations when they implement them. Mandatory attendance at the training session can also be used to educate those certifiers who have been issued a noncompliance from the NOP.

Unfortunately, guidance documents do not hold the force of law and are routinely ignored by certifiers and certified operations. NOP actions against a certifier are routinely challenged and take many years for enforcement to be implemented. During that time, the certifier and the operations certified by them can continue to operate as if they are certified.

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Organics Under Attack*continued from page 7*

- **Administrative actions by the NOP**

These actions usually occur after media controversy, where there's blatant disregard of the regulations, from an Inspector General report, or when certifiers are implementing regulations differently, as are occurring with the origin of livestock and hydroponics. Some examples of administrative action are the measures implemented by the NOP to increase the effectiveness of tracking imported organic grain. If the NOP wanted to follow the European Union decision to change to electronic certificates for imports to ensure easier trace back verification they could do that by administrative action. The NOP can standardize organic certificates, especially important with the tracking of organic livestock. Hopefully, the organic community has been working with the NOP on different solutions to problems before administrative action is taken, as is the case with the blatant abuses with some organic imports. The solutions might then have been discussed by the NOSB or at some of the regular meetings that advocacy groups have with USDA.

- **By Report Language in Bills**

When the Senate or House Appropriations Committee reports an appropriations bill to the full Senate or House, respectively, they typically publishes a committee report explaining the bill. These reports contain more detailed guidance to departments and agencies than is provided in the accompanying bill — generally referred to as “report language.” Similar guidance is also provided in the managers’ joint explanatory statement (or managers’ statement) that accompanies a conference report. Significantly, report language and managers’ statements do not have statutory force; departments and agencies are not legally bound by them. For example, the report language in the Senate Agricultural Appropriation committee in July 2017 addresses the abuse in organic certification: “The Committee strongly encourages USDA to focus resources for NOP on robust oversight of domestic and international operations that carry the USDA organic seal in light of recent news reports that have shed light on inadequate enforcement of the standards.” These statements about how to use appropriated money are added by sub-committee staff and may not survive to the final bill at the request of legislators. The organic community has used these in the past to attempt to influence USDA's use of grant money for research, to increase the amount of money spent on enforcement and provide reports to the committee on progress of these actions. These statements are usually part of the bargaining process of what ends up in any final bill. They have to survive the conference committee where the Senate

and House Bill are combined. Their effectiveness is marginal except if they are adopted by the administration, enforced by the agencies or championed by influential members of Congress. In 2017, there is some doubt that there will be a new budget and we will be left with a continuing resolution that continues the funding and priorities from previous years.

- **Inspector General reports can be a useful tool to ensure enforcement of regulations.**

These reports are usually started after complaints from the trade, members of the public or more usually by members of Congress. One particular report on organic dairy conducted in 2012 analyzed the compliance side of hauling organic milk and, as a result, the NOP had to make recommendations to correct the areas identified as inadequate by the report. This has brought changes at the NOP and more transparency in identifying organically certified operations. The recommendations on ensuring the integrity of organic milk was finalized in 2014 with a Guidance document entitled “Certification Requirements for Handling Unpackaged Organic Products.”

Achieving Change by opening OFPA (aka, The Act)

Changing the legislation that has formed the basis of organic certification, OFPA, to mandate changes to regulation is always an option and has been done occasionally without having any impact on the totality of the Act and integrity of organic. But anytime the Act is opened, especially when there is a hostile administration, there is the possibility that some drastic changes could be made. In 2017, we are faced with a hostile Congress and well-financed groups within the organic sector that are focused on single issues.

If, or more likely when, the Senate recommends changes in the OFPA in order to make modifications to the structure, governance and power of the NOSB it will be looking for support from the industry to justify its actions. They will get support from the USDA because, historically, the USDA has attempted to rein in the powers of the NOSB. The support the Senate gets from the organic industry will depend on what it can offer them. It is more than likely that the powerful poultry lobby will support the opening of OFPA and use it to change the animal welfare poultry requirements. Groups in the West might be keen to use the opening of OFPA to address the different regional needs of growers, especially when dealing with the loss of what they regard as valuable production tools, for example, antibiotics in tree fruit. There also appears to be a regional division emerging over the issue of whether hydroponics and/or containerized production should be allowed in organic, with Eastern and Midwestern organic producers largely being opposed or skeptical, and Western organic interests being more open to the idea. Some of this may relate to the scale of operations enabled by hydroponic/containerized production, and

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"We love it in the maternity pen!"

— Alan Mesman



MESMAN FARMS, MT. VERNON, WASHINGTON
 Alan (Anita), Ben (Chelsy) and Samantha Mesman
 Robotic Organic Dairy, 110 cows, SCC 150,000



"We have been using Udder Comfort™ for 8 years and just love it in our maternity pen!" says 4th generation dairyman Alan Mesman, pictured above with wife Anita during the 2016 WODPA Conference. Alan and his son Ben and daughter Samantha operate Mesman Farms, a 110-cow robotic organic dairy near Mt. Vernon, Washington.

"As an original user, we did one of the first DH1 comparisons 8 years ago, coating udders of high-count cows. We were surprised when our SCCs fell by 40,000. We then transitioned to using Udder Comfort routinely after calving to manage udder edema and milk quality."

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organics Under Attack

continued from page 8

some of it may be related to water shortages in the West, and the perception that hydroponics and containerized production methods are better at conserving water. The Coalition for Sustainable Organics will undoubtedly use the situation to obtain organic status for hydroponics. I can only imagine other well-

financed groups, like organic milk CAFO's, will use the opening of OFPA to make changes to the definition of access to pasture. For those in favor of opening up OFPA to solve an individual issue, there is immense danger that those in control of the process will implement their own agenda and undermine organic integrity for scientific (as defined by the federal government) and commercial reasons.

How does this directly affect Organic Dairy?

To understand the implications for Organic Dairy, take for example,



the one-time transition for dairy. Theoretically, it would be relatively easy to end the one time transition for dairy if the OFPA was modified since dairy is the only form of livestock that has that provision. All other livestock have to be organic from birth, with increases in the number of organic animals occurring through conventional breeding stock. Making this change by amending OFPA is unfortunately, the quickest and easiest way. The NOP has effectively blocked the ten years of work done by the NOSB; by NOP staff; and by the organic community with comment on Proposed Rules by closing it for comment and not presenting it for Final Rulemaking. As illustrated above, opening up OFPA for this one issue, or adding it to a number of issues Congress is looking at, could be counterproductive because those with more influence might change the provision to continuous transition as we currently have in some areas and/or weakening the access to pasture standards.

What can we do now?

We need to approach change by being strategic and using all the tools available. Enforcement will come down to political will and an expansion of the NOP budget, with more money allocated for auditing of certifiers and enforcement of regulations.

The NOSB is in no way perfect but we should continue to support its continued existence as currently defined in OFPA. If the NOSB became just an advisory body to the Secretary of Agriculture, without its current powers, or a haven for large scale production, all the recommendations would be dictated by Big Organic Ag. This is very similar to how all the other committees work at the USDA.

Recently, we have been successful in working with the media and via legal routes. The media has shown a heightened interest in organic dairy and organic imports, and will continue to inform the public. Our recent interaction with the Department of Justice, partnering with the work that Cornucopia had done, brought us success in keeping a third buyer for organic milk in order to maintain some future leverage on pay price. Currently, we are part of a lawsuit to maintain the independence of the NOSB, and we are assisting organic groups and individuals that are taking legal action to preserve their markets.

As we move into a very uncertain political season we need to be aware of all the different tactics and actions that are available to us to preserve the organic market and an adequate pay price. The reality is that organic dairy is just one part of the organic industry and the producer voice unfortunately is very limited by a lack of resources. By building strategic partnerships and investing time and money to support our priorities we can be part of the process to maintain the integrity of the organic label and our market place. By working together we can ensure that neither Congress nor Big Organic Ag can devalue the work and investment of the past thirty plus years. When the glut of organic milk finally subsides we need to be in a good position to reestablish a thriving organic dairy market that pays a fair price to producers. ♦

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Fertility Needed for Growing Pastures & Hay: Part 1

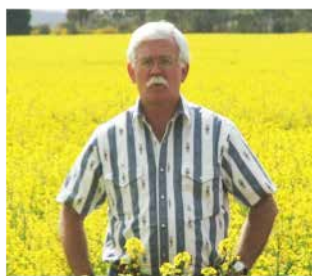
By Neal Kinsey

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

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

A large number of farmers and ranchers contact us concerning what fertilizers and soil amendments they should use for growing good to excellent pasture and hay. Such questions cannot be correctly answered without a soil sample that has been properly taken in the field and correctly analyzed – you can't tell what you need until you know what nutrients you have and don't have! And the soil audit can only provide correct answers when the sample being sent for testing has been taken properly. (Guidelines are available on our web site, www.kinseyag.com, or mailed upon request at no charge.)

When it comes to building soil fertility, here is the place where those concerned with true quality should begin. Take soil tests from permanent pastures and hay meadows to a depth of only four inches. Remember the deeper you sample, the less available the soil nutrients (including micronutrients) will



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tend to be. Nutrients applied on top of the soil without being worked in will have the most significant effect only on the top four inches over the next year. If the soil is to be worked first for newly planted pasture or some type of hay crop, then consider taking a topsoil sample to an average depth of six and three-fourths inches. When soils are worked after fertilization, even two or three inches deep, that is generally sufficient to mix the materials well enough to be utilized throughout the aerobic zone (as

deep as a fence post will rot in that soil). If levels of nutrients below this area of prime influence are required, then take a separate subsoil sample to determine whether nutrients are lacking there or not.

Keep in mind that when fertilizer or lime is applied on top of the soil and not worked in, most of the nutrients will remain concentrated in the top few inches during the next growing season. As the plants begin to take up nutrients, if the correct fertilization has been done and those levels are correctly maintained, it is possible to positively affect fertility levels over the entire year – which will be evident by annually testing that four inch zone. When a grower follows through with fertilizing and testing for three or four years in a row on soils that will not have lime and fertilizer worked into that soil it will become evident as to how important it is that samples should represent only the first four inches as a separate soil sample every year.

Neal Kinsey, from Charleston, Missouri, USA, owns and operates Kinsey Agricultural Services, Inc., a company which specializes in soil fertility management. The program is based on the system of providing soil nutrients to correctly treat the soil and the plants that grow there, using soil chemistry to correct the soil's physical structure to build the "house" which enables the biology to flourish. Our business includes working with most major food and fiber crops throughout the world. Consulting includes soils received for analysis and recommendations from every state in the United States and from over 75 countries, principally from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Great Britain, Germany, Austria and France. Detailed soil audits will determine specific fertilization programs based on each individual soil and its fertility requirements.

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Mycotoxin Alert 2017

continued from page 5

However, it usually isn't that simple. Not all molds you can see produce toxins, and not all grain/forage containing toxins looks moldy. For that reason, although we rarely see moldy grain, we do test often for mycotoxins. There are accurate lab tests available – Dairy One does a nice 6 mycotoxin scan, but these are expensive and slow, and tests are only as accurate and representative as the sample was, so they are usually not done unless there is good reason to suspect a problem.

What makes us suspicious? We generally test grain that is light test weight, poorly matured, off-color, musty, dusty, harvested excessively late, has many broken or damaged kernels, or just doesn't look/smell/feel right. We also randomly test other samples of each grain during the season to get a baseline and to check our assumptions. A slight pink coloration to the grain can indicate the presence of Fusarium. We usually recommend testing all on-farm feed supplies if a farmer complains of 'typical' mycotoxin symptoms in their animals. We also recommend that, if you must feed forages that are moldy, slimy, off-smelling, or otherwise not quite right, you test them first. Traditionally,

afatoxins have been detected by placing grain under a 'black light', but that is not a reliable test for the Fusarium toxins.

At high levels, mycotoxins can cause liver damage, internal hemorrhaging, cancer, abortion, and reproductive failure in animals, but even at a fairly low levels, they can strongly suppress an animal's immune system, resulting in other opportunistic infections, such as salmonella, clostridia, and E coli to 'break through', causing diarrhea, mastitis, and other production/health problems. Some mycotoxins are estrogen-like, interfering with cycling, conception and fetal development.

The subclinical effects of mycotoxins are more insidious and difficult to identify. Feed with mycotoxins can result in reduced feed intake, impaired rumen functioning, elevated SCC, poor vaccine take, reduced milk yield and butterfat, reduced weight gain, and impaired reproductive function in both females and males. The problem here, of course, is that other factors can cause similar low-grade symptoms, which is why farmers may not connect symptoms to cause. But, if you see such symptoms, mycotoxins in feed and forage are one of the first things to address. Animals under stress for other reasons and young animals tolerate significantly lower toxin level than healthy adult animals.

There are 'threshold' levels of concern for different mycotoxins depending on the animal species being fed. Accord-

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ing to Dairy One, ruminants can tolerate a total toxin level of around 5 parts per million (ppm) of vomatoxin while other experts caution not to exceed 1-2 ppm. Pigs, chickens and young animals are much more sensitive. The acceptable threshold for organic human food grains is essentially zero.

Other mycotoxins are of concern at a much lower tolerance level. New York State has issued a warning that it is illegal to use feed with aflatoxin levels above 20 ppb in dairy feed, because the toxin can be transmitted into the milk. Animals destined for slaughter or breeding can be fed higher levels, up to 300 ppb aflatoxin for finishing beef steers.

It is important for livestock farmers to recognize that as far as the animal is concerned, it is the total cumulative intake level of all mycotoxin-infected feed that counts. Even if each individual feed/forage item tests 'below threshold levels' (including bale-age, silage, grain, ground feed, high moisture corn, ear corn etc.), if eaten together by one animal, the overall level may exceed the threshold and adverse effects will be seen. Also, frequently contaminated feed/forage contains more than one toxin, further complicating the decision of whether you have reached a level for concern.

While there are products available to 'bind' or adsorb toxins, none are 100% reliable, so it is best to avoid feeding suspect

feed whenever possible. If you need to use a toxin binder, try to match the correct binder to the toxin present. In the feed industry, mycotoxin binders are often termed 'flow or anti-caking agents' to avoid making actual efficacy claims. Binders allowed under organic standards fall into 3 primary categories:

1. Clay or silicate/montmorillonite-based products (Desert Dynamine, Redmond Conditioner, bentonite, calcium aluminosilicate etc) are effective against aflatoxin, but with little effect on Fusarium toxins.
2. Low-inclusion rate yeast cell wall extracts, also known as oligosaccharide/beta-glucan yeast cell-wall products (Fuse 207, Check M, Immunowall, FloMatrix, Mycotex etc) are reasonably effective against the Fusarium toxins.
3. A newer product from Alltech called Integral A+ is made from hydrolyzed yeast and is showing promise in better protecting an animal's gut on a routine basis, tying up toxins in cattle, horses, sheep, poultry and pigs. It seems to work best when used as a routine 'safety' feed inclusion at the rate of 4-8 g/head/day than if used in an emergency or acute situation.

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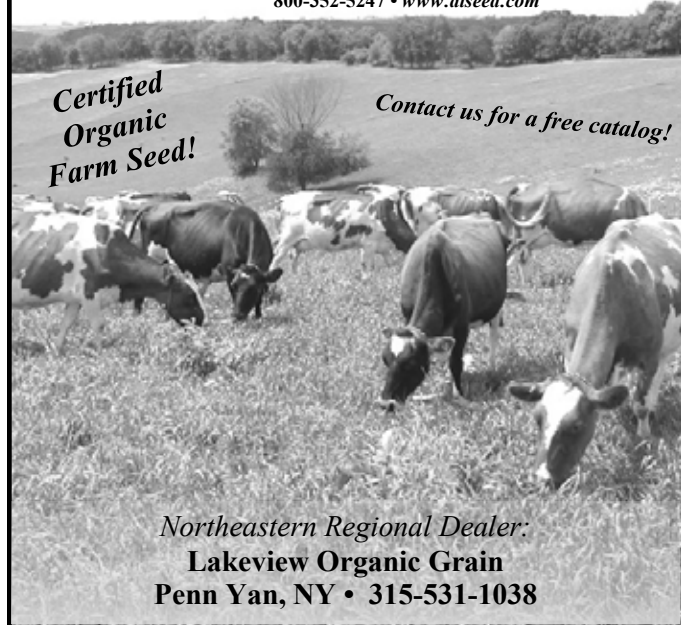


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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

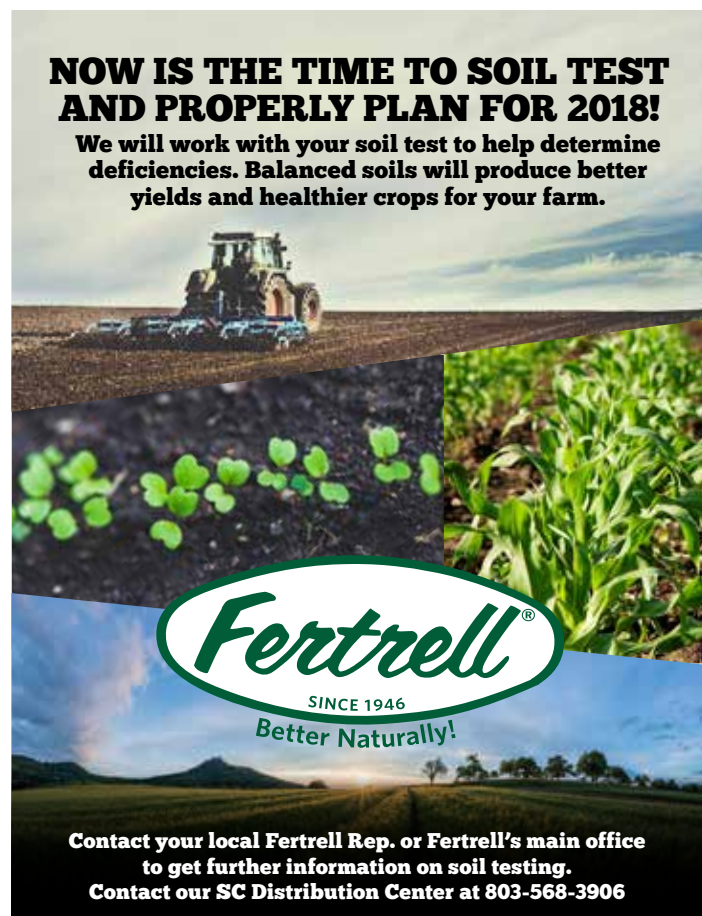
Mycotoxin Alert 2017

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Steps to Minimize Mycotoxin Levels in Grain, Forage and Feed

1. Always use cleaned, high quality seed that does not carry seedborne diseases. If you plant back your own seed, make sure it was not infected with scab or head blight (*Fusarium*) the previous year. *Fusarium* is a very common soil organism, so its presence in seed alone will not guarantee problems, but if weak seed results in a plant that is more vulnerable to stress, this can cause infection and mycotoxin problems. Whenever possible, use disease resistant varieties.
2. Since fungal infection and mycotoxin development is far more likely on stressed plants, it is very important to focus on reducing agronomic factors in the field that cause stress. This includes soil fertility imbalances or deficiencies/excesses, soil drainage problems, soil compaction, weeds, insects, and diseases. It also includes
3. Harvest at physiological maturity, as soon as the moisture content allows minimum grain damage. This means harvesting shelled corn at 23-25% moisture, ear corn at 25-30%, small grains at 12-17%, and soybeans at 11-15%. The longer grain is left in the field after maturity, the higher the likelihood of fungal contamination. Dry suspected grain to at least 14% moisture as rapidly as possible, at least within 24-48 hours after harvest. Safe, long-term storage can only be achieved at a moisture level of 13.5% or below. Cool grain after drying so hot grain doesn't absorb moisture from the air.
4. Adjust the harvesting equipment for minimum grain damage and maximum cleaning. Especially where scab/head blight is evident in the field, the combine should be set for maximum cleaning, with higher blower speeds to remove the small shriveled diseased kernels and broken grain.
5. If harvested grain contains wet weed or plant material, run it through a rotary cleaner soon after harvest so the

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moisture doesn't migrate into the grain. Rotary cleaning also will remove broken and diseased kernels and fines which are more vulnerable to insect and mold damage in storage, and removal of chaff and debris will reduce the possibility of dryer fires. During harvest, we routinely use the rotary cleaner between truck/wagon and grain bin to make sure that grain goes into storage as clean as possible.

6. Roasting does NOT deactivate mycotoxins, but it may reduce the level by blowing off surface mold. If you roast moldy grain, make sure you run a mycotoxin test after roasting to check if the level is safely reduced.
7. Thoroughly clean all bins before storage to remove dirt, dust, and old grain. Store in water-, insect-, and rodent-tight structures. Keep grain well-aerated and monitor regularly for mold, insect infestation, leakage, or other deterioration.
8. For ensiled forages in bags or silos, make sure forage is harvested at the right moisture level, is tightly packed, that oxygen is excluded and the 'package' is kept sealed since mycotoxin-causing fungi require oxygen to live. Be prepared to discard forage from around torn areas of Ag bags, as it is more likely to be contaminated. Avoid

harvesting dead or moldy plant material in the field.

9. Use extra care and watch more closely when you harvest grain or forage that you know grew under stress, including grain that is low test weight, frost, insect or flood damaged, harvested immature or at high moisture, or forage or silage that may have been harvested too wet or too dry, dirty or containing significant levels of dead material, or that may not have fermented correctly, or any feed that just doesn't look or smell right!
10. If you have reason to suspect mycotoxin problems, contact a forage testing lab and test before feeding it or representing it to a buyer as sound grain. If you must feed contaminated grain, identifying the toxins present will help you choose the most effective toxin binder.
11. Reduce animal stress from other causes, since stressed and diseased animals are far more susceptible to mycotoxin issues than healthy unstressed animals. Watch your animals for subclinical symptoms that might indicate feed issues.

For more information, this article from South Dakota State University has good information:

http://openprairie.sdstate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1139&context=extension_extra

Mary-Howell Martens can be reached at Lakeview Organic Grain, Penn Yan, NY, 315-531-1038, mh@lakevieworganic-grain.com.

On page 38 is an update to this article.

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Message from the NODPA President

continued from page 2

tours, and read articles from these presenters and about these presenters in this issue. By now, the brochure will have arrived in your mailbox. And due to generous donations from our sponsors, the registration is again free for organic and transitioning farmers. The only cost is for the great meals that are prepared for you. So come join us for a day or two! We will come together to understand market forces, help our farms be more resilient, and join in the conversations that may influence positive results. (Well, and to have some fun with old friends and meet new ones, too.) I hope to see you there!

Liz Bawden, NODPA President
Hammond, NY | Phone: 315-324-6926

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

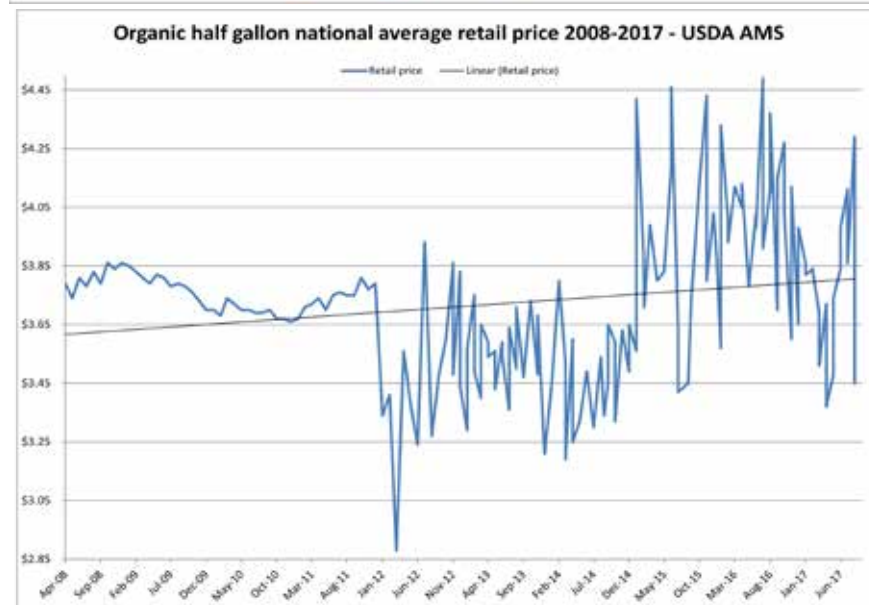
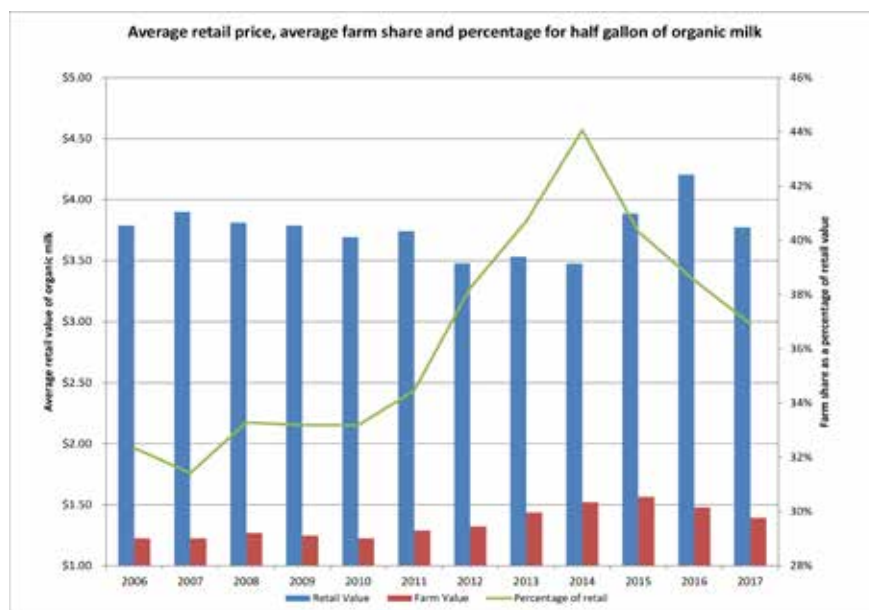
Organic Milk Pay, Retail and Feed prices September 2017

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

As pay price tumbles, losing between \$3-10 per hundred pounds compared to 2016, fluid milk sales continue to grow as does world-wide demand for organic milk powder. Demand for organic fluid milk shows no signs of slowing down. The USDA AMS national data reports total organic milk products' sales for June 2017 were 208 million pounds, down 1.7% from the previous June 2016. Overall, the January-June 2017 sales are up 0.8% over the previous January-June 2016. Total organic whole milk products' sales for June 2017 were up 4% over June 2016. This resulted in 7.7% increase in sales of organic whole milk for the first half of 2017, over sales in the same period of 2016. Usually a surplus on the supply side of dairy products and a drop in pay price is reflected in lower retail prices. Although there is mixed data from USDA AMS on retail prices of organic half-gallons and a wide difference across the country, there seems to be no rush to lower the retail price of organic milk, with the exception of Whole Foods which is under new ownership. Their new owner, Amazon, has targeted organic milk and butter for significant price reductions. Retail price cuts will almost certainly mean that the lower pay price will remain longer that the 18 months to two years it may take for the supply side to adjust to slower growth. Lower pay prices will be a boon for large dairies but small to mid-size producers will suffer the most as usual.

New England and the Northeast are organic milk deficient areas, with milk coming into the area from many states including Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan and Pennsylvania and reflects the national trend of increasing utilization of organic whole milk at the retail level. In New England, Federal Milk Market Order 1 reports utilization of organic whole milk for July 2017 as 14.160 million pounds, up from 12.3 million pounds, one year earlier. The July 2017 butterfat content was 3.28 percent, down from 3.29 percent in 2016. Organic reduced-fat milk utilization for July 2017, 18.4 million pounds, was down slightly from 18.5 million pounds one year earlier.

As conventional mailbox pay price starts to rise out of their cyclical trough, organic pay prices have dropped. Maple Hill Creamery/Byrne Dairy have notified at least some of their Northeast producers (who are without contracts) that their average pay price will be \$29.80 over the next 12 months, with seasonal variation in their pricing. Upstate Niagara Cooperative is supporting producers by holding the pay price at just a \$3/cwt drop from 2016's price. Horizon (DanoneWave) and OV pay prices have dropped



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

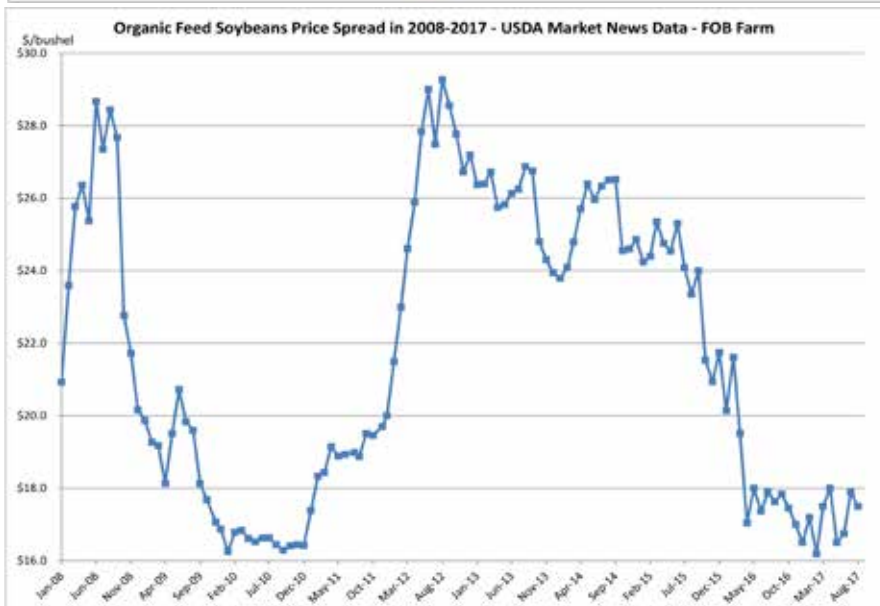
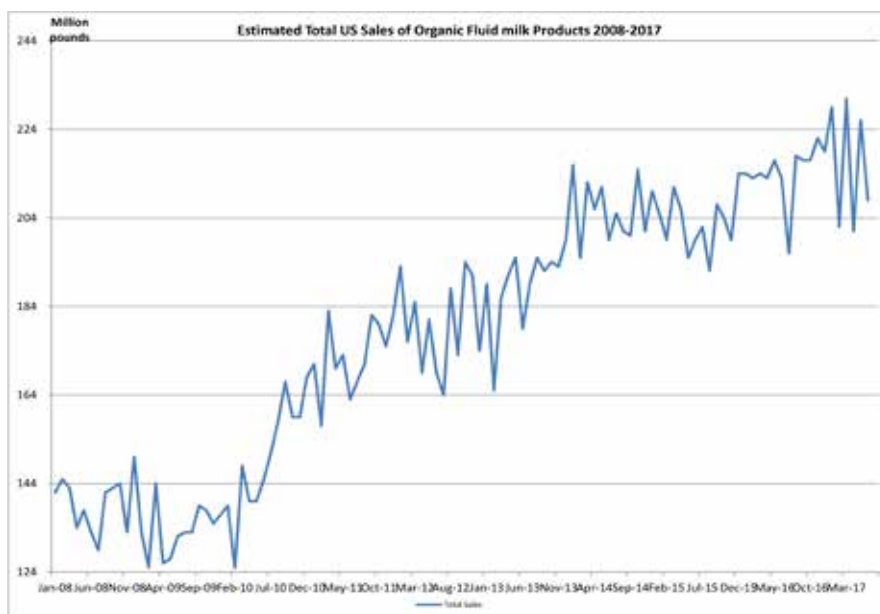
substantially over the last year, with Horizon latest cut of \$4 for September 2017 milk and OV's continuing its \$1 per cwt for inventory management, plus it \$2 drop for Spring flush and the previous \$2 drop.

Milk buyers are not taking on any new farms, whether they are transitioned, transitioning or are those producers looking for new buyers. One buyer has imposed baseline quotas and a 5% drop in volume on 2016 production, plus financial penalties for over-production. Buyers, like CROPP, are obviously taking the hit directly, with organic milk being diverted onto the conventional market with lower prices. Some producers in the West (again without contracts) are only getting the conventional price for their milk. The drop in pay price is affecting the grass-fed market similarly. We saw this in 2009, and the same is happening again. These drops in pay price are large and unexpected, with producers looking to refinance their term loans and short term debt if unable to meet the cash needs with simple cuts in non-essential purchases.

The sale of Stonyfield to the largest dairy products group in the world, Groupe Lactalis, has been finalized. It is still uncertain what changes, if any, this will mean on the supply side. There are several initiatives around advocating to Ben and Jerry's about converting to organic within three years. While this may be an unrealistic timetable, there is the potential to use consumer pressure to leverage companies to 'walk the talk' when it comes to implementing their public mission statement that fuels sales. Stonyfield never had a herd of cows but they were able to use the purchase of dairy inputs from Organic Valley to paint a picture that consumers could buy into. Perhaps there is a possibility that the new owners of Stonyfield can work with Unilever, Ben and Jerry's parent company, to fully utilize the grass-based organic dairy herds in the Northeast.

There is little difference in the price of organic feed grain, although there are reports that with tankers full of organic corn being turned around at sea because of tighter import controls, the price of organic corn may be rising. In the Northeast, the weather picture has varied widely with some producers reporting a near perfect combination of wet and dry weather for pasture, grass conservation and corn, and others suffering the wettest year in memory and thinking of "breeding cows with gills." With the wet weather, there is also widespread fear of mold contamination of forage and grains (see article in this issue) to further complicate producers difficulty in making a ration that is healthy and cheap but doesn't produce too much milk.

Organic hay costs are within the same range as last year, with hay being offered at \$50 per round bale or \$150-200 a ton FOB with a good supply. Cheap foreign feed still dominates the market and undercuts domestic producers. ♦



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

An Interview with Neal Kinsey

By Sonja Heyck-Merlin

Neal Kinsey, internationally known expert on soil fertility management and the owner of Kinsey Agricultural Services, will be presenting at the 17th Annual NODPA Field Days on September 28 & 29, 2017 in Truxton, NY, and ahead of the NODPA Field Days, we wanted everyone to learn more about Neal via the following interview, which is based on questions submitted by a number of organic dairy farmers.

Please introduce yourself:

I was born on a farm in southeast Missouri in the same county where I currently live. I am the eldest of 12 children, and I spent my childhood with my grandfather while my father served in the military. Once my father came home he also started farming. I am married with two daughters. My business, Kinsey Agricultural Services, was launched as a part-time enterprise in 1973. By 1976, I had grown my business enough to pursue it full-time. What we do at Kinsey Ag. is advise in terms of soil fertility. We sell advice, not products.

How did you come to be interested in agronomy?

The principal crops on our family farm were alfalfa, corn, wheat, soybeans, cotton, melons, pasture, and hay. When new ground was put into production on our heavy clay soils, it would always go into soybeans. We sent soil tests to University Extension which would always come back saying we didn't need to apply anything to grow soybeans. The first time the land was put in soybeans, it would make 50 bushel/acre. We would do another soil test which again said we didn't need anything, and the second year we would make 40 bushels. Do another test, and again we'd be told that we didn't need anything, and make 30 bushels the third year.

The question I had is why did we go from 50 to 40 to 30 bushels and the soil tests always said we didn't need to add anything? At the time, I was enrolled in a Master's program of Food Industry Logistics at the University of Missouri, and I was able to pose this question to many people. I was referred to Dr. William Albrecht, professor emeritus of soil science.

In response to my question of the decreasing soybean yields, Dr. Albrecht said that the problem was we hadn't conducted a detailed enough soil analysis. In 30 minutes, he told me why we hadn't been able to produce the proper yield. I took that information home, and in one year's time we went from 30 bushels back up to 45 bushels.

I also discovered that Dr. Albrecht taught a private correspondence course in soils, which I then enrolled in. After that, I began working with area farmers as a soil fertility specialist. Meeting Dr. Albrecht completely changed the course of my career.

Please give us a description of your agronomy philosophy:

One of the Laws of Thermodynamics states that life can only come from life. Life only comes from life, and our life is based on what

we grow for food. It is my philosophy that the quality of food provides the quality of our life.

Why is that? Because the soil is alive. That life provides the means for providing life to the plants that grow there. That quality of life in the soil provides the quality of life for the plants we grow. The plants and how they grow and develop provides the quality of life for those who consume them. In other words, we are what we eat.

We have to feed the equivalent weight of one average sized cow per acre in living organisms before our crops gets all of what is required to grow properly. This is the thing too many people forget- the soil life eats first, and the plant crop eats second. The plants survive on what's left because the microbes get as much of what they need as possible first.

If we don't feed that average sized cow per acre in addition to our crop, we start shorting ourselves. We are not feeding our soils properly. We have to feed the life of the soil in order to get the life back. Feed the soil correctly to properly feed the crop, which provides our nutritional needs accordingly. To do that, the living organisms in the soil need the proper environment. They need the ideal physical structure, the right amount of air, water and minerals. They need that to accomplish their work. Most soils don't naturally have that proper environment.

Ideally, 45% of the soil is mineral content, and that mineral content is what provides the nutrients for the plants we're growing. In the end, we want that physical structure but the chemistry of the soil (the effects each nutrient has on all the other nutrients) determines the physical structure of every soil.

What is the ideal physical structure we're trying to achieve? It's 25% air, 25% water, 45% minerals, and 5% humus. Once the physical structure is properly provided for, we have the right amount of porosity in that soil, the right amount of space to provide the proper relationships between air and water that is needed to nurture the microbes and all the organisms that feed the plants.

Using soil chemistry to provide the proper nutrients also provides the correct physical structure, which is what we need to build a house for soil biology. Use the soil chemistry to provide the proper physical structure, which then builds the house for biology, which includes the plant roots and anything else that supports the plant.

What experiences led to that philosophy?

One session with Dr. Albrecht stands out. Dr. Albrecht was discussing colloidal humus. When you take all the organic matter in the soil and break it down to its smallest components, it's the organic colloid. That collection of organic colloids is what we call colloidal humus.

When he analyzed the mineral content of colloidal humus, it analyzed out exactly to the same nutrients as the most fertile soil. Dr. Albrecht explained that when you look at what produces the best grass, corn, or whatever crop you want to grow, these standards are basically the same all over the world.

What he found when he analyzed the humus was that your soil needs 60-70% calcium depending on whether it's sand or clay. Every time he analyzed the colloidal humus, the calcium was between

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NODPA Field Days Farm Tour: Twin Oaks Dairy, Truxton, NY

SAVE THE DATE!

2017 NODPA Field Days: September 28 & 29, 2017

Truxton Community Center, 6337 Academy Street, Truxton, NY 13158

Education Program

Once again this year, we are offering a farm tour on Thursday morning, prior to the official start of the educational program. Attendees can start at Casey Farms, Apulia Station, NY, and see Bill and Joanne Casey's organic dairy and Pick Your Own berry operation that they started in order to diversify their income base. (Please note that you do not have to sign in at the Truxton Community Center in order to attend this tour, instead register after the tour.) Registration and lunch follow at the Truxton Community Center followed by a full afternoon of workshops. We are so lucky to have Neal Kinsey join us. He will be speaking about Soil Fertility and Climate Change. If you'd like to learn more about Neal and his background, philosophy, and advice he can offer, please read Sonja Heyck-Merlin's interview on page 18. Dr. David Wolfe, Professor of Plant and Soil Ecology and Chair of the Climate Change Consortium at Cornell University, has had his eye on climate change for many years. In the session Shifting Weather Patterns, he will share his professional focus: the impact of climate change on agriculture and farming practices. He will have insights and practical strategies to cope with unpredictable weather such as experienced during the 2016 NYS drought and this year's excessively wet spring and summer.

Friday morning kicks off early for producers who have the Producer-Only Meeting at 7:00 am. This year, this session will be especially important with so many organic dairy issues impact-

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Thursday, September 28, 2017

8:00 – Noon Registration and Trade Show Truxton Community Center, 6337 Academy Street, Truxton, NY 13158

(REGISTRATION CONTINUES THROUGH LUNCH AND CAN BE DONE AFTER THE CASEY FARMS TOUR)

9:00 – 11:30 Pre-Field Days Farm Tour of Casey Farms, 1136 Berry Road, Apulia Station, NY 13020. Bill and Joanne Casey will give a tour of their organic dairy and Pick-Your-Own Berry enterprise. This is an optional tour. Participants can go directly to the farm and register after the tour.

12:00 – 1:00 pm Lunch and Registration

1:00 – 3:00 Soil Fertility and Climate Change: How building up soil fertility creates resilience on your farm when growing conditions are unstable. Neal Kinsey, owner, Kinsey Agricultural Services, will provide education and share his experience so you can create and maintain the most fertile soil for your pastures and crops.

3:00 – 3:15 Milk Break

3:30 – 4:30 Shifting Weather Patterns: Opportunities and Challenges for Dairy and Crop Production in the Age of Climate Change. Dr. David Wolfe, Professor of Plant and Soil Ecology and Chair of the Climate Change Consortium, Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future, Cornell University, whose professional focus is on the impact of climate change on agriculture, will focus on recent shifts in weather patterns and offer practical strategies to help farmers adapt to them.

4:30 – 5:30 Social Hour and Trade Show, and NY Grazing Coalition Pasture Soil Health Trailer Tours. Fay Benson, Cornell Cooperative Extension's Small Dairy Extension Specialist will lead tours and answer questions about this educational resource.

5:30 – 7:00 Banquet Dinner and NODPA Annual Meeting, Liz Bawden, NODPA President, and Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director.

7:00 – 9:00 Keynote Presentation: CowSignals, Jack Rodenburg, Certified CowSignals Trainer and founder, Dairy Logix, Ontario, Canada, will lead an interactive event that will be fun and educational while providing you with the tools to help you improve cow management and housing by observing and analyzing cow behavior.

9:00 pm Meeting Ends

Friday, September 29, 2017

6:30 – 9:00 am Continental Breakfast, Truxton Community Center

7:00 – 9:00 Producer-Only Meeting Facilitated by Henry Perkins, Maine Organic Milk Producers president and past NODPA president, with discussion on pay price, milk supply and much, much more.

9:00 – 10:30 Adopting New Technology and/or Management Systems on the Farm: How to make well informed and financially sound decisions about major farm management changes. Sarah Flack, consultant and educator, will walk everyone through the process for decision making around change. She will also address whether a robotic milking system is compatible with your grazing system, and how to assess whether your farm is suitable to convert to an all-grass based system.

10:30 – 11:15 Functional Barn Design: Strategies for Assessing Your Barn for Cow Comfort and Labor Efficiency, Jack Rodenburg, Dairy Logix, Ontario, Canada, international consultant on barn design and CowSignals Trainer, will address freestall barn design for cow comfort and labor efficiency; system design and management for robotic milking, and calf barn design incorporating the best in ventilation, and more.

11:15 -- 12:00 Twin Oaks Dairy Farm Tour Overview. Kathie and Kirk Arnold will give an overview of their farm and new barn construction. The Arnolds and Jack Rodenburg worked together on designing their new barn, and they will share their observations from that process. In addition, Kathie will discuss the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program (DGA) and her experience as a Master Dairy Grazier. Fay Benson, the NY DGA Program Director will be on hand to offer DGA program updates and answer questions.

Noon – 1:15 pm Lunch

1:30 pm Twin Oaks Dairy Farm Tour, 3185 NY-13, Truxton, NY 13158 Kathie and Kirk Arnold, owner-operators, will lead a tour of their farm and Jack Rodenburg will be on hand to show how the Arnold's designed their new barn with cow comfort and labor efficiencies clearly in mind.



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ing producers. Pay price, over-supply, changes at the USDA and other topics will certainly be discussed in this meeting. The education program starts at 9:00 am with Sarah Flack who will offer advice and strategies on how to make well informed and financially sound decisions about major farm management changes, especially in light of the sometimes overwhelming technological advances available to farmers these days. Sarah, always practical and thoughtful in her approach to educating farmers, will lead a lively, informative session. To learn more about Sarah's approach to decision making, please read her article on page 23. Following Sarah's presentation, Ed Maltby, NODPA's executive director, will bring updates from Washington DC and will address supply and pay price. This will be followed by Jack Rodenburg's workshop, Functional Barn Design: Strategies for Assessing your Barn for Cow Comfort and Labor Efficiency. Jack is an international consultant on barn design who worked with the Arnolds on their new barn design. He'll also join Kathie and Kirk during their farm tour overview session. You can read more about the Arnolds' process of designing their new barn, with Jack Rodenburg's assistance, in Kathie Arnold's article on page 28. Kathie Arnold, a certified Master Dairy Grazer, will share her experience with The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program and her apprentice, Fay Benson will be on hand to update

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REGISTRATION

NODPA's 17th ANNUAL FIELD DAYS & PRODUCER MEETING & DINNER

Cost		Qty.	Total
Registration: Thursday & Friday			
Free	Organic dairy & transitioning producers & families		
\$30	All who aren't organic dairy producers		
Meals			
\$10	Thursday lunch for Adults		
\$5	Thursday lunch (under 11)		
\$25	Thurs. dinner for Adults		
\$12.50	Thurs. dinner (under 11)		
Free	Transitioning farm member. Thursday evening dinner		
\$5	Friday breakfast (7:30-9 am)		
\$10	Friday lunch		
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FIELD DAYS 2017

Embracing Change in Organic Dairy

continued from page 21

everyone on the program and answer questions. Following lunch, we wrap up the 17th NODPA Field Days by heading over to Twin Oaks Dairy for a tour of the Arnold's farm and new barn.

Keynote Presentation

We have a very special and fun evening planned for Thursday. Following the banquet dinner and NODPA Annual Meeting, rather than having a keynote speech format, Jack Rodenburg will engage the audience in a lively, interactive presentation on Cow-Signals, an internationally renowned program designed to teach farmers and others to really understand what their cows' behaviors/signals are communicating, by 'reading' their signals. He will then offer strategies for utilizing this information to improve cow comfort, productivity and a farm's infrastructure.

The 17th Annual NODPA Field Days will feature a robust trade show that attendees can visit on Thursday morning, prior to lunch, and during the afternoon's Social Hour. We are fortunate

that many of our sponsors and trade show participants have donated prizes for our door prize drawing. We have books, products, things to wear, and more! It's not to be missed. Also, during the Social Hour, everyone is welcome to visit and learn all about the NY Grazing Coalition Pasture Soil Health Trailer that will be on display. Fay Benson, Cornell Cooperative Extension's New York Organic Dairy Program director, will be on hand to demonstrate the features of the trailer and to answer questions.

Truxton NY and the surrounding communities offer an abundance of fresh, local food. We will be featuring as much local, organic meat and produce as possible in our delicious home cooked meals, and will featured a number of dairy products from our sponsors, including Organic Valley, Upstate Niagara, and Maple Hill Creamery.

We hope you will begin planning your trip to Truxton and the NODPA Field Days, where you will have the chance to connect with old friends and make new ones; learn new and practical strategies to take back to your farm, and have the opportunity to relax and have some fun! ♦

Questions? Contact Nora Owens, Field Days Coordinator, at 413-772-0444 or noraowens@comcast.net.



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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

What is the Right Herd Size for Your Farm?

By Sarah Flack

What is the right number of cows for the farm? And how would that change if the herd was 100% grass-fed with a milking parlor? What if instead of going grass-fed, the herd continues to get some grain, and robots milked the cows? What about just investing in a better grazing system and soil amendments to produce more high-quality pasture and forage on the current land base? Is it better to buy the haying equipment or continue to have harvesting done by custom operators and buy some bales when needed?

When I get these questions from a farmer, I know that they are thinking through all their options, and asking the right questions. There are a wide range of very different management, feeding, grazing and milking systems on successful organic dairy farms. What works well on one farm may not work well on another! Each farm is uniquely different, so the planning process to make a well-informed decision takes some effort. This article is a quick overview of some of the key factors that have helped with the decision making process for some farmers with whom I have worked.

What stocking rate is ideal?

Usually the first thing to do is a thorough assessment of the land base and farm resources. It is critical to make sure the land base, and its capacity to provide pasture and stored forages matches animal numbers and level of production. How many acres of dairy-quality pasture are there within cow-walking distance of the milking facility? This is often what determines the new herd size, and is a key point that differentiates the organic dairy farm from most non-organic farms. But herd size also depends on what the pasture intake goal is.

A farm transitioning to 100% grass-fed will be aiming for a grazing system where most of the forage intake is from pasture. This usually requires more acres of pasture per cow once grain feeding is discontinued. Therefore, if there isn't more land, the planned herd size may have to be reduced to be able to maximize pasture dry matter intake.

For a farm considering a robotic milking system, the pasture intake goal per cow is usually lower. However, the new grazing system has to allow continuous access between the pasture and robot. So, pasture on the other side of the road, unless there is an underpass, can't be used by the milking herd. Although this system would include feeding grain and supplemental forages during the grazing season, with lower pasture intake, it is still possible the herd size would have to be reduced to match the land base available in order to ensure the farm would meet organic pasture intake requirements.

Sometimes at this point in the research and discussion it becomes clear that there isn't enough pasture to feed the herd size to make the new management system idea work. But if the land base looks like it may support the new system, then it is time to dive deeper.

Looking at income and expenses

Next steps may include doing some cash flow projections to look at these new herd sizes. Cash flow projections can also help look at all the other variables that may change including: lower or higher levels of milk production (cows generally make less milk with no grain and more milk with robots), different organic pay prices and premiums, new loans (robots are expensive), lower or higher labor costs with different milking and feeding systems, increased feed costs if more forages have to be purchased. Since each farm is different, doing some of the number crunching will help each farm make a well-informed decision.

Quality of life

In addition to making sure the new system works financially, it is also important to factor in the farm family's quality of life, and what type of management system best fits their overall goals. One farm that called me said, "my son wants to take over the farm, but only if we get robots." This was extra motivation to figure out a way to make it work for them financially!

The initial cash flow projection can provide critical information for the decision making process. Then, if a loan is needed to pay for the new management system or infrastructure, that cash flow can be used to write a full business plan to help secure financing from a lender.

Some states have farm viability grant programs, which provide funding for farmers to work with a consultant or a team of advisors on business planning. In this process, farmers can learn how to do cash flow projections and enterprise analysis, and can also work with advisors to write full business plans. Some farm viability programs also help families work on intergenerational transfer or succession plans for their farms.

The initial process of asking the right questions, and the financial planning process, may also help by directing the decision-making process into looking at a totally different opportunity for the farm. Some farms, after researching several high cost options, decide to just invest in improved soil fertility, better forage harvest/storage equipment, changes to the feeding or grazing system, or minor changes to the milking system to improve milk quality, productivity or labor efficiency.

In Conclusion

Given the current situation with the organic milk markets, this might be a good time to do some re-assessment of farm finances, land-base, herd size, infrastructure and management system. As some farms are asked to ship less milk, getting lower pay prices, or still looking for a milk buyer willing to sign them so they can

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

An Interview with Neal Kinsey

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60-70%. This is right where the most fertile soils should be. When he analyzed the magnesium, it was between 10-20%, right where we say the most fertile soils should be. Same for potassium and so on.

When he said this, all of a sudden I thought that when you start looking at it, whether it is our bodies, or what we consume, or what is there for nutrients to grow what we consume, overall it should look just like the most fertile soils. If we can get the soil into that kind of situation, we're providing the best nutrition for everything, for the whole earth.

The second revelation relates to a relationship I had with a medical doctor from California, Dr. Joe Walters. At age 55, he was told he had six months to live and medical science was unable to solve his disease problems. He was an allergy specialist, his wife had a PHD in nutrition. With his grim prognosis, he came home and told his wife that if we can't solve this problem with nutrition, then I guess I will be dead in six months.

They did solve it with nutrition, and I met him 15 years later. After this experience, Dr. Walters focused his career on working with about 1500 patients- movie stars, athletes, and statesmen, and they paid him to tell them how to stay well. Dr. Walter's goal was to treat people in order to help them prevent illness. The first message to his clients was that he

couldn't help them unless they were ready to start eating organically. Mind you, this was in the 1970's. Whatever you eat, he said, you should know how it's grown because that is the key to staying well.

I got acquainted with him through one of my clients with a 15- year old daughter who was told she had six months to live. Someone told him about Dr. Walters and two years later when I met the family, she was back to perfect health. I'm not saying that you can solve everything like this but I have seen that there are things that can be.

My client took me to meet Dr. Walters and also asked me to pull some soil samples from his large organic garden. It had two sections, one part grew great, the other part he struggled to grow anything. I analyzed the garden and discovered that the problematic area had an excess of some nutrients.

After explaining to him about his magnesium and calcium levels, he said, that's exactly what the human body needs to be healthy. What he said went right down to the same thing that Dr. Albrecht was talking about- what we need for the healthiest plants is also what people need to stay healthy.

All of a sudden, I began to put this together and realized that the better off we can make our soils, the better off we make the people who consume the food grown in the soil.

Can you describe the scope of your business?

There are three parts to our business.

The first is farm consultations in which we provide analysis and



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recommendations to growers. We work with growers of nearly every major food and fiber crop in the world. We also work within the timber, landscaping, and potting mix industries. The scope of our work has to do with anything that relates to soil fertility and growing plants. We have received samples from soils in 75 different countries. The greatest volume of samples comes from California. Missouri has historically been second, but in 2016 New Zealand ranked second. We take thousands and thousands of samples. We collect the most from corn growers. Second is pasture/hay, followed by wine grapes, then soybeans, cotton, and wheat.

The second scope is offering support to 50 consultants located across 20 countries. They are independent contractors, but through their association with us, we can help them understand the soils they are dealing with and what to do to improve them. At Kinsey Ag., we try to put all the information together and help our consultants face the challenges unique to their clients.

Third, it is my goal to teach as many people as I can. We conduct classes all over the world. There are two introductory courses which each run three days. In a few days, I am leaving for South Africa to teach an introductory course. There are also two advanced courses- one for sandy soils and one for clay soils. We are also working on a new course which will teach people how to correct soils that have excessive amounts of nutrients.

What do you think is the most prevalent wrong direction in the management of soils?

What I feel is that we have forgotten that we must feed the soil and then let the soil feed the plant. The soil is the plant's stomach. When we neglect what the stomach of the soil needs, we're going to have trouble. No matter what we put on our crops, our soil is going to be lacking unless we put on enough to feed that average sized cow per acre. Most soil tests are designed to feed the plant and don't take into consideration feeding the soil.

I believe there are two specific soils management issues for organic producers. The first is that too many organic farmers rely on pH to tell them whether to spread lime or not. There is a difference in using pH for liming versus the actual calcium saturation of each soil. Many soils with extremely high pH still have a severe calcium deficiency. If you have a calcium deficiency, that takes precedence over everything in the soil in terms of nutrition.

The second issue is that many organic growers short themselves in terms of nitrogen. Most organic farmers do not have enough resources to provide the amount of nitrogen they need. If we don't get the proper amount of nitrogen, we won't get the proper amount of growth and proper utilization of other nutrients.

Can you describe the differences between soil health in the Northeast vs. the Midwest?

In terms of nutrients, one difference I see between the two regions is the Northeast tends to have lower pH's than the Midwest. In the

continued on page 31

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NET UPDATE

Recent ODairy Discussions

By Liz Bawden, Organic Dairy Farmer, NODPA President

Wild Parsnips (also commonly called Cow Parsnip, Cow Parsley, or Wild Chervil) were noticed spreading into one farmer's pastures and hay fields; he asked the group if this plant will bother his cattle. A few producers responded, some shared links to information on plants toxic to cattle from the Universities of Wisconsin and Minnesota. These fact sheets revealed that Wild Parsnip contains furanocoumarins which can cause photosensitivity, or severe sunburn, in light-colored cattle. Although the toxic dose has not been established, one researcher thought that wild parsnip had to account for at least 20% of the cow's diet to see a toxic effect. Another farmer had beef cattle that regularly ate the wild parsnip in their pasture with no ill effects, having a diverse pasture for the animals to graze. But if you are removing the plant by hand, one farmer reminded the group to use protective clothing and gloves, since the sap can burn the skin and eyes. Interestingly, one vet provided information that Wild Parsley was historically used for treating bruises, and it is currently being studied for its effectiveness in treating gastric and breast cancer.

During a herd check, a cow was found to have a mummified calf. To expel the mummy, it was suggested that homeopathic Secale at a 1C potency may work. One vet added that if you have an "old-timer" vet, he may manually remove the CL on the ovary to cause the cow to cycle. And he cautioned, "If you've had other simmering reproduction issues then a mummified fetus could mean a BVD problem. Certainly 2 or more mummified fetuses would indicate a diagnostic work up in the herd."

There was a discussion about electric fencers, and several producers highly recommended the Cyclops fencers, available from Taylor Fencing in Alabama. Most said it was the best fencer they had ever used, although one farmer preferred his Stafix fencer. A few farmers asked if there were any local dealers. According to their website at www.talorfence.net, dealers in the northeast include: Equine Supply in Nichols, NY, Wholesale Fence & Supply in Gap, PA, Buck Hill Fencer Shop in Paradise, PA, and Cameo Fencing in Valentines, VA.

A hoof trimmer was called in to trim a cow that was lame with

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a foot ulcer. The farmer had the foot trimmed, and was giving garlic, vitamins, Biocel CBT, and Vitamin C, and asked what else she should do for her. It was suggested to put a block on the good toe for a month or more to allow the ulcer to heal, and to increase her biotin, zinc, and Vitamin A levels. Zinpro hoof health products were also recommended. Aspirin (3 to 5 boluses given twice a day) would help reduce the swelling and improve blood flow. One producer soaks the hoof in a bucket while she's being milked in the parlor with warm water and a mild soap; he feels that this helps the infection to drain down. And one vet suggested having your vet administer sodium iodide IV (as an electrolyte by vet's prescription) to provide some antibacterial protection since a sole ulcer can migrate into deeper tissues causing serious problems; but sodium iodide must be given intravenously and can cause abortion in a pregnant cow, so talk with your vet. Comfrey poultices on the foot and Hypericum tincture added to the soaking water were also recommended.

Mary-Howell Martens at Lakeview Organic Grain issued a strong warning about the appearance of mycotoxins in small grains coming into her mill in Penn Yan, NY. The weather has made it a good

year for the fungus that can grow on a variety of small grains, and this has the potential to seriously impact cow health. Her advice for northeastern farmers: "Especially if you grew small grains or are buying small grains from a neighbor, please be aware of this and get them tested. There are very good mannan-oligosaccharide toxin binders you can feed to reduce the impact, but you need to know what you are working with. This is not someone else's problem this year in upstate New York, it is ours."

(Please see Mary-Howell Martens' article, MYCOTOXIN ALERT 2017!, on page 4 of this issue.) ♦

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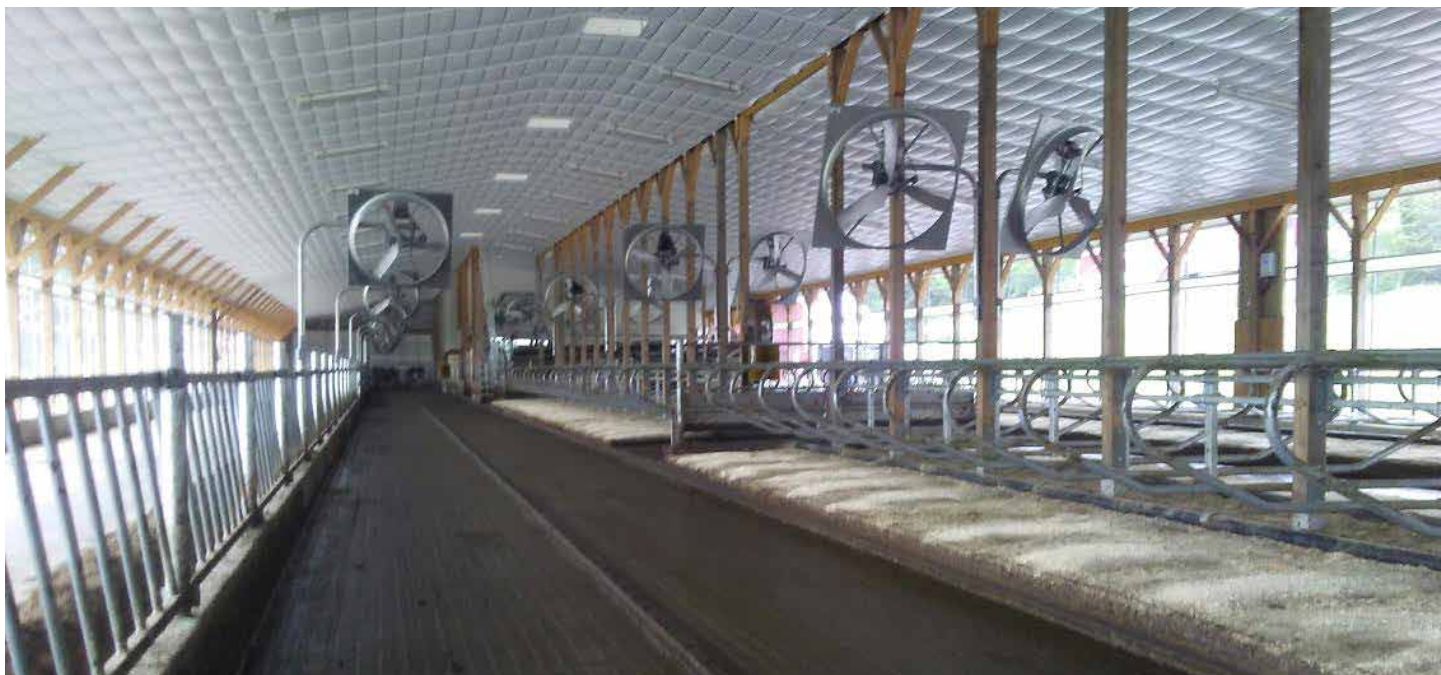
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ORGANIC PRODUCTION



A New Barn at Twin Oaks Dairy LLC

By Kathie Arnold

Making decisions can be hard. Making a decision to build a new barn and milking facility and abandon a long-used but still functional barn can be especially difficult, and can take years in the “ponder the question” phase.

Our tie stall barn had been the heart of our operation and had been upgraded numerous times over the years. With all that investment of time, money, and sweat, and with us making a decent income using the tie stall barn (and in later year an adjacent freestall barn to milk a second round of cows in the tie stall barn), how could we think of giving it all up and investing megabucks into a brand new facility that would not serve appreciably more cows? We didn’t think of it for decades.

But there were issues with the tie stall barn—the big ones being the amount of physical labor required, the amount of time it took to do all the work, and personnel safety.

By the time my son, Kirk, and I were the owner/operators of Twin Oaks Dairy LLC, after farm transfer work in 2010, the thought did come up occasionally, but would quickly be dispelled after considering the cost to build a new facility. But the thought did not fully disappear.

Employee injuries, from being kicked by cows and having a cow lay down on an employee’s leg, highlighted the ever present potential for injury when working in such close proximity with

cows. The cow’s habit of sorting through the total mixed ration (TMR) and invariably pushing it out of their reach resulted in many cows getting on their knees to get at the TMR and then leaving a pile of manure right in the middle of their stall. Between the need to frequently push feed and scrape manure manually, significant time and effort had to be allocated to these jobs throughout the day. Add in gutter cleaner and electric feed cart problems, employee absences and issues, frozen water buckets in the winter; it was definitely enough to keep the notion alive.

After a few years of the thought rumbling around in our brains and deliberations, we both came to a yes at virtually the same time—near the end of 2015. At that time, we had some haylage that was too dry, making the TMR especially light and fluffy. The cows had a hay day, blithely pushing it out of their reach. We’d just finish pushing the TMR in on one side of the barn and go back to the other side to find it already pushed out. And of course, the cows were kneeling like crazy and so were especially messy. ENOUGH! We didn’t want to keep working like this.

The speed with which the final decision came to build a new facility is evidenced by the fact that we had just upgraded to new memory foam mattresses and new rubber on the center alley only a couple months before. Once we came to the “had enough” state, even that recent investment couldn’t stop our forward movement to a new facility.

Our tie stall/freestall barn combo and other buildings and infrastructure had maxed out the space available, so building a new barn meant moving to a new site—across the highway and adjacent to the manure lagoon. When the lagoon had been constructed several years prior, it was sited where there was space

for a new facility, in case the tie stall barn ever burned down and needed to be replaced.

Now that the decision was made, we wanted to be on the fast track to having a new barn—a high tech barn with robots—and hoped to be able to be in it by the end of 2016. That meant intense study: reading lots of articles on barn design, touring numerous robot dairies, attending presentations on all four major automated milking systems, visiting all kinds of booths and dealers at the NY Farm Show, doing a business plan, securing financing, and talking with a myriad of people.

An article I read in *Progressive Dairyman* said that major projects like this should never be done in less than a three year time frame from decision to move-in. We didn't want to continue to work in the tie stall barn for another three years so we were determined to divide by three and move it down to a one year time frame from decision to move-in.

We came very close to making that goal. One way we expedited the process was by hiring consultants Jack Rodenburg and Harold House of Dairy Logix in April of 2016. Super well spent money!

Right about the time we first met with Jack at our barn site, we began to get cold feet on milking with robots, being unable to wrap our heads around how our grazing system would work with cows going out to pasture and coming back to the barn on their

own, with no one pushing them. Our lactating cow pastures are stretched in a long band from the barn site, with a narrow depth, which means a long walk to many paddocks.

Earlier that year, when we worked with him on our Cornell Dairy Farm Business Summary, Jason Karzes told us we should consider a parlor as well as robots. At that point, it had seemed like wasted time to do so; why consider an "old" technology when newer technology was available? But, after many conversations with people experienced in grazing robot dairies and much consideration on our part, we decided that continuing to be able to maximize dry matter intake from grazing was more important to us than milking with robots. We also had a couple other concerns in regards to going with robots. We started visiting milking parlors, having many more conversations, and getting parlor quotes. We decided on a DeLaval rapid exit, double 12 parallel parlor.

With his wide ranging expertise and knowledge of excellent barn design, including many refinements that we may not have even thought of, Jack Rodenburg worked closely and intensely with us to hone the design and build on the plans that DeLaval had blueprinted out for us, based on Kirk's design. Kirk envisioned a 3 row freestall barn with the freestalls, holding area, parlor, and special needs bed pack all lined up one after another, with a drive through feed alley that ran alongside these the full length of the

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

A New Barn at Twin Oaks

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barn, enabling all cows to eat at the same time. Harold House laid out the plans for ventilation chimneys that we thought sure were way excessive, but turned out to be just perfect. The value of expertise!

Luckily, we had a local contractor who said he would do what he needed to fit our barn into his schedule for 2016. Having someone you know and trust as a builder is a huge plus. We also had excellent other contractors for earth moving; manure drop and barnyard construction; insulation; laneway and fence construction; and installation of freestalls, headlocks, slant bar panels, gating, fully automatic curtains, waterbeds, rigid polycarbonate panels for the outside window/wall of the parlor and holding area, circulating fans, and a roof mounted 58 kW solar system. Installation of the parlor and other milk system components moved along concurrently, once the structure for those parts of the barn were up.

While we didn't choose robots to milk the cows, we did choose many of the features we had seen in robot barns—alley scrapers (by Dairymaster), insulated ceiling, robot feed pusher (a Lely Juno), and an automatic sort gate by DeLaval. We chose a crowd gate that has a rubber scraper on the bottom so that it can scrape manure on its back trip. No skid steer needed in this barn for manure scraping. The alley scrapers dump the manure into concrete drops at the end of the barn, from which the manure and wastewa-

ter flow into the lagoon by gravity.

While it meant more money spent upfront, guiding principles in building this facility were to incorporate automation, make it as problem free, safe, and labor and energy efficient as possible, as well as give cow comfort a high priority. It was a dance of many moving parts, and although work on some of the systems didn't get finished until this year, we were able to move the cows into the barn and start milking in the parlor on December 29th, 2016.

We moved our Spalding Fly-Vac down to the new barnyard this summer and have installed a motion detector on it so that it automatically turns on and off when the cows arrive from pasture. We also put a new piece of pasture technology to work this year—a Batt-Latch Automatic Gate Opener. It is a portable, solar powered gate opener that can be programmed for time of opening. On hot days, we close the cows in the paddock with the Batt-Latch, which we have programmed to open 2 to 3 hours before afternoon milking, so it can be the cow's choice if they want to come into the barn early, and we don't have to be around to do it.

Come to the NODPA Field Days September 28th and 29th to learn more about our decision making on many of the components in our new barn, how they are working out for us, and to see the barn and all of its accouterments. Jack Rodenburg (without whose design help we no doubt wouldn't be nearly as satisfied with the final product) will be at the Field Days for two presentations and will be at the tour of our new barn. Don't miss this great opportunity to hear and learn from Jack. Whether you are building a new barn or not, he has lots of information and insights to share. Hope to see you in Truxton.

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

An Interview with Neal Kinsey

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Midwest, where we tend to have high pH's, the limestone is often left off when it should be applied. Overall, I think the Northeast tends to have a better balance in terms of having enough calcium and magnesium because growers are more concerned with their low pH levels.

Second, we tend to use more sulfur in the Midwest because when we stopped the practice of burning high sulfur coal, we began to notice sulfur deficiencies.

What are your thoughts on climate change and its impact on soil health?

I think any change in climate does affect soil health, whether it gets hotter, colder, wetter, or drier. I think farmers should concentrate less on climate change and more on asking themselves how they can help their plants withstand the challenges facing them, be it heat, cold, wetness or dryness. If that is our focus, we can use soil health to impact climate-related challenges on the farm, more than climate change will impact us.

Soil type is based on the physical aspects of a soil. Soil health is based on the biological aspects. Soil fertility is a combination of these but we must look at the chemistry as the driving force for the physical and the biological. To prepare for any aspect of climate change, more attention has to be given to the influence on soil chemistry.

The chemistry is the part of the equation that we can most easily measure to determine what to do to affect the most beneficial change in soil structure and biological activity.

Too many of the crops we grow are not suffering from adverse weather conditions, but because we are not building up our soils with a sufficient enough nutrients to withstand so much of what is blamed on weather and climate.

Please give us an idea of how a farmer might get started on a path to improving soil health:

Someone once told me you can't manage what you can't measure. How do you manage the fertility of a soil if you don't know how to measure it? People make the assumption that any soil test will test the same.



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Taking a representative sample is key. When you pull a sample, don't mix a bunch of soils together. If it doesn't look the same and grow the same, don't mix them. Take a sample from a large area that has all the same soil characteristics. Also, be sure to sample from the proper depth. If you're collecting a pasture sample, only collect samples from the top four inches of the soil.

Soil testing must be done properly and you must have trust in whom-ever you look to for recommendations. Testing is important because it shows whether we have solved the problems or not. Soil testing will prove if you're making progress and if you're using the right materials.

Can amendments be added to stacked manure, and then applied together?

Here is an example why I would exercise caution when adding amendments to stacked manure. If you want to add limestone, keep in mind that unless it's pelletized or some kind of real pulverized lime, it will be three years before you see the total amount of calcium that will come out of that manure. If you put limestone in stacked manure, it's a good idea to know the tonnage added and calculate how much calcium will come out of that manure over the next three years. If we don't know that, when we look at the manure or where it has been spread, our soil analysis will be inaccurate because we'll continue to see a calcium increase over the next few years.

Amendments can be added, but I would want to know what was in the manure and what materials you're thinking of adding before I'd think it was necessarily a good idea.

To improve soil structure, do you have a favorite cover crop for soils where there can be a lot of winterkill?

Daikon radish would be the best if you're looking to penetrate and loosen the soil and make it more friable. Daikon radish helps to increase the air space and porosity in that soil.

Small grains like wheat, rye or oats are another option. We have found that if you plant a crop of small grains in the fall after you have spread compost or manure, that those plants can take 85% of the nitrogen up into the plant and hold it there. When they decompose in the spring or get worked into the soil, the nitrogen is preserved and not lost to leaching. The nutrients that have been through a plant already are the most easily taken up and utilized by the next crop you grow.

Please describe a few of the main topics you will be covering in your talk at the NODPA Field Days:

The topics I plan to emphasize are:

- Nutrient needs of grass and what farmers aren't being taught to increase both production and quality.
- Importance of micronutrients in pasture, hay, and silage.
- Distinguishing between fertilizers that are soil feeders vs. plant feeders.
- The same fertilizers are not effective depending on their form and soil conditions.
- Understand the Law of the Maximum.
- Judging the differences between compost and manure and how you handle them differently.

BOOK REVIEW

Hands Off My Food*by Dr. Sina McCullough**Book Review by Cecelia Murray*

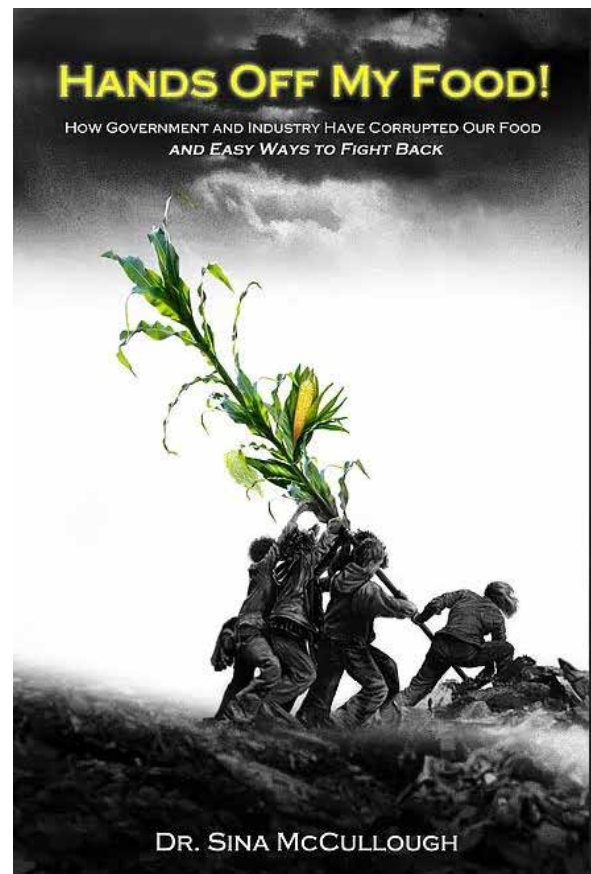
The cumulative effect of the power of personal choices and “speaking with your dollars” is the empowering message of “Hands Off My Food”, the debut book of nutritionist, wife, mother, advocate, organic food enthusiast and informed consumer, Dr. Sina McCullough. Chapter by chapter, Sina paints the picture of how we as a population, and specifically in the United States, abdicated our personal responsibility on making informed, intelligent, healthful food choices. Instead, these choices have often been made with the help and urging of our government and have led us down the road to chronic disease, obesity and food allergies.

Dr. McCullough presents the problems we face on a personal level by taking us on the journey of her personal health crisis. The foods she was eating were literally making her debilitatingly sick. Hands Off My Food takes you on her odyssey to renewed health by fighting her autoimmune disease through learning what and why the foods she was eating were making her body attack itself rather than making her healthy, as the right foods should. This approach resonated with me because my family and I also suffer from food allergies and autoimmune diseases.

The FDA and its “veil of unearned trust” is thoroughly chronicled. She leads us through the birth of the FDA in 1906 as well meaning, but ultimately detrimental, by giving consumers the confidence to abdicate their personal responsibility as it pertains to food choices and giving that responsibility to the federal government. She informs us about the reality of the GRAS (generally recognized as safe) determinations the FDA makes on food, additives and everything related to food production. The major loophole of GRAS determination is the lack of unbiased research required to obtain GRAS status, if any research. As organic dairy farmers, we all know the story she tells of rBST and GMO’s safety determinations. As I am loathe to admit, my personal experience as a guinea pig for rBST in the 90’s substantiates the fact that many of those trials were not accurately documented.

Dr. McCullough additionally delves into the story of federal dietary guidelines and commodity farm subsidies (which may be hard for farmers to read/agree with, but they spoke to my libertarian leanings). As a long time Farm Bureau member, I did resent her criticism of that organization. I may not always agree with their policies but I have ultimate faith in the process by which those policies are voted on by the members. Also, while I’m not a advocate or fan of the milk check off, I believe it is our right to advertise our product and that this expense is not a consumer tax as she portrays it.

But the theme of the book is certainly personal empowerment. One whole section is devoted to teaching the consumer how much power is in our pocketbooks and how companies are driven to provide the products that consumers choose to buy. In chapter 11, “Feed the Good and



Starve the Bad”, she urges you, as a consumer, to buy the products you support, from the producers you support, produced in the way you support (feed the good) and don’t spend money on the things you don’t back (starve the bad). Ultimately, these companies are in the business of making money and they respond to the demands of the marketplace. Additionally, she lists specific things we can do above and beyond our purchasing power to encourage change.

I was very encouraged reading this book that we organic producers are all on the right track--producing organic products that are both desired and appreciated by our consumers. I also found myself wondering if we should go beyond the organic seal and the limitations put on us by the inaction of the NOP and the federal government and focus on educating the consumer to the added benefits beyond the organic seal.

After reading Hands Off My Food, I was inspired enough to reach out to Sina McCullough to share some of my experiences. She immediately and graciously responded to continue the conversation. She is very eager to learn about organic farming and anything about the food system. She readily agreed to speak at this year’s NODPA Field Days but, unfortunately, personal conflicts arose and she will be unable to attend. She hopes to speak at next year’s Field Days and expects to have her second book out by that time. She plans to donate some of her books for door prizes at this year’s NODPA Field Days, as well as provide copies of her book for sale. I heartily recommend reading Hands Off My Food and I am grateful for her vocal support of organic food and farming.

Cecelia Murray and her husband, Leonard, have been producing organic milk for 10 years at their Bundy Creek Farm, LLC in Truxton, NY, and she can be reached at cecelmurr@aol.com.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

What is the Right Herd Size for Your Farm?

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transition to organic or grass fed, cash flow projections are a useful tool to understand what options work best for each farm's long term financial sustainability.

Sarah will lead a workshop at the 2017 NODPA Field Days in Truxton NY, which will look at strategies for making well-informed and financially sound decisions on major farm management changes, such as whether a robotic milking system fits into your farming and grazing system, or if your farm is suitable to convert to an all grass-based system.

Sarah Flack is the author of The Art and Science of Grazing and Organic Dairy Production. She is a consultant specializing in grass-based and organic livestock production, and is known for her public speaking, workshops, books and numerous articles and fact

sheets on a range of agricultural topics. Sarah's approach in her consulting, writing and teaching is to empower farmers to create their own individualized management systems that can work successfully for them, their farm and family goals. In this practical and comprehensive approach to farm management, the planning and design process always include consideration of livestock wellbeing, plants, soils, water quality, farm labor, farm profitability and farm family goals.

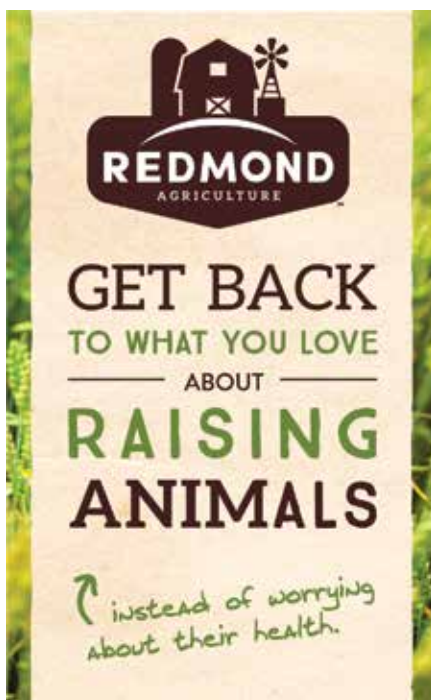
Her focus is on helping to create more farms with good organic and grass-based management systems, which allow farmers to create positive change in their landscapes, livestock, checkbook and farm family quality of life. She works with dairy, beef, sheep, and goat farms, and is experienced with both organic and non-organic farming systems.

Sarah's approach to working with farmers is based on what she learned while consulting, teaching and writing on the topic since the early 90's. She grew up on a family farm in Vermont, which used high stock density management intensive grazing (called "mob stocking" back then) to successfully improve the productivity and ecological health of the land and livestock. She later studied Holistic Planned Grazing as well as the science behind pasture management in graduate school.

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- In New York, Contact East Regional Pool Manager Anne Phillips at (607)-222-3265 or Anne.phillips@organicvalley.coop
- In New York: West Regional Pool Manager Eric Beller at mobile: (315)-359-7382 or eric.beiler@organicvalley.coop
- In the Southeast, contact Gerry Cohn at (919) 605-5619 or gerry.cohn@organicvalley.coop.
- Central to Western PA, contact Georgia Klischer, Pennsylvania MID Regional Pool Manager at mobile: (570)-336-2354 or Georgia.klischer@organicvalley.coop
- In Southeast Pennsylvania and Maryland, contact Terry Ingram at (717) 413-3765 or terry.ingram@organicvalley.coop.
- Peter Miller, East Regional Division Pool Manager, (612) 801-3506 or peter.miller@organicvalley.coop

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Location: Almo, Idaho

FORAGES, BEDDING & GRAINS

For sale: Organic Hay and Straw; Baleage and Dry hay, clover and mixed grass/clover, 1st, 2nd, 3RD Cuttings, priced per test results from \$140/ton. Nice fine wheat and rye straw, wrapped for outdoor storage, \$150-220/ton. Cleaned Organic Rye, \$ 535/ton in supersacks. Organic Red clover, \$2.50/# bulk. Hauling available. Provident Farms, North-central PA, 570-324-2285 or 570-772-6095.

For sale: NOFA-NY certified organic 1st cut 4x5 round dry bales grass hay late cut never rained on, net wrapped \$35. Will load, large quantity, lots of room to load. Tammy Thomas, email: disneytam89@gmail.com, phone: 518-727-1712

Location: Greenwich, NY

Certified Organic Hay and baleage 1st and 2nd cut hay round and small square bales millet, grass and oat baleage 2nd year transitional organic winter rye seed and straw Stephens Farm Sussex, N.J. Ted Stephens, 973-875-2849, email: stephensfarmnj@aol.com

Location: Sussex, New Jersey

Calendar

September 10, 2017

Strategies for Carbon Sequestration on the Farm, Butterworks Farm, 421 Trumpass Rd., Westfield, VT, 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Join Jack Lazor for a pasture walk and talk about the benefits of grass-based livestock farming. Learn how agriculture has the potential to mitigate climate change through carbon sequestration.

COST: Free (but please register so the hosts know how many to expect). CONTACT: See more information at <https://www.vlt.org/event/strategies-carbon-sequestration-farm/>, register at <https://vlt.givezooks.com/events/strategies-for-carbon-sequestration-on-the-farm>, or contact Cara Gauthier at cgauthier@vlt.org or (802) 262-1222 with any questions.

September 12, 2017

Organic Dairy Forage Management: Corn Silage & Weed Control Miller Farm, 1732 Fort Bridgman Road, Vernon, VT, 10 am-2 pm.

Join farmer Peter Miller, grazing consultant Sarah Flack and UVM Agronomist Dr. Heather Darby as we discuss the installation of their irrigation system, their organic corn silage production, as well as other forages they grow, and how the Millers are using flame weeding tools for weed control. Lunch is provided, and will be prepared in NOFA-VT's mobile wood-fired pizza oven.

COST: \$20 for Farmers, \$30 for others, lunch included

CONTACT: <http://nofavt.org/onfarmworkshops> for registration or more information. Or contact Kyla Bedard at kyla@nofavt.org

September 12, 2017

Estimations & Ruminations: An overview of Calculating Pasture & Livestock Needs (New York Event)

Whallonsburg Grange Hall, 1610 NYS Route 22, Whallonsburg, NY, 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. COST: Free

CONTACT: See more information at <http://www.essexfarminstitute.org/event/estimations-ruminations-overview-calculating-pasture-livestock-needs/>

September 23 & 24, 2017

Advanced Grazing Clinic (2-Day New York Event)

Locations around Essex NY: Whallonsburg Grange, Reber Rock Farm and North Country Creamery

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. both days

This Advanced Grazing Clinic is to assist Graziers in more effective use of pasture to achieve high production from their grazing livestock. Essential for this are the ability to assess pastures, calculate seasonal feed and supply needs of animals, and knowledge of soil-plant-water relationships. The clinic will provide Graziers with the necessary knowledge to affect positive change to their feeding

systems, and therefore their farm/ranch profitability, resilience, and stewardship. COST: \$80 per farmer for 2 days. This cost is available only to farmers actively farming in the Tri-County Area of Franklin, Clinton and Essex Counties. Scholarships are available from Adirondack Harvest for those who are members. For those coming from outside the area, cost will be \$820 total. Space is limited and local farmers will be prioritized.

CONTACT: See more information, including pre-requisites and detailed information about how to apply, at <http://www.essexfarminstitute.org/event/advanced-grazing-clinic-2-days/>

September 29 - October 1, 2017

Draft Animal-Power Field Days (3-Day Event)

Cornish Fairgrounds, Cornish, NH, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

CONTACT: Register at <http://www.draftanimalpower.org/dap-field-days/registration/>. Or you can register for Field Days by printing out the form at <http://www.draftanimalpower.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/2017FD-Registration-2.pdf>, filling in your order and mailing it to DAP along with a check to: DAPFD, 271 Plank Road, Vergennes, VT 05491. COST: \$60 for Friday Intensives, \$100 or \$200, to work with the Perry's on horses. Saturday admission is \$15, Sunday is \$10, and pre-registered admission for all three days is \$60.

October 13, 2017, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Grass Based Dairy Management

Autumn Valley Farm, 1644 County Highway 39, Worcester, NY 12197

Interested in transitioning to grass-based milk production or looking to find out more about fine tuning your pasture management? Join NOFA-NY and Maple Hill Creamery as we learn more on grass-fed organic cow health, breeding, grazing and feed production. Tom McGrath will share his success with restoring depleted pastures through bale grazing, chicken manure and lime applications. Tour Autumn Valley Farm and hear from Tom as he shares his experiences in producing quality feed to meet your herd's nutritional needs in a grass-based system. Tom will also share his thoughts on dairy genetics and inline breeding with the group. Contact NOFA-NY at (585) 271-1979 or info@nofany.org.

SAVE THE DATE:

November 3, 2017

NY Women in Agriculture Conference, all day

DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Syracuse, New York 298, East Syracuse, NY

The NY Women for Agriculture team is excited to be hosting the first annual NY Women in Agriculture conference. It will focus on both personal and business growth skills and tools for women involved as either primary or partner operator for their agriculture operation. The theme of this year's conference is "Communication and Building Connections. Contact Bonnie Collins, bsc33@cornell.edu, (315) 736-3394 Ext. 104, for more information.

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.)

_____ \$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 handler/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 form AND YOUR EXEMPT FORM 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. **If you need assistance in applying for the exemption, check here _____.** 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

_____ \$300 to \$500 to become a Friend

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

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

_____ \$100 to become a supporter of NODPA

_____ \$1,000+ to become a Benefactor

_____ \$150 to become a Business Member

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: _____

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Just In: Mycotoxin Alert Update!

A quick update for the main mycotoxin article, which starts on page 4.

By Mary-Howell Martens

In New York, and in the northeast, there are emerging 2 new sources of mycotoxin problems this summer. Straw, especially wheat straw and triticale straw can be a potent source of vomatoxin and some of the other lesser known Fusarium toxins, but the nastiness that is emerging is a toxin most of us have previously not heard about called Gliotoxin, caused by the fungus *Aspergillus* (but a different species than the *Aspergillus* that causes aflatoxin). This has been measured at high levels in straw in Cayuga County, NY. If a cow eats their bedding, especially after the bedding gets wet, this can be ingested.

The significant thing here is that the toxin contains sulfur. Why is that important? Because of a situation I helped sleuth out a month ago when an organic dairy farmer had a milk sample come back positive for sulfa drugs. He had no idea where it

might have come from. Eventually, we got the old 2016 crop ear-corn in his crib tested and it had detectable levels of aflatoxin. Doing a little research on this, it appears that the common CHARM test used on milk has some cross-sensitivity, so aflatoxin and apparently gliotoxin can throw a positive sulfa result, even if no sulfa is present. Of course though, it is illegal to feed dairy cows feed exceeding 20 ppm (parts per billion) aflatoxin because it can come through, in a particularly potent form, in the milk and aflatoxin is carcinogenic.

Now here's the next ringer. Haylage in New York is testing positive for *Penicillium* mold this summer! That is a greenish slimy mold that develops when haylage is harvested too wet and not stored anaerobic enough. Guess what antibiotic *Penicillium* toxins can mimic? Yes indeed folks, positive penicillin test in organic milk.

The other thing is that these toxins are causing haemorrhagic bowel symptoms in some New York herds. Generally that is associated with an infection like salmonella, but it appears that DON (vomatoxin) and gliotoxin can cause the symptoms, bloody manure, etc.

Please also be warned that we have been rejecting loads of New
continued on page 40

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Deadline for advertising in the
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Commit to a full year of print advertising and get 10 percent discount: Full: \$567, Half: \$288, Quarter: \$159, Eighth: \$85.

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

For advertising information call Nora Owens:
413-772-0444 or email noraowens@comcast.net.

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

From the MODPA Treasurer

As I write this, there seems to be definite change in the air. I have seen a couple of trees starting to change color and the days are definitely getting shorter. It was nice to have the sun up to greet me in the morning and to be able to work well into the evening. However, fall is my favorite time of the year; the time when we can see the bounty of harvest from the hard work we have done this spring and summer. It also means an end to mosquitoes. I am still not sure what their intended purpose is. If anybody has the answer, please let me know. They are one of many mysteries in my life.

The crops in my area have done okay this year. Nothing phenomenal but they are good. Not sure how much of the corn will make it to maturity. Some will need until mid-October due to the late spring we had, but time will tell. It has been a good year for pasturing. The grass has had plenty of moisture to work with. A few more sunny days would have helped but it has been a very good pasture season. The hay crop is plentiful but some was made later than it should have been or was rained on; definitely better than 500 miles west of me where they have had a severe drought all year. My heart goes out to them; not fun to be in their shoes.

The processors are still reluctant to take on much new milk in my area. Many who were in transition have had their start dates pushed back several months in addition to the price cuts this spring. Hopefully this will pass soon. The milkman says the surplus is not coming from the producers on his route. Even with the good grass there has not been a big flush of milk. Makes me wonder where the surplus is coming from. Some things never seem to change.

I have been able to get out and take in a few events this summer. I always enjoy pasture walks. It's nice to catch up with old friends and make new ones. Even after all of these years I still seem to be able to come home with new ideas to try. I also attended the summer meeting of The National Family Farm Coalition. Many good friends were there and the opportunity to hear what is going on in the rest of the country is nice. These meetings also make me realize that it isn't just dairy farmers getting the short end of the stick. It is anybody who is producing food that is getting a raw deal. I talked with several people in the fishing industry. Their industry is like ours: a handful of processors determining price with no regard for the fishermen's right to try to actually earn an honorable living. Some of them feel like me: that it will be a sad day when there is nobody left to replace us. There needs to be some very radical and different change of attitude and policy in this country. Producing food should be an honorable career, not something for many to look down their nose at, or to be made fun of. I have heard the comment "still farming" many times over the years. I still proudly say "yes." I try to keep my other thoughts to myself. Hopefully someday soon this will change. How many would be able to produce and harvest their own food if they needed to?

May you all have a bountiful harvest this Fall. But more importantly have a safe harvest.

Take a moment and smell the clover no matter how busy you may be. It won't be back till spring.

Bruce Drinkman, MODPA Treasurer
Glenwood City, WI, 715-781-4856

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 PRODUCTION

Just In: Mycotoxin Alert Update!

*A quick update for the main mycotoxin article,
which starts on page 4.*

continued from page 38

York grown triticale grain due to elevated vomatoxin. The level for concern with cows is 5 ppm (parts per million) and we tested one load, grown by a really excellent farmer who is very attentive to detail and quality, that tested 13 ppm. That can cause some serious symptoms, from general immune system depression to actual bleeding and death.

What can farmers do? Fortunately, there are yeast cell wall products that bind up many of these toxins and let the cow eliminate them in a non-toxic form. These are allowed for organic, OMRI listed generally, and can be fed at a 'safety' routine low-inclusion

level without tying up nutrients like the older clay binders do.

I was at a training at Cornell 2 weeks ago and several conventional feed mills say they are recommending safety toxin binders. These mycotoxins are a real serious problem with distillers' grain coming out of the ethanol plants - the ethanol process really concentrates the toxins and all kinds of toxins are being found. Corn gluten meal also is risky because it concentrates toxins. We organic farmers don't use those products, but we do have to worry about other feed sources, especially this year any forage you may have harvested a little wet, and any triticale and wheat that have not been tested. It remains to be seen what corn and corn silage will be like, but many New York experts are worried, especially silage.

Heads up, folks. Mycotoxins may not be easy to detect or realize you have in your feed, especially your hay/baleage/haylage/silage, but mycotoxins are real, and they can do real damage.