

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Pasture Management and Youngstock Field Days, August 8, 2018 at Ottercrest Farm.

FEATURED FARM: OTTERCREST FARM, WHITING, VT

Twelve years ago, after a successful career as a veterinarian, the opportunity arose for Brian Howlett (56) to buy the dairy farm where he spent his early childhood. Purchased by his father in 1964, the family moved to his mother's family farm, a modernized dairy in the late-1970's. A cousin

rented and operated the farm until he sold the cows in 2005. Ottercrest Farm is in west-central Vermont in the Lake Champlain Valley of Addison County about 50 miles south of Burlington.

In 2006, Brian and his twin brother took

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NODPA Speaks Out On The Origin of Livestock Next Steps to Save Organic

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The National Organic Standard Board (NOSB) met in St Paul, MN, from Wednesday, October 24, 2018 to Friday, October 26, 2018. On the last day of the meeting they made a clear and unanimous recommendation to the Secretary of Agriculture on the need for a Final Rule on the Origin of Livestock. They have opened the door to re-activating the 2015 Proposed Rule and bring

the consistent interpretation of the one-time exemption for transitioning conventional dairy animals called for by the USDA Inspector General in 2013.

The Final Rule would need to be as simple as possible: One time transition for a conventional herd to organic that is tied to place and ownership. No exceptions. No loophole. No implementation timeline.

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Message from NODPA President

Although it seems eons ago, organic dairy producers met during the last week in September in Knoxville, Maryland for the Annual NODPA Field Days. We owe a big "Thank you!" to Myron and Janet Martin of Peace Hollow Farm and to Ron Holter of Holterholm Farms for their hospitality. As usual, there were lots of ideas exchanged, and we all benefited from the farm tours and workshops.

One of the ideas that has been gaining traction in recent months comes from the frustration farmers and their processors have felt in realizing that not all certifiers apply the USDA's NOP standards evenly. Specifically, there are accredited organic certifiers that certify operations that do not comply with the Origin of Livestock Rule, the Pasture Rule, or are involved in certifying fraudulent imports. One approach is to encourage processors to simply not accept an organic certificate from these certifiers. These lax certifiers have eroded consumer confidence in organic foods, and have contributed to the oversupply in dairy. It is vital that we maintain the integrity of our products. So check with your

certifier--- Do they allow repeated transition of conventional heifers? Do they allow farms to graze less than the minimum of 30% for the entire grazing season? Have they certified import brokers or feed mills that have imported fraudulent grain? Most certifiers are doing a great job; and it's certainly a tough, thankless task. Talk with yours.

By this time, you have received the annual fundraising appeal letter. Now, more than ever, your support for the work we do is critical. With donations, advertising, and sponsorship down, your membership support is essential. We don't have a high overhead; like you, we work out of our kitchens. There are no highly paid employees; we just work away at it to get the job done. Your support helps us to keep this newsletter coming to you, the website and ODairy list serve up and running, and we continue to network with other like-minded groups to keep you as informed as we can. We are determined to bring you the most accurate and timely information on organic dairy. Thanks for your support!

We wish you and your families all the blessings of the season!

Liz Bawden, NODPA President

Hammond, NY | Phone: 315-324-6926

Board Members & Representatives

PENNSYLVANIA

Arden Landis, State Rep
1850 Bowmansville Rd.
Mohnton, PA 19540-9427
c2graze@dejazzd.com
Phone: 717-484-0038

Roman Stoltzfoos, State Rep
Spring Wood Organic Farm
1143 Gap Rd, Kinzers, PA, 17535
romans@epix.net
Phone: 610-593-2415

Dwight Stoltzfoos, Board Secretary
Spring Wood Organic Farm
1143 Gap Road
Kinzers, PA 17535
info@springwooddairy.com

VIRGINIA

Rodney Martin, State Rep
Bridge View Dairy
2773 Fadley Road
bridgewater, VA 22812-2711

NEW YORK

Kirk Arnold, NODPA Vice President
3175 State Route 13
Truxton, NY 13158-3107
kickaha21@gmail.com
P: 607-842-6631

Liz Bawden, President, Newsletter Contributor, Associate Editor
119 Factory Rd., Hammond, NY 13646
bawden@cit-tele.com
Phone: 315-324-6926

Ryan Murray, Board Member
6000 Cheningo Solon Pond Rd.
Truxton NY 13158
rcmdairy@gmail.com

Robert Moore, State Rep
Moore Farms, 2083 Moore Hill Rd.
Nichols, NY 13812
Phone: 607-699-7968
cowpoke2@verizon.net

Bill Stine, State Rep
45540 Stine Road
Redwood, NY 13679-3160
Phone: (315) 482-2017
tstine2007@yahoo.com

John Stoltzfus, State Rep
1553 Hesselton Gully Rd.
Whitesville, NY 14897
jsttribe@yahoo.com
Phone: 607-356-3272

George Wright, Treasurer
821 Pyrites-Russell Rd., Hermon, NY 14897
wrightdairy@yahoo.com
Phone: 315-347-4604

VERMONT

Craig Russell, Board Member
Brotherly Farm LLC, 570 Lavender Road
Brookfield, VT 05036
brotherlyfarm@yahoo.com.
Phone: 802- 272-7726

Brian Wilson, State Rep
Morningside Farm, 101 Hemenway Hill Rd, Shoreham, VT 05770
Cell phone: 802-377-1786,
bpwilson@shoreham.net

Jeep Madison, State Rep
2806 Smith Street, Shoreham, VT 05770
Cell: 802-349-6262
jojoselixir@yahoo.com

Bonnie and Tom Boutin, State Rep
1184 Cross Road, Newport Ctr, VT 05857
Phone: 802-334-2081
bonnieboutin@yahoo.com

CONNECTICUT

Rick Segalla, Board Member
96 Allyndale Rd., Canaan, CT 06018
mocow@earthlink.net
Phone: 860-824-0241

MASSACHUSETTS

Morvan Allen, Board Member
Maple Shade Farm Inc.
229 Hewins St, Sheffield, MA 01257
morvenallen@live.com
Phone: 413-229-6018

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Cindy-Lou Amey, State Rep
Indian Stream Farm
81 Tabor Road, Pittsburg, NH 03592
Phone: (603) 538-7734
cindyloouamey@gmail.com

MAINE

Steven Russell, Board Member
RR2 Box 5660, Winslow, ME 04901
jwinrussel@roadrunner.com
Phone: 207-872-6533

Steve Morrison, Board Member
Policy Committee Chair
159 Atkinson Rd, Charleston, ME 04422
smccrest@gmail.com
Phone: 207-285-7085 Fax: 207-285-0128

Aaron Bell, State Rep
Tide Mill Organic Farm
91 Tide Mill Road, Edmunds, Maine 04628
Phone: 207-733-2551
eatlocal@tidemillorganicfarm.com
www.tidemillorganicfarm.com

AT LARGE NODPA BOARD MEMBERS

Ed Zimba, MODPA Board Member
Zimba Dairy, 7995 Mushroom Rd
DeFord, MI 48729
zimbadairy@tband.net
Phone & Fax: 989-872-2680

Darlene Coehoorn, MODPA President, Newsletter Contributor
Viewpoint Acres Farm
N5878 Hwy C, Rosendale, WI 54874
ddviewpoint@yahoo.com
Phone: 920-921-5541

Bruce Drinkman, MODPA Treasurer
3253 150th Ave. Glenwood City, WI 54013
bdrinkman@hotmail.com
Phone: 715-265-4631

Sean Mallett, WODPA President
seanmallett@msn.com

Henry Perkins, Past President,
Box 156 Bog Rd., Albion, ME 04910
Phone: 207-437-9279
henryperkins51@gmail.com

NODPA Policy Committee

Chair Kathie Arnold
3175 NYS Rt. 13, Truxton, NY 13158
kathiearnold@gmail.com
Phone: 607-842-6631
Fax: 607-842-6557

Cecelia Murray, Policy Committee
Bundy Creek Farm LLC
5229 Cheningo Road
Truxton, NY 13158-3118
cecelmurr@aol.com

NODPA STAFF

Ed Maltby, Executive Director
30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342
ednodpa@comcast.net
Phone: 413-772-0444 Fax: 866-554-9483

Nora Owens, Editor & Event Coordinator
30 Keets Rd., Deerfield, MA 01342
noraowens@comcast.net
Phone: 413-772-0444
Fax: 866-554-9483

Webmaster / Newsletter Layout
Chris Hill, Chris Hill Media
368 West Duval St. Phila., PA 19144
Phone: 215-843-5704
chris@chrisillmedia.com

NODPA Contributing Writer
Sonja Heyck-Merlin
Clovercrest Farm, 159 Atkinson Road
Charleston, ME 04422
207-285-7085, sjheyckme@gmail.com

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the NODPA Desk: November 2018

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The 2018 NODPA Field Days were very successful and the setting was just spectacular, well worth the long car drive. The warmth of the welcome from Myron, Janet and their family made the event relaxed and enjoyable for the diverse group of attendees and their families. For many of those who attended, this was their first exposure to NODPA and to see new faces participating enthusiastically in the program emphasized the importance of rotating the event around the region, rather than having it in the same place every year. The discussions around the issues of the day were perceptive and always ended on a positive note or vision for the future. The producer meeting raised issues that are very pertinent to all producers, and the exchange of information on relationships with milk buyers was very valuable.

Our work over the next year will be guided by those discussions plus the concerns raised by producers, individually and on conference calls. Incorporating social, philosophical and religious values into decision making is very much the basis of why we are drawn to farm and care for animals. Sometimes the answer really is 'This is what we do.' Not always the best start for negotiating a better pay price but all part of the rich fabric that makes us fight for the integrity of organic production.

The NOSB held its Fall meeting recently and took the time to make a recommendation on the need to sort out the chaos of the Origin of Livestock regulation. Hopefully, this will kick start the drive to reinstate the 2015 Proposed Rule which has finally risen to a priority for the leading organic advocates in Washington DC. With Lactalis taking over Stonyfield and Danone NA introducing new management, there is an increased opportunity to get support from buyers for regulation that is consistently enforced across all areas and by all certifiers. With one defined method of transitioning there would be no opportunity for certifiers to input their own preferences which better suit their region or clients. Regulations cannot be interpreted to suit the economic needs of producers and/or milk buyers. Once we allow that to happen we devolve back to the 'good old days' prior to OFPA with multiple different ways of being certified organic. Without strong and legally enforceable regulations, national milk buyers, large operations and large certifiers dictate conditions for selling certified product. As certifiers and milk buyers consolidate and work together on add-on labels and agreeing on their interpretation of regulations, producers will be left with fewer opportunities and choices. What is needed is clear regulation which can be

audited simply and effectively that negates the need or ability for certifier shopping. Certifiers should concentrate on certifying to the law and regulation. Producers and milk buyers need to work together to improve the pay price, make policy recommendations and work together on regulations to improve conditions that organic family farms are living under.

The OTA have launched their new initiative to get comments on different ways to generate resources to promote the organic seal and organic research. The landscape is large on the many different ways to raise money, and OTA correctly asks many key questions that need answering before any proposals are put forward. There is no alternative to in-person meetings that convene all stakeholders to brainstorm the best way forward as a united community so I urge OTA to take these questions to the winter conferences and annual meetings. The aim must be to look at the best, most efficient, transparent and inclusive way to provide resources and money to do the work of promoting organic, promoting on-farm research and ensuring a better standard of living for organic producers that reflects their work and investment. Obviously, the answer to one of their question about whether the process should lead to a mandatory USDA commodity checkoff would be no, as that has been roundly rejected by a majority of the organic community. Some of the important questions that OTA does ask are around governance issues and fair distribution of resources; again transparency will build trust. The question still out there is whether the organic seal is homogenous enough to be considered a commodity or whether it is best to accept that there might need to be either regional grouping or commodity based groups. In future issues of the NODPA News we will provide more information on what OTA is asking and how folks can participate if they want to.

The Farm Bill is stalled as we go to press and there are mixed predictions about whether it will be completed in a lame duck session in 2018 or be taken up again in a new Congress in 2019. A lot depends on the elections and how the power shifts in Congress and within the committees. There are some positive signs that the now unfunded organic programs can use any surplus they have to continue the program. It certainly looks positive for the cost share program.

John Bobbe from OFARM has announced his retirement from his position. He is a good friend of producers everywhere and has done a monumental effort in building the strength of OFARM. He has tirelessly increased the organization's work domestically and internationally, extending its reputation around the globe. He led the exposure of illegal imports and forced USDA to act. He will be missed but I'm sure that he will be tempted back to the fray when needed. Good luck and best wishes John; enjoy your vacations in England and keep sending those pictures! ♦

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Vermont New Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program

By Cheryl Herrick

In Vermont and around the country, the economic crisis facing the dairy industry is a top concern, and along with it come significant implications for families, communities and farmland. The problem is complex, the stakes are high, and farmers and those who support them want solutions.

As with many complex, persistent problems, the solution is likely to lie in many places. One of those is in helping farmers to convert to grazing, or if they're already grazing, to improve their practices in order to increase profitability, build quality of life for themselves and their communities, and protect the land and water we all share.

In August, in partnership with the Vermont Farm to Plate Network, the Center for Sustainable Ag's Pasture Program was delighted to welcome Mary Ellen Franklin to our team. Mary Ellen is the Program Education Coordinator for Vermont's Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program, and she's been working hard to support farmers and aspiring farmers in the region. She recently took a few minutes to let us know what she's offering, and how she sees her work fitting in to the big picture of dairy in Vermont.

Center for Sustainable Agriculture: Tell us about the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program in a nutshell.

Mary Ellen Franklin: Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship is the only accredited apprenticeship for farming in the country. Its mission is to provide a guided pathway to independent farm ownership, to develop grazing careers, and to strengthen the economic and environmental well-being of rural communities and the dairy industry.

The apprenticeship is an "earn while you learn" opportunity. It is composed of 4,000 hours of paid employment and training over two years. Of those hours 3,712 are on the farm under the guidance of an approved Master Grazer. The 288 balance of hours is comprised of courses in farm and pasture management, herd health, milk quality, soils, holistic management, and peer discussion groups, pasture walks, and farming conferences and networking opportunities.

CSA: And why is this program a good one for Vermont right now?

MEF: Dairies in Vermont are experiencing the same pressures as dairies across the country. Vermont Agricultural Census data from 2012 shows the average age of farmers in Vermont was 57 years old, and that many don't have a second generation who want to continue farming. Falling milk prices make it more important than ever to reduce costs; the grazing model has been



Mary Ellen Franklin and VT Secretary of Agriculture Anson Tebbetts

shown to help do this while at the same time improving herd health and provide environmental benefits. And it's well known that qualified hired help is very hard to come by.

CSA: What sorts of folks might want to know about the program?

MEF: Farmers best suited to become Master Grazers are optimistic about the future of their farm business, they believe the industry still holds opportunities for people who have the desire to succeed and live this lifestyle, and they consider themselves educators willing to pass their knowledge on.

The program requires that apprentices have a high school education or equivalent. Apprentices need to be hard-working, not be afraid of long hours or getting dirty, be able and willing to work with others, and be passionate about the well-being of the animals they partner with and the land that provides for them.

Taking on an apprentice for two years is a big step for any farmer. But I think as young people complete this program and continue to be part of the dairy industry, people are going to take notice and get onboard with this. I am going to work to grow the pool of approved master grazers and the pool of qualified and motivated apprentices here in Vermont. Apprentices who are more likely to put their skills to work here in the Northeast when they graduate as Journeymen and Journeywomen.

CSA: Any early stories from your initial visits?

MEF: I started in the position of Educational Coordinator in Vermont in mid-August. I came on board with 10 approved Master Grazers in Vermont, plus one in MA, and right now we

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have one Master-Apprentice pair. All of them take grazing very seriously and want to see that knowledge passed on. All of them are optimistic about the future.

The Master Apprentice pair is doing really well. The young man is 3/4 of the way through the two years and plans on starting his own farm in Ohio when he gets done. He has the skills and a plan and Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship helped in a big way. I have had the pleasure of meeting several apprentices and I have been very impressed with every one of them. They are hard-working, competent, knowledgeable and invested in grazing dairies.

CSA: And what should folks know about you?

MEF: I fell in love with dairy as a 20-year-old college dropout. A very nice farmer in Lebanon, Connecticut, went out on a limb for me and gave me a job and the opportunity to get started in dairy. I never looked back. I worked on different farms learning different skill sets as I went. I read everything I could get my hands on and I became a dairy farmer. I have farmed for 40 years, and my husband David and son John still farm in Guilford, Vermont.

I believe there are young people like I used to be out there, who want to do this kind of work and live this kind of life. DGA is a terrific way to get a start in grazing dairy. I'm here to spread the

word and grow this program in Vermont so the next generation can find a way to dairy and maybe the older farmers can step away and feel good about all they have accomplished on their farms over their careers.

More about the Vermont Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program:

- Interested in learning more about becoming a Master or an Apprentice? Contact Mary Ellen Franklin at maryellen.franklin@uvm.edu.
- Learn about the national Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program: <https://www.dga-national.org/about>
- More resources for pasture and livestock farmers can be found at the Pasture and Livestock program at UVM Extension: <https://www.uvm.edu/extension/sustainableagriculture/pasture-livestock-program>.
- Sign up for the monthly Pasture Calendar to be notified of workshops, conferences and other opportunities for grass-based (and aspiring) livestock farmers at: <https://uvm.us5.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=77e70cac537a6042b614c0477&id=048645c641>.



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Young Farmers: Make Your Voices Heard

By Liz Pickard, Twin Oaks Dairy, Truxton, NY

I'd be preaching to the choir if I said farming was a tough career. Over the course of 12 years of doing farm work, I've had many ups and a lot of downs. Yes, I was doing what I loved - providing healthy organic food to my community. And yes, it was satisfying to draw milk off the bulk tank right into a glass, or to watch the winter wheat that I had sown come up in pencil-straight rows, or to pull jewel-colored carrots out of the ground and act surprised every time. But living on a farm worker's wage is hard. I mean, living on any farm wage is hard, whether you're the owner or not. But that's just it- I wasn't the owner. I was the hired hand, who was out of work come November, scrambling to find a new place to live and a new coffee shop I could work at while I waited out the snow. And I knew that at my current rate, I would be about 60 years old before I had enough money saved up to start my own farm.

For first-generation farmers like myself, this is a common story. With no land, equipment or livestock to inherit or borrow, utterly lacking in start-up capital, and saddled with tens of thousands of dollars in student loan debt, we are the laughing stock of the loan offices (I have literally been laughed at by a loan officer, just so you know).

Some first-generation farmers can do it. They work off-farm, have a spouse with another job, or have well-off family members to help them out with start-up cash. Generally, they work themselves to the point of burn out, or, if they're lucky, until they make it.

But more often than not, they give up - get tired, get jaded, or are just sick of being broke. I have been in this position, and have many many friends and peers in this position, and it is not a fun place to be. What to do? Give up on your dreams? Take that office gig that pays well and comes with benefits but you know will make you hate yourself?

This is why I helped start the Central New York Young Farmers Coalition (CNY-YFC). CNY-YFC is a local chapter of the National Young Farmers Coalition (NYFC), an amazing group of young farmers who got together and decided that this was no way to treat the people who feed our communities. They work at the state and national level

to advocate and inform on policies that support young or beginning farmers.

NYFC has made incredible steps towards developing policies that address the needs of beginning farmers. This year, they successfully lobbied for implementation of the Working Farms Protection Act (WFPA) in New York. Farmland access is a huge hurdle for young farmers. The WFPA helps address this issue by making working farm easements permanently eligible for funding through the State's Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (FPIG) program. Working farm easements include farmer ownership and affordability provisions such as preemptive purchase rights, which help keep protected farmland affordable and in the hands of actual farmers.

For our recent September meeting, our local chapter was visited by David Howard, the Northeast Campaigns Director for NYFC. He was interested in hearing what's working and what's not as far as ag policy on the state level goes. The group had a chance to discuss some of the strengths in our region (access to great markets, lots of other farmers to network with and get advice from, for example). We also discussed where we'd like to see improvement (crop insurance programs, issues with Empire State Development's New Farmers Grant Fund Program, and issues with NYS's Young Farmers Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program).

I could go on about this group and how inspiring they are, but I'd rather just invite you to be a part of it (every farmer, every age). We have meetings about once a month to work on projects or organize events. The meetings are usually in Dryden, NY, at no specific day or time but rather when we can all manage to get together at once. There are 10-30 people at meetings, and we often gather somewhere where there is also pizza. Contact us through our Facebook page @CNYYoungFarmers, or via email at cnyyoungfarmers@gmail.com. And while you're online, check out the NYFC website for more information about their important policy work: www.youngfarmers.org. ♦

Liz Pickard is farming at Twin Oaks Dairy in Truxton, NY. She can be reached at elizabethpickard@gmail.com

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Starting this Fall: USDA Funded Expanded Grass-fed Dairy Production Research Project

By Sarah Flack, Heather Darby and Sara Ziegler

Thanks to new grant funding, current research on grass fed dairy production will be expanded to a larger geographic region and scope, addressing more of the key issues in grass-fed dairy production. This new multi-year research project, funded by USDA's Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), is titled Advancing Grass-Fed Dairy: A Whole Systems Approach to Enhancing Productivity, Quality, and Farm Viability in the US (Project no. 2018-02802).

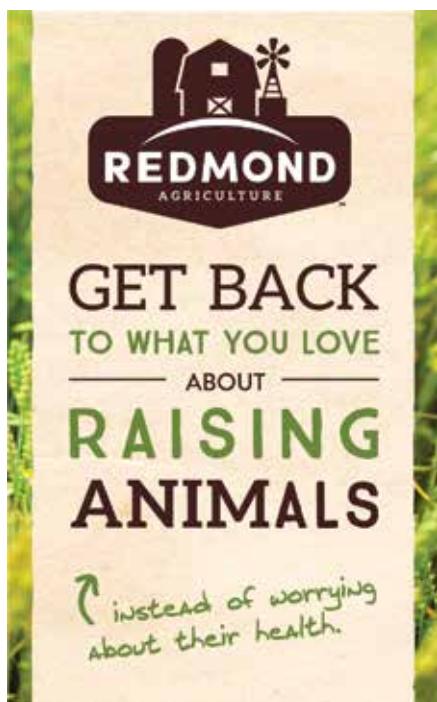
The project, led by Dr. Heather Darby at the University of Vermont, assembles a team of farmers, consultants and researchers from several states (full list provided at end). This multi-disciplinary research team hopes to identify critical components of grass-fed dairy management that support high quality milk production, herd health, environmental health, and farm economic viability while contributing to a vibrant grass-fed dairy market that meets the needs and preferences of consumers. If you are a grass-fed dairy producer, look out for information in the mail on the project, or contact one of us if you'd like to participate.

This new project builds on recent research results on grass-fed dairy farming, as well as questions from both farmers and researchers. The project goal is to continue to meet the need for

educational resources and relevant research to support farmers, service providers, and the rapidly growing grass-fed industry overall.

During the past 2 years of research, farmers and researchers in the Northeast have been documenting basic production benchmarks and practices that may contribute to successful grass-fed dairy systems. In the fall of 2016, a survey of all grass-fed dairy producers in the U.S. (140 at that time) was conducted from which 83 farmers anonymously shared data about their production practices (thank you!). This not only helped establish the first set of production benchmarks for grass-fed dairy, it also helped the collaborators better understand what additional research would be most helpful to farmers. A smaller group of 22 farms were then enrolled in a 2-year research project in which they shared data each month, and receive data reports back regularly.

This new project will begin with another survey of all grass-fed dairies in the U.S. (now estimated 300-400). If you are a grass-fed dairy producer, keep an eye out for the survey! If you receive a survey request, we hope you will fill it out and return it to us. Also, if you would like to participate in further phases of this project or want more information, please contact one of our



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project team. This initial part of the project will serve two purposes: 1) to get a better measure of the production practices on grass-fed dairy farms throughout the US, and 2) inform farmers about the project, and identify farmers who would be interested in participating further in this four-year project.

The new OREI project will include:

- Continued collection of information on production practices
- Information on economics and the cost of production data of grass-fed milk
- In-depth research and modeling on how the nutrient cycling and soil health differs in grass-fed systems without grain nutrients.
- Research on MUN (milk urea nitrogen) and grass-fed dairy rations
- Research on high energy forages and utilization in grass-fed dairy rations



- Research on consumer preferences, market demands and potential for grass-fed market growth and expansion
- Expanded educational and networking opportunities for farmers, processors and technical service providers

For more information about this project contact Heather Darby at heather.darby@uvm.edu or 802-524-6501, Sarah Flack at sarahflackconsulting@gmail.com or 802-309-3714, or Sara Ziegler at sara.ziegler@uvm.edu or 802-524-6501.

Project Team Members:

Heather Darby, Professor of Agronomy, University of Vermont Extension

Brent Beidler, Farmer Advisor, Randolph VT

André F. Brito, Associate Professor Organic Dairy, University of New Hampshire

Dr. Sidney Bosworth, Professor of Agronomy, University of Vermont Extension

Dr. Roy Desrochers, Sensory Practice Leader, Tufts University Sensory and Science Center

Sarah Flack, Grazing Livestock Specialist, Flack Consulting, Enosburg Vermont

Dr. Sabrina Greenwood, Assistant Professor of Animal Science, University of Vermont

Dr. Kathy Soder, Animal Scientist, USDA-ARS-Pasture Systems and Watershed Management

Research Unit

Albert Robbat, Jr., Director, Tufts University Sensory and Science Center, Associate Professor of Chemistry

Sara Ziegler, Crop and Soil Coordinator, University of Vermont Extension

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2018 NODPA Fund Drive Is Underway

Please Support NODPA NOW With Your Annual Dues & Donations

The crisis in organic dairy is very personal to us all. When contracts are lost and pay price drops by 25%, boot strapping becomes the reality for the whole farm family. NODPA's service to producers is to give them avenues for venting and sharing experiences, either in person, in print or through the internet. The stark truth is that organic dairy farm families are the casualties of the market monopoly by two national buyers, a handful of large dairies and poor enforcement of regulations. Now, more than ever, NODPA needs to be able to speak clearly and loudly about the solutions that will mitigate the situation in the future.

We are speaking out about the accountability of certifiers, the NOP, and organic dairy buyers in order to close loopholes and protect the integrity of the organic seal with consumers. We work with other advocates to bring the maximum pressure to bear while also sitting down with different buyers to discuss ways that we can work together on enforcement. We take testimony to the USDA NOP and NOSB, in person when funds are available, but by email, phone and conference calls when not. We highlight the problems; show that the pay price is not a premium but covers higher input costs; and illustrate the ingenuity and dedication of organic dairy farm families. We remind those in power that organic producers need protections against exploitation, both on the Federal level and under contract law. NODPA is presenting some of the answers to these problems whether it's looking at supply management, an organic Margin Protection Program or possibly an organic version of the FMMO.

Most of all, NODPA keeps the issues in front of the people that count in Washington and with consumers, and we will continue to work with other producers groups across the country to defend producers' rights. No other group can do that as effectively and with the same integrity as NODPA, which is why your support this year is so critical.

As we launch NODPA's 2018 annual fundraising campaign, we'd like to thank all of you who supported NODPA in 2017 by sending in your subscription and/or donation, by directing that your check-off monies be

paid to NODPA, or by adding your subscription to your Field Days registration.

You supported the NODPA News, the ODairy Listserv, NODPA Field Days and NODPA's website, and made it possible for NODPA to take your concerns to Washington DC. With your support we stopped the organic checkoff and defended the democratic rights of all organic producers.

During NODPA's annual fundraising campaign, we ask you to renew your support of the services you need and value. NODPA's ability to provide these services is reliant on our one-time per year fund drive, plus advertising, sponsorship and business membership. When there is a downturn in income for producers, suppliers are also affected which has an impact on how much they can advertise or sponsor our products and events. We keep costs to a minimum BUT there are still bills to pay. We know you depend on NODPA for the latest organic dairy news and education. Your support is a vote for the work we do.

Please pledge your support for NODPA today by paying the enclosed invoice for \$45.00 or a greater contribution if you can, or pay by credit card online (www.nodpa.com). If you have already pledged, thank you and please think about adding an additional contribution. With your financial support, NODPA can continue to provide the valuable resources and services that you depend on. And, our sincerest thanks to our business supporters and advertisers for their ongoing support.

You may have already received this NODPA Fund Drive letter and your invoice in the mail. Please return the invoice and your payment in the envelope included with the letter at your earliest convenience. **If you have questions or need assistance, please call Nora Owens at 413-772-0444 or email her at noraowens@comcast.net.** And, if you know someone who has not received our letter or would like to become a NODPA member, please call or email their contact information to us. Again, thank you all for your generous, ongoing support that is critical to NODPA's ability to best serve the national Organic Dairy community.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Origin of Livestock

continued from page 1

Friday was the day that the Board considered livestock issues and they kept the following livestock sunset materials on the list: Alcohols: ethanol, isopropanol; Aspirin; Biologics- vaccines; Electrolytes; Glycerin; Phosphoric acid; Lime, hydrated; and Mineral oil. They voted to delist sucrose octanoate esters. The Board wholeheartedly agreed that there was a need for apiculture standards.

The Board then moved on to the Origin of Livestock debacle. They recognized the pressure from all sides of the organic community to present another recommendation on the Origin of Livestock Rule. Over the years, they have been asked to support the need for rulemaking and have not acted. Stimulated by a discussion at the National Organic Coalition (NOC) pre NOSB meeting, attended by 100 organic stakeholders, they passed a unanimous resolution urging USDA Secretary Perdue to issue a Final Rule on the origin of livestock that reflects the will of public stakeholders and the organic community. This was the first time in twelve years that they have acted on this issue with the following resolution:

It has come to the attention of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) that the continued state of varying interpretations and practices around the Origin of Livestock standards is creating market instability for organic producers. The 2015 USDA Origin of Livestock Proposed Rule was based on six recommendations from the NOSB between 1994 and 2006. The proposed rule responds to findings from the July 2013 USDA Office of Inspector General (OIG) audit report on organic milk operations stating that certifying agents were interpreting the origin of livestock requirements differently. Rulemaking is necessary to ensure consistent interpretation and enforcement of the standards for origin of livestock and to provide industry with additional clarity of application of the organic dairy standards. In early 2017 the Origin of Livestock Proposed Rule was removed from the government's Unified Agenda of Regulatory and Deregulatory Actions. Support for this rule has been expressed through public comment by the majority of organic stakeholders. Strong federal oversight is essential for fair, consistent certification and for creating a level playing field for all certified organic operations. Therefore, be it resolved by unanimous vote, the National Organic Standards Board—as USDA's Federal Advisory Board on organic issues and representing organic farmers, ranchers, processors, retailers and consumers—urges the Secretary to directly issue a final rule for Origin of Livestock that incorporates public comments submitted in response to the Proposed Rule (Docket Number AMS-NOP-11-0009).

ORIGIN OF LIVESTOCK RULE: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The National Organic Program has, as they do with any issue that is brought to their attention, asked for producers to write to the Secretary specifically asking for rulemaking on the origin of livestock. They are requesting clear examples of how the lack of consistent enforcement and fairness has contributed to economic hardship and the oversupply of milk in the marketplace, with devastating effects on pay prices to organic dairy farmers. They have also asked for economic data on the different costs involved in rearing organic replacements from the last third of gestation as compared to raising conventional dairy animals. At this NOSB meeting, the National Organic Program's Deputy Administrator, Jenny Tucker, made it clear that they need all proposed regulations to be linked directly to the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 (OFPA or Act), with a legal analysis showing how it is connected to the Act. She emphasized that the primary goal of this administration is to enforce regulations, and that the language in current regulation is not clear enough to provide a solid legal basis for enforcement. She also advised that she needs all requests for action be sent to her, and to the Secretary, by early January 2019 because they will be considering their work plan at that time.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

At the present time, there are many different interpretations of the existing regulation of the one-time transition allowance despite the wording of the Act, the regulation and the 2003 NOSB recommendation. There is nothing in the preamble which indicates that, once converted, operations are allowed to continuously bring conventional animals into the organic dairy herd. Indeed, the preamble and the regulation strongly support a "systems" approach to organic production. Continuous introduction of conventional dairy replacement animals undermines, and is contrary to, a systems approach.

2000

It is important to look back on what the preamble of the December 21, 2000 Federal Register National Organic Program Final Rule says. It contains several statements (page 80570) that frame the principles the Rule Writers intended regarding dairy herd conversion and dairy replacement animals, including the following:

- After the dairy operation has been certified, animals brought on to the operation must be organically raised from the last third of gestation.
- The conversion provision also rewards producers for raising their own replacement animals while still allowing for the introduction of animals from off the farm that were organically raised from the last third of gestation.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Origin of Livestock

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This should protect existing markets for organically raised heifers while not discriminating against closed herd operations.

- ...a whole herd conversion is a distinct, one-time event.... It is a one-time opportunity for producers working with a certifying agent to implement a conversion strategy for an established, discrete dairy herd in conjunction with the land resources that sustain it.
- ...the conversion provision cannot be used routinely to bring non-organically raised animals into an organic operation.

What the regulations say from the Final Rule in 2000:

205.236 Origin of livestock.

(a) Livestock products that are to be sold, labeled, or represented as organic must be from livestock under continuous organic management from the last third of gestation or hatching: Except, That:

(2) Dairy animals. Milk or milk products must be from animals that have been under continuous organic management beginning no later than 1 year prior to the production of the milk or milk products that are to be sold, labeled, or represented as organic, Except,

(i) That, crops and forage from land, included in the organic system plan of a dairy farm, that is in the third year of organic management may be consumed by the dairy animals of the farm during the 12-month period immediately prior to the sale of organic milk and milk products; and

(ii) That, when an entire, distinct herd is converted to organic production, the producer may, provided no milk produced under this subparagraph enters the stream of commerce labeled as organic after June 9, 2007: (a) For the first 9 months of the year, provide a minimum of 80-percent feed that is either organic or raised from land included in the organic system plan and managed in compliance with organic crop requirements; and (b) Provide feed in compliance with § 205.237 for the final 3 months.

(iii) Once an entire, distinct herd has been converted to organic production, all dairy

animals shall be under organic management from the last third of gestation.

2003

Then in 2003, the NOSB made a recommendation to change a few words, and a punctuation mark to further emphasis that dairy herd transition be used only one time, when a producer with a farm initially transitions from conventional to organic production:

(iii) (3) Dairy animals – replacement stock. Once an entire, distinct a dairy herd has been converted to organic production, all dairy animals shall be under organic management from the last third of gestation.

2006

This recommendation was ignored in the 2006 Rule on the Origin of Livestock that ended the 80/20 provision for conversion because of the Harvey court case. In the 2006 Rule the USDA NOP recognized that “this change still leaves two methods of replacement of dairy animals for organic dairy operations and that this is a matter of concern in the organic community. To address the issue of dairy replacement animals for all certified organic dairy operations, USDA will draft an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPR) to invite public comment on further changes necessary to the NOP regulations dealing with the origin of dairy livestock under subparagraph § 205.236(a)(2), Dairy Animals.” Proposed changes were part of an ANPR on the Access to Pasture Rule in 2008 but were left out of the Proposed

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Origin of Livestock

continued from page 12

and Final rule to allow certifiers to concentrate on the changes to Access to Pasture Final Rule published in 2010.

The following solutions to the problems raised by the current interpretation of the Origin of Livestock have been suggested but are neither practical nor timely:

1. Termination of the OFPA provision that allows the transition of conventional animals to organic. This would require Congressional action which would require the support of the national buyers and key members of Congress plus the trade organization OTA and other advocates. This support is not there from the national milk buyers, congress or the OTA because it would limit how quickly the organic milk supply could grow.
2. Through an add-on label that shows that the milk labeled would be only from dairy livestock that were organic from the last third of gestation. This would be difficult to accredit, validate and enforce. This would also give buyers a great deal of leverage to dictate which certifiers to use and would undermine the national power and recognition of the NOP Seal.

3. Some have said guidance might work but the NOP has said they cannot legally enforce non-compliance of any guidance document. They have also said they can not enforce the current wording of the regulation and have allowed blatant abuse that includes allowing organic calves to be reared conventionally and then return to organic.

WHAT TO DO NOW

Regulation is the only practical way forward. In order to move forward quickly we need to petition the USDA NOP to reactivate the 2015 Proposed Rule and immediately make it into a Final Rule, taking into account the comments already submitted in response to the Proposed Rule. Any request to reactivate the Proposed Rule and put it on the 2019 work plan must not include any suggestions that diverge dramatically from the recommendations the Proposed Rule has made otherwise the NOP would have to start the process from the beginning with another Proposed Rule and comments, causing years of delay. The idea of only allowing a small herd of 100-200 organic dairy animals to take advantage of a one-time transition is biased to small operations and difficult to get approved so any regulation that included that recommendation would need a new Proposed Rule.

The Final Rule would need to be as simple as possible:

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ANIMALS

We are selling some grass-fed, certified organic cows. They are all Holstein/crosses. *Some have horns!* Please email us for more details or give us a call. Gus and Kyra Tafel, Muscle In My Arm Farm, 607-847-8998

Location: New Berlin, NY

Group of 100% grass-fed certified organic bred heifers for sale. They are all due to calve in the next 2 months and are from a farm which has been grass fed for over 4 years. Breeds include Jerseys, Jersey crosses and Ayrshires and are bred back to Jersey or Ayrshire genetics. Call me or send me a note if you are interested and I'll connect you with the farmers (they don't do email), Sarah Flack, sarahflack-consulting@gmail.com

Location: Vermont

NOFA VT certified organic heifers for sale. We are overstocked and looking to sell 15-20 heifers, all ages from calf to short bred. Great genetic and healthy animals. Make a Reasonable offer or trade me something of equal value. Jeremy. Text is best #802 236 1920, Southwind Farm, North Rupert, Vermont 05761

Location: North Rupert, Vermont

FORAGE

I am looking for a load of good quality dairy hay in small square bales. Bill Casey, 1136 Berry Road, PO Box 36, Apulia Station, NY 13020, 315.683.5674, bill5308@aol.com

Location: Central New York

EMPLOYMENT

Executive Director, NOFA-VT is accepting applications for the position of Executive Director. We are looking for a leader who will continue to build a big, inclusive, and energetic tent for Vermont's agricultural community and be resilient and adaptable while leading the organization. For more information see: Executive Director Search: Organizational Profile & Vision at https://nofavt.org/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/nofa_ed_final_.pdf To apply, please send a cover letter, resume, and three references to edsearch@nofavt.org by January 15th, 2019.

LOOKING FOR WORK:

I have been working with a bright young couple who have experience as herd/farm managers. They are looking to relocate to this area if they can find the right job. They would be a great match for an organic dairy farm who wants to hire a team of managers, particularly

continued on page 18

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay And Feed Prices November 2018

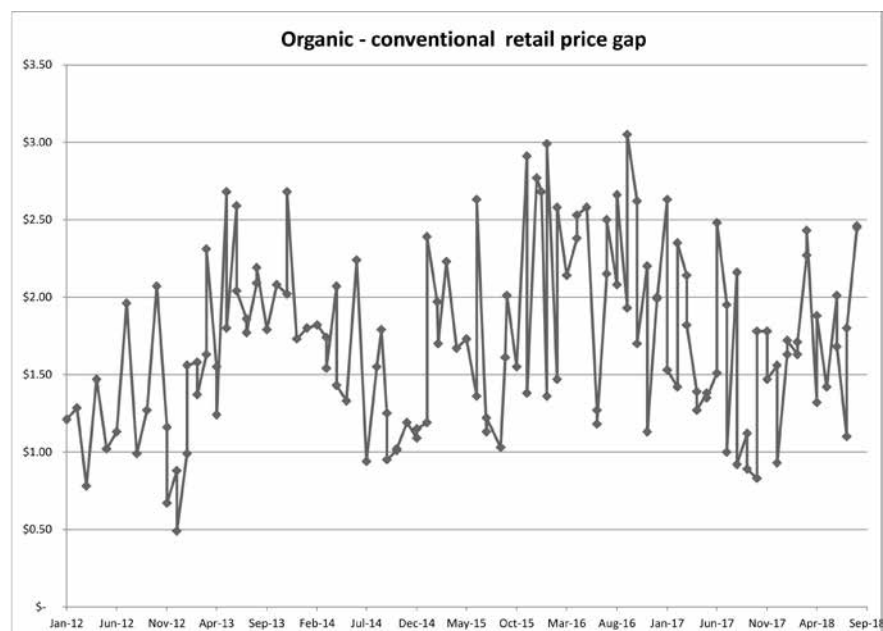
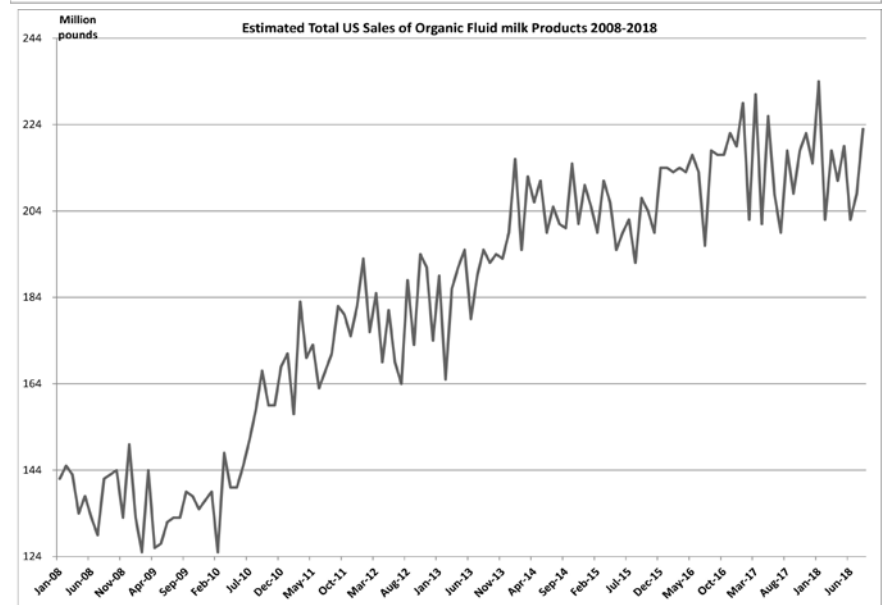
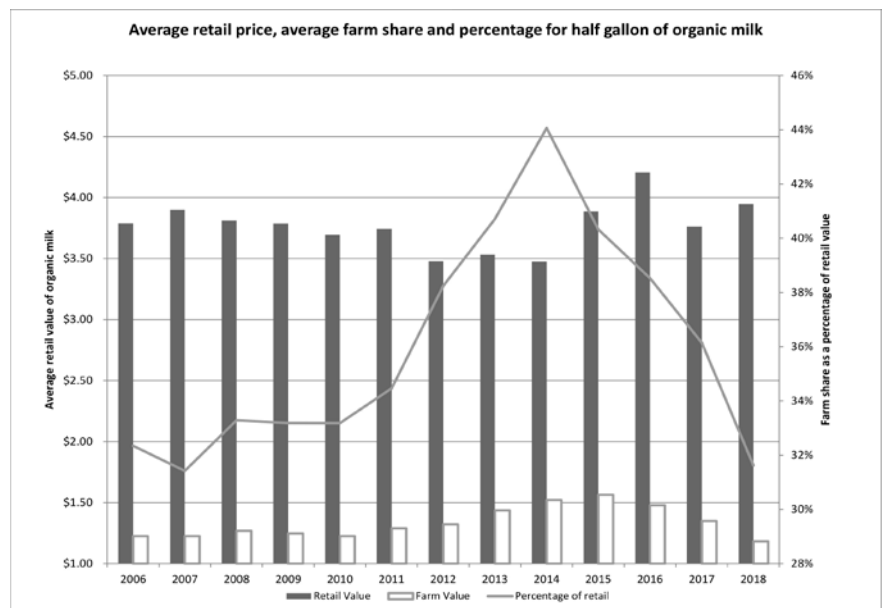
By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

USDA Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) reports that retail sales of organic milk during August 2018 were 222 million pounds, up 2.1 percent from August 2017 and up 0.5 percent, January-August 2018, compared with the same period of 2017. Sales of organic whole milk continue to increase with retail sales for August 2018 of 90 million pounds climbing 4.1 per cent from August 2017 and rising 5.1 percent compared to 2017, year to date. See attached charts.

In the Federal Milk Marketing Order 1 (FMMO 1), the report for August 2018 shows utilization of organic whole milk is slightly down compared to August 2017 (14,637,868 lbs. compared to 15,092,215 lbs. – a 4% drop), but for September 2018 utilization was up 2% over September 2017 (14,800,366 lbs. compared to 14,591,7930 lbs.). For organic non-fat the FMMO 1 shows there is marginal increase of only 1% for September 2018 (20,073,319 lbs. compared to 20,004,688 lbs.) and a less than 1% decrease for October 2018 (18,463,891 lbs. compared to 18,563,822 lbs.). This utilization data show level consumption in one of the prime organic markets in the USA.

With CROPP making decisions on their 2019 pay price at this time of year, there are reports that they will be conservative moving forward. CROPP is ready to launch their Grassfed Verification program and 2019 will be the pilot year. They will be promoting the program to certifiers to increase access for producers. Danone NA has consolidated its US operations and is cutting some contracts in the Northeast but apparently, even more in the West, and reports on its new contracts do not show any movement on pay price. Danone NA does report that it is starting to look for increased supply in the Northeast and it does admit that its 20 page contract is probably overkill!

As organic dairy looks to re-establish its position in the dairy aisle it continues to have to contend with non-bovine milks and dairy products that are growing at rates reminiscent of organic dairy growth in 2002-2006. Danone is the largest yogurt producer in the U.S. with about 34% of the market across its portfolio of brands, compared to Chobani at 17.5% and Yoplait at 16.5%, according to recent IRI data. Danone North America is putting resources into dairy-free alternatives after their purchase of WhiteWave. In the opinion of Mariano Lozano, chief executive of Danone North America, this trend will continue to command more shelf space in the



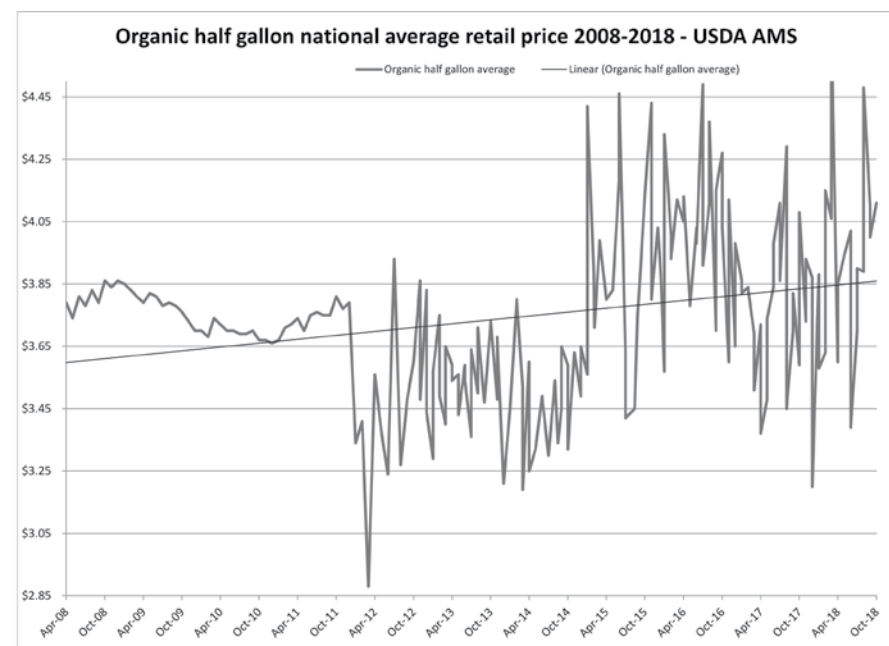
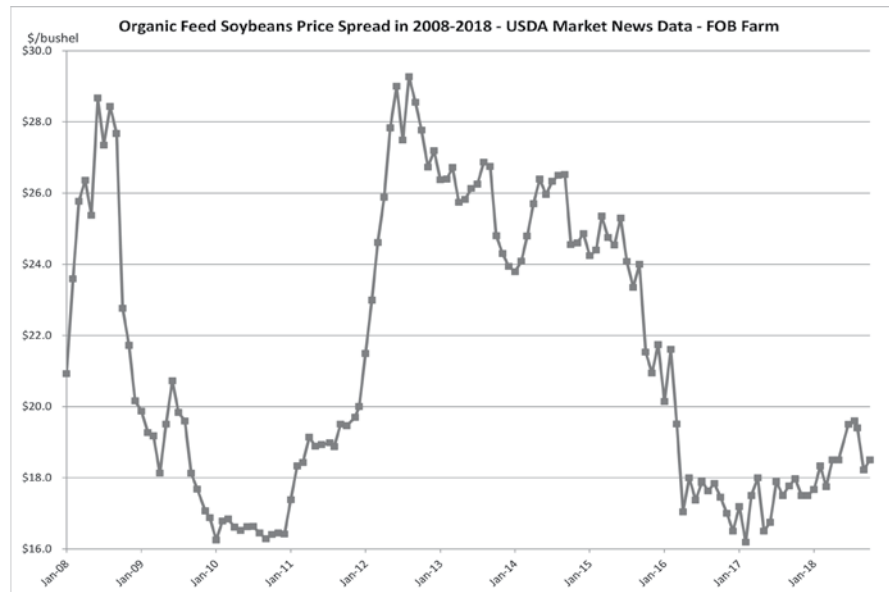
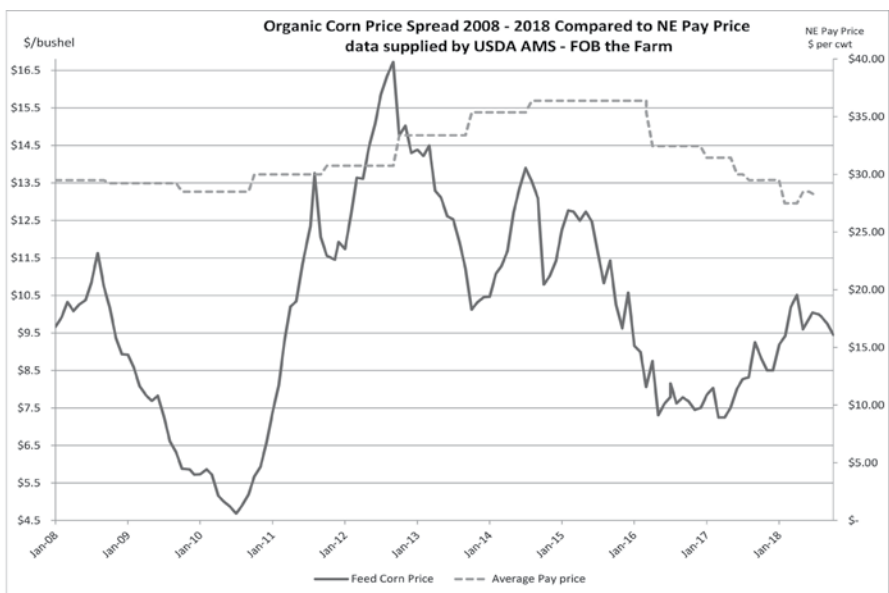
yogurt aisle with plant-based products now comprising just 2 percent of yogurt sales. Lozano notes plant based products are growing at a rate of 55 percent per year. Lozano said the company is focused on expanding innovation within probiotic, premium, low-sugar and organic options. "The yogurt offering in stores is growing, and we believe evolving consumer choice is fueling the need to continue to innovate," Lozano said. Last week, 301 Inc., the venture-capital arm of General Mills, led a \$40 million investment round in Kite Hill, a food company that makes plant-based dairy alternatives, including yogurt, citing this "incredible untapped potential in the market." While Danone, Chobani and others in the yogurt space continue to see growth, General Mills, the owner of Yoplait, is struggling. During its most recent quarter, sales slipped 2%, and while this is an improvement from the 5% decline the business saw last quarter, its lackluster performance reflects growing competition from powerful newcomers. General Mills' French-style Yoplait yogurt called "Oui," which was meant to counter authentic, international-inspired brands such as Chobani and Siggi's (owned by Lactalis, parent company of Stonyfield), has yet to see any growth.

The Jacobsen NON-GMO & Organic Weekly Bulletin reports Organic corn prices increased slightly as producer who need product in late October and early November paid up to nearly \$9.50 per bushel. Several merchandisers believe once the harvest comes on board, there will be enough product available to keep the balance of early 2019 near the \$9.25 bushel level. Farmers still need to get into the fields and the cold weather is slowing the drainage process. Imports of organic corn picked up and imports of organic crack corn have also weighed on prices.

Organic soybean prices have remained steady, bid at \$18 and offers near \$18.75. Prices have been depressed by cheap organic bean meal imports that have weighed on whole bean prices. The question of whether Chinese buyers will begin to purchase Indian soybean meal directly, due to US tariffs on US soybeans could alter the organic soybean landscape. If Chinese buyers begin to pick off cheap Indian soybean meal, it will no longer be cheap. With no end in sight to the US / China trade standoff, these outcome appears to be more likely. For the moment, domestic prices for organic bean meal are down to \$800 per ton. Imports are trading as low as \$775. Organic bean oil is now seen at \$0.43 per pound.

Organic feed wheat prices are shifting slightly lower as organic corn dips. Feed wheat is seen at \$7.75 with offers coming in near \$8.00 at the farm.

NON-GMO soybean prices have remained stable for new-crop at \$1.25 to \$1.50 over conventional. Non-GMO soybean meal is approximately \$145/\$150 per ton over conventional. ♦



Classified Ads

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on a farm where there may be the opportunity for them to be part of an eventual farm succession plan. They both have herd and crop management skills and are good communicators who work well as part of a team. Send me an email (sarahflackconsulting@gmail.com) if you have an opportunity you think I should connect them with.

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Land Lease Opportunity: LANDGROVE FARMLAND OPPORTUNITY, LANDGROVE, VT:

Overview

Multiple owners of contiguous of prime farmland in the heart of Landgrove are offering a farmland lease opportunity to a farmer or farmers interested in developing an agricultural enterprise. The current beef farmer is retiring after 30 years of regenerative land stewardship. He is coordinating with his 4 neighboring lessors to find a new independent operator to steward this special farm. The landowners expect the new operation will begin in the 2019 growing season.

The landowners are motivated to find a new farmer and are eager to work creatively with the right farmer-partner to help the farmer create a productive and profitable venture in Landgrove. They seek a farmer who will establish an environmentally responsible (sustainable, non-chemical) diversified agricultural operation. The previous pasture-based grazing operation is suitable to the landbase, but the land will support a wide range of crop and livestock production; multiple species and mixed agricultural use are possible. Farmer Recruitment Process

Interested farmers are asked to submit a letter of interest addressing the following questions:

1. What will success look like at the Landgrove Farmland under your stewardship and how long will it take to get there?
2. Summary outline of agricultural and business plans
3. What qualifies you to carry out the proposed use of the farm?
4. What other lease conditions do you have?

Please send your letter to Jon Ramsay at jramsay@vlt.org. If you have any further questions about the farm's resources or the

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Peace Hollow Farm



The 18th Annual NODPA Field Days Education Program Summary: Tools for Survival: Weathering the Current Dairy Crisis While Maintaining Organic Integrity

By Adam Diamond, Ed Maltby, and Liz Bawden

For those who weren't able to attend the NODPA Field Days at the end of September, here is a summary of the farm tours and educational program.

We were fortunate to have Adam Diamond write a detailed summary about the activities on Thursday, and Ed Maltby and Liz Bawden, NODPA Board President, provided a summary for Friday's activities.

NODPA held its 18th Annual Field Days for NODPA members and supporters on September 27th and 28th at Yarrowsburg Mennonite Church in Knoxville, MD. The title of this year's event was Tools for Survival: Weathering the Current Dairy Crisis While Maintaining Organic Integrity. The two-day event included two farm tours

of nearby organic dairies, panels on financial analysis and record-keeping, grass-fed milk marketing, and policy issues affecting the industry, a producer only meeting, and a rousing, albeit sobering address by Mark Kastel from The Cornucopia Institute. All told, about 50 people, including NODPA members and their families, and supporters, including representatives from University of Maryland Extension, The Cornucopia Institute, and the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, came throughout the two days. This important annual event offers an opportunity for organic dairy farmers in the Northeast to share lessons about what works and what doesn't, get updated on important developments in the industry and in the policy world, and, last but not least, build solidarity and think about how to best respond to the

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Loading up for the trip to the Martin's farm tour



FIELD DAYS

continued from page 19

extremely challenging market conditions facing organic dairy farmers.

The Field Days kicked off bright and early on Thursday morning with a hay wagon tour of Myron Martin's Peace Hollow farm, which backs up right next to Yarrowsburg Mennonite Church, where the meetings, panel discussions, and delicious meals were held over the course of the two days.

Myron has a total of 265 acres of land, including 65 acres of rented land; almost the entire farm is in pasture or hay; none of his land is currently in crop production. His cows do not eat any grain at all, feeding on pasture, hay or silage throughout the year, getting 30 lbs. of dry matter intake daily.

It has been almost ten years since he planted crops on the farm; he has concluded that grass is the best feed for his cows so he has designed the entire farm around making sure cows have sufficient access to forage year-round. A key point Myron emphasized in the tour is that farmers have multiple options when it comes to infrastructure for cutting, hauling, and storing forage, let alone raising crops, and when you focus on just one option you can more comfortably invest in the best equipment for that approach without breaking the bank. Not only has Myron been able to

minimize costs and simplify operations by not planting crops and eliminating all the associated equipment they require; he has also focused on silage production using bunkers as his primary system for feeding cows when they are not on pasture and when supplementation is needed. By doing so, he is able to capitalize on earlier investments he made that were compatible with this strategy. Before he went all grass in 2009, he had built several bunk silos; after switching to an all grass dairy he switched to using these bunkers for storing long-cut silage.

He uses a Pottinger chopper hay wagon to chop and haul hay after it's been cut by a disk mower. It is then put in the bunkers. Myron explained "you have choices, either an ag bagger, bale bags, or trenches. It's best to pick one technology so you don't have to invest in equipment for more than one method. This is where I put my money."

To facilitate grazing, the farm has 7,000 feet of water lines running across the fields to bring water to the cows while they are grazing. The cows stay hydrated and on pasture, and it saves time that otherwise would have to be spent hauling water to the cows. Myron uses rotational grazing, with cows going through paddocks for one day, and returning again to the same paddock in 21-30 days, the interval depending on how much it has rained. Myron said he makes hay when it's dry, even if it's not ready,

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because otherwise he could lose it all. He often pre-clips about 12 hours prior to the cows entering the pasture. Myron's grazing season is from the beginning of April until October. He currently milks 80 milking cows. For three months of the year he's not feeding them any stored hay crop –they only get grass from pasturing. They freshen in the spring and the fall.

He follows an unusual milking regimen that he believes reduces stress on the animals, especially given their no-grain diet, and works with his lifestyle. Cows are milked at 16 hour intervals, at 6 am, 10 p.m., 2 p.m. the next day, and so on. He has fine-tuned his practices over time as he has enhanced his knowledge of the biological properties of soil and figured out what makes the most sense for his farm in terms of soil health, milk quality, herd health, input costs, and personal well-being. For example, while he tried chicken manure once, he now applies liquid manure to his hay fields, but does not add any nutrients to his pasture land. Myron has come to believe that grazing animals and harvesting hay for them to eat simply makes the most sense. "God made this land to work," he said.

Myron has been relatively conservative in terms of upgrading

other equipment on the farm. He changed what had been a double 6 into a double 8 milking parlor in 1996. One person can milk all the cows fairly quickly, and while it is relatively old milking equipment he said "it works just fine." He is milking 50-60 lbs. of milk per cow; given his production levels and herd size it does not make sense to invest in newer milking equipment.

He has decided to consistently upgrade his hay making equipment, and recently bought a neighboring farm to secure more pasture and hay land. A few years ago he bought a neighboring farm with 100 acres for just short of \$1 million, which was only made possible with \$640,000 in assistance from a state farmland preservation fund. He also rents 65 acres for \$50/acre.

Building off his focus on grass-fed livestock, Myron has developed a healthy side business in grass-fed beef, earning \$60,000 last year from selling beef. He explained that with grass-fed beef, the marketplace premium is for grass-fed, not organic beef, as the nutritional and taste profile of meat from animals raised on grass is what particularly attracts consumers, with grass fed beef considered more heart healthy. The beef is not certified organic

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Hay Ride to the Martin's Farm Tour

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because the butcher he uses is not certified organic, and it does not make sense to try and find a certified organic butcher.

One challenge that Myron is dealing with right now is the stability of his milk buyer. He shipped for many years with Organic Valley (OV), but switched a few years ago to Trickle Springs Creamery, which distributes organic milk in glass bottles to independent stores in Maryland. In the course of a rapid expansion, Trickle Springs took on more debt than it could handle, and asked Organic Valley to take over its suppliers, but they are not full members of the CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley. The current surplus in the organic milk market means Myron is in a precarious situation and not receiving the full pay price of other members, and he is considering all his options, including direct marketing as one possible alternative to solidify his financial situation.

Just as the rain started, the farm tour wrapped up and everyone returned to the Yarrowsburg Mennonite Church for a delicious hot lunch before the educational program kicked off. We were fortunate to have Janet Martin, Carissa Martin, and Beverly Martin cater all of the delicious meals, many of which used grass-fed beef from the Martin's farm and other products from local and organic farms. Following lunch, the afternoon program got underway, and a summary of the program follows.



**Keynote
Speaker
Mark Kastel**

THE GRASS FED LABEL: IS IT STILL THE 'SILVER BULLET' OF ORGANIC MILK?

Panel Discussion with:

Myron Martin, Peace Hollow Farm, Knoxville, MD

Ron Holter, Holterholm Farms, Jefferson, MD

Forrest Stricker, Spring Creek Farms, Wernersville, PA

The first afternoon panel focused on the market for grass-fed milk, including why it has emerged, what it means for farmers and consumers, and how it might be expanded.

Panelists discussed how grass milk, by keeping animals on a grass only diet leads to a different omega 3 profile in the milk. It is better for cows as they are designed to subsist on grass not grain, improves soil health as cows cycle nutrients while grazing, and is beneficial for human health. All these qualities potentially give it a significant price premium at the retail level compared to regular organic milk. Grass-fed milk constitutes a small, albeit fast growing share of the fluid organic milk market. For example, OV's grassmilk label is growing 20% a year, compared to basically flat growth for its regular fluid milk. However, panelists suggested that this market could grow much faster and that there is a disconnect between milk buyers and farmers regarding the value of grass-fed milk. In recent years, the science has caught up with farmer intuition regarding the value of grass for cows and their milk, and organic milk companies could be more proactive in touting emerging scientific findings on the nutritional benefits of milk from grass-fed cows.

Even with its 20% growth rate, CROPP only has a 64% utilization rate for its grassmilk pool, which means one third of the milk from farmers that have committed to producing only grassmilk, with no grain fed to their cows yearround, is not being marketed as such. The implication is that this market could grow faster, with the utilization rate rising, if CROPP and other organic milk companies put more marketing muscle behind grass-fed milk.

In addition to more consumer education and marketing, an additional important step to advancing the grass-fed organic milk market would be the establishment of a 100% grass-fed standard. Requiring all organic milk farms using the grass-fed label to abide by one standard would level the playing field across all farms. In fact, it was asserted by one panelist that this is the only way to guarantee the viability of small scale agriculture. University of Maryland Extension Agent Dale Johnson reflected on whether or not grass based dairying functioned as a limit to scale. While it is hard to graze very large herds on grass, he surmised that one way around this limit would be to bring the forage to the cows in form of hay or silage. Cows could be 100% grass-fed, but it would not mean they were on pasture most of

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the time. It is details like this that will have important implications for the development of the grass-fed milk market, and for whether it will serve as a lifeline for smaller organic dairy farms struggling to survive in a difficult marketplace.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF YOUR FARM IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Panel:

Jeff Semler, Extension Educator, University of Maryland Extension, Washington County

Dale Johnson, Farm Management Specialist, University of Maryland Extension, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics

Curvin Eby, Green Acres Farmstead, Hagerstown, MD.

Maryland organic dairy farmer Curvin Eby started off this session by stating — “Success is not final; failure is not final; what counts is the courage to continue.” When conditions are daunting, it takes creativity and perseverance to find a pathway to a better place; likewise, one can never rest on one’s laurels and

assume that the good times will continue forever. Eby and Dale Johnson then used this as a jumping off point to engage in a detailed analysis of the Eby farm over the last ten years, with a spreadsheet distributed to participants detailing farm income and expenses over this timeframe for the farm.

The analysis started with a discussion of how the Eby farm dealt with the recent milk glut, and in particular the need to reduce milk production as CROPP had imposed a quota on its members and Eby’s farm was over the quota. It was imperative to stay within the production because all milk produced over the quota would sell for \$20 less per cwt (currently \$16 per cwt). Estimated net income and profits for 2018 are projected to be down significantly from the average of the last three years, but Curvin has taken important measures to lessen the pain caused by the milk glut, and lay the groundwork for a well-managed, profitable farm operation going forward. Feed costs for this 50-cow farm have been fairly high for several years, averaging \$52,000 annually from 2015-2017. This amounted to almost twice as much per cow as a comparison group of seven organic farms with an average of 75 cows.

Eby saw where things were going with the milk glut and quota

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requirements and decided to take action. He renovated his pastures to increase grass production, reduce feed purchases, and thus lower his production costs for milk. The results have been remarkable; in January of this year it was projected that the year's feed bill would be \$50,000, and now it is projected to be only \$5,000 for the year, a 90% reduction! While feed costs may go up in future years, this case illustrates how much one can impact the bottom line with careful attention to pasture management. Eby also is adjusting the size and mix of the herd, as he is keeping more heifers to increase herd size, and aiming for higher butterfat content through genetics and the shift to almost no grain feeding. CROPP's quota is based on volume, not butterfat, with significant bonuses paid for high butterfat given the high demand for organic butter, so this tactic can help stabilize income even as production goes down to meet the quota.

There were two other line items in the spreadsheet that stood out in the analysis, and these could affect overall farm profitability significantly. Depreciation, which measures the decline in value of farm equipment and structures over the course of a year, is meant to budget for future equipment and infrastructure purchases. However, Johnson and Eby agreed that this \$17,000 line-item may have been overstated by \$10,000. Counterbalancing this positive

boost to the bottom line, though, is the absence of any payments for health insurance, which is often a particular problem for small family farms like this one. Otherwise, rental lease payments have largely been replaced by property tax and insurance payments. Overall, this financial analysis was a very useful exercise in showing how different choices can affect farm finances. Although one can never depend on market conditions being stable, farmers can sometimes lower their base production costs to reduce their vulnerability to sharp fluctuations in input or output prices.

MAXIMIZING NET INCOME AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE OF YOUR FARM: LEARNING HOW TO DO MORE WITH LESS

Panel:

Jeff Semler, Extension Educator, University of Maryland Extension, Washington County

Jacki Perkins, Dairy Specialist, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)

This session started out with a quick brainstorm around the room of important challenges affecting farm viability. These challenges then were grouped together into four groups, with each group

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Dale Johnson, Farm Management Specialist, U. of Maryland Extension

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charged with working through a particular set of related challenges and then sharing their insights with the entire group.

After the brainstorming session four groups were formed.

Here are some of the key issues each group covered.

1. Weather/heat abatement/extreme weather:

- Can use shade trees and portable shade mechanisms to keep cows comfortable in hot weather on pasture. Ventilation fans in barns are an important tool as well.
- Can plant fast growing trees in hedgerows and plant slow growing trees for the next generation
- Wet and dry weather tips—adjust plantings of corn and soybeans, as well as grasses and summer forages depending on the weather. Be mindful of which varieties are going to do well in dry weather/wet weather. Millet does well in wet or dry conditions.

2. Farm Succession/mentoring:

- It is critical to have open communication across the different generations.

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NET UPDATE

Recent ODairy Discussions

By Liz Bawden, Organic Dairy Farmer, NODPA President

A sudden flurry of third trimester abortions on one farm caused the farmer to send out blood samples to a lab. The animals were in a group of dry cows and bred heifers, all receiving a diet of 100% pasture in fields of predominantly fescue. The herd on this farm had not been vaccinated for over 20 years, so the farmer suspected they were having an outbreak of Lepto. Surprisingly, the blood tests came back negative for both Lepto and BVD. The farmer asked the group for insight on what may be causing the abortions.

One farmer suggested that the wet weather may have brought on an outbreak of Salmonella. Another producer felt that the cause may be an endophyte infected fescue problem. He felt that endophytes improve the "livability" of the stand, and wet weather after drought can cause increased levels of toxins in the fescue. This can cause outbreaks that hadn't been seen before because the levels vary year to year and within season depending on the stage of growth. Another farmer believes endophyte-free grasses can be re-infected with the endophyte by feeding hay in the paddock. He thinks the toxic parts are concentrated in the seed head and stalk, so mowing the paddock may help reduce the toxin load.

Two vets suggested other causes: one reported that these symptoms are classic for *Neospora caninum*. "It will usually hit the dry cows for a few months, and then disappear." He also stated that in the case of toxic fescue, there would generally be peripheral circulation symptoms present like a tail dropping off, quarter dying back, or ear tip shortening. Another vet disagreed with the lab results for the Lepto test. He pointed out that the titers were low, but "what you might expect ... in an unvaccinated cow early in infection." He suggested taking another set of samples, two weeks after the first, and submitting them together. To rule out other possible causes, he recommended that samples be sent from the fetus and placenta, in addition to blood samples to get the best diagnosis.

A third vet suggested that if the diagnosis is confirmed to be Lepto, there is a very effective homeopathic nosode as a protection from future outbreaks.

There was a long discussion on the control of horse nettles in pastures. Two farmers shared their frustration with trying to battle the weed through grazing management and mowing. Another farmer suggested that we take a step back to understand why they were growing there in the first place: he informed us that horse nettles (along with field mustard, penny cress, morning glory, quackgrass, wild chamomile, and pineapple plant) are indicators of soil crust formation and/

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

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

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

Cost: Display-ready ads are \$150 per month.

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www.nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml

FIELD DAYS

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- Fair is not always equitable—need to count sweat equity of the family members that have stayed on the farm when considering who gets proceeds from sale of family farm or how farm ownership is transferred down the generations.
- Open communication is key! Understand that transition is going to happen.
- New farmers can benefit from mentoring. It can be very helpful to find like-minded people or a group to get involved with and share experiences, challenges, and insights.
- Many organizations are out there working to pair farmers without land to those with land, eg. Farmlink, MOFGA

3. Value of Grass vs Value of Land:

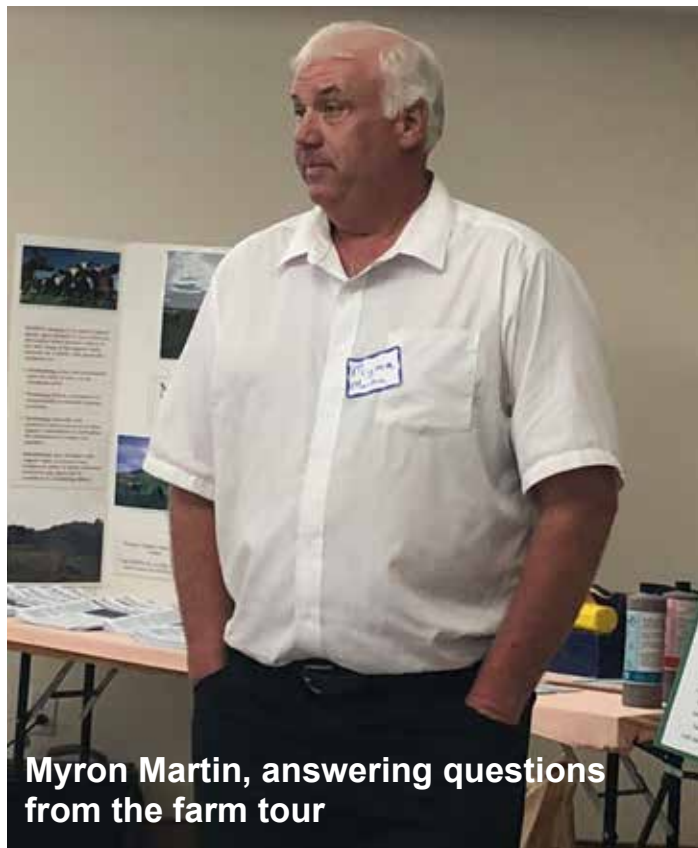
- Group discussed how important it is to see the value in grass, and cultivate this value through careful management.
- A diversity of animals and plants is good for soil.
- As one builds up soil organic matter one could rotate a high value crop, e.g. vegetables, on a portion of one's grass-land. This could be a way to increase farm income and raise the value of the farm.

4. Animal Husbandry:

- **Fly control**
 - Cattle rotations-grazing to certain height controls flies
 - Sticky fly tapes
 - Spray cows with a fly repellent, such as Ecto-Phyte
 - Chickens can control flies, but need to protect them from hawks
 - Guinea hens are good for eliminating ticks, but they wander and are very loud.
 - Kelp may help reduce flies.
 - Fly Vac- start in beginning of season
- **1x Day Milking**
 - Reduces stress on animals. Can improve body condition, improve conception rates. Tradeoff is less milk, but often increases butterfat content.

This session ended with some broader reflections on the importance of sharing practical knowledge—from farmer to farmer. Meetings like NODPA Field Days facilitate this sharing, and Agricultural Extension and other organizations can play a key role in encouraging the transmission of this informal knowledge from farmer to farmer. Furthermore, this peer to peer farmer education takes on increased importance given the budgetary pressures that the Extension Service is facing, and the withering

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Myron Martin, answering questions from the farm tour



Trade Show Discussions

FEATURED FARM

Ottercrest Farm, Whiting, Vermont**Pasture Walk at Ottercrest Farm**

continued from page 1

control of the land from their father and started to restore the farm after 30 years of neglect. His brother, however, also had a job with NRCS and chose not to farm full-time. Brian decided to sell the herd of Jersey heifers which had been transitioned to organic. He revitalized his veterinary career by spending the next three and a half years working in New Zealand as the senior dairy veterinarian for a large practice.

He had always been drawn to New Zealand for its grass-based approach to dairy farming and its support of agriculture in general. "The whole country side was supportive of agriculture," Brian reminisced. "You don't see this anywhere in America anymore. The value system is completely different. You go into a store and everyone there is a farmer."

The land had been rented and was in a state of disrepair and

nutrient-deficiency when Brian decided to retire from veterinary work and return to the farm with his wife and two children. "Most of the farm had been cropped with corn and the renter's final move was to moldboard plow all of the land but not harrow it," Brian said, leaving a heavy thatch of grass and weeds on the furrows. Someone had also decided that burning the weeds was a good idea which caused a dangerous fire.

"None of the main buildings were damaged," said Brian. "I did lose all the fence posts, leaving piles of barbed wire lying in heaps, covered in weeds. That was the extent of the permanent fencing when I returned to the farm." Brian thought he would be able to return the grasslands to productivity in a few years, but five passed before he was able to establish a productive pasture program.

It's practical to adopt New Zealand's low-cost, grass-based

seasonal dairy model during the northeast growing season, but it's difficult to extend this philosophy into the winter. The oppressively cold Vermont winter of 2014-2015 triggered Brian to question his management system.

Brian said, "At the end of the winter, I started doing some math and was amazed at how much I was spending for the joys of milking in the cold. I thought to myself, if this is costing me money, why I am doing this?"

Three radical changes followed. He switched his ration from haylage to dry hay to eliminate the need to start multiple tractors in the cold. He began to transition his herd to spring seasonal production, and he switched to once-a-day milking in the winter. Brian would no longer have to climb up the 1970's sheet metal Martin silo. "The unloader still worked," Brian said, "but it would eat through the sides of the silo and turn into shreds of metal and spit it out." Instead he built a 36' x 96' shed to store round bales.

"At this point," Brian continued, "my business focus is to make

as much money as I can in the grazing season and to waste as little time and lose as little money as I can in the winter."

In 2018, the herd of 40 milk cows began calving in mid-March and was finished by the end of July, with one outlier. His infrastructure is able to support up to twenty more milk cows but Brian has chosen to sell cows rather than buy feed in times of recent drought. The current Organic Valley quota prevents him from adding additional cows. Brian said the limitations are good. "It's only me doing this and I already have to prioritize everyday what it is I am not going to do."

"The cows are a multi-colored lot. Some people joke that I am trying to produce my own breed of brindle cow," Brian said. The core of the herd is Jersey-Milking Shorthorn crosses bred with AI to Ayrshire, Holstein, Montbeliarde or Guernsey. The average weight of a milk cow is 1100 pounds. Butterfat fluctuates between 3.7 in the heat of summer to the high-fives in winter.

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Discussions about pasture



FEATURED FARM

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The calving window is large enough that Brian still milks in the winter. “I need some winter cash flow and have to be here anyway,” Brian said about not being fully seasonal. To reduce labor demand, he adjusts the herd to once-a-day milking in the late fall as the cows make the transition from pasture to stored feed. The dry period is shorter for Brian’s cows- 30-35 days because he feels it reduces fresh cow mastitis.

Brian has 180 acres of open land which meet all his pasture and forage needs. The main farmstead sits atop a hill and the land slopes downward into the floodplain of Otter Creek. In the distance are expansive views of the Green Mountains. A fair amount of the higher ground is clay on top of a big mound of sand that is 20 to 30 feet down. At the lower edge of the hill are seeps and springs where water runs out. The lowland is subject to flooding by Ottercreek and its heavy clay soils hold the moisture long after the creek subsides.

Since the initial plowing and planting of the ground, Brian has not done any tillage. He does, however, make use of an Extension-owned Haybuster no-till drill. “I generally no-till grass and clover seed but I always try something new. I have had very positive results with forage chicory,” he said. Typically, he seeds at the beginning of September after his second crop of hay.

His hay land and pastures overlap. Sometimes he grazes second crop from his hay fields and sometimes he takes first crop off his pasture. Typically, he grazes everything which grows after Labor Day. Normally cows begin grazing by April 20th and remain on pasture until the beginning of December.

He has no permanent perimeter fencing, instead depending on poly-wire. “The core philosophy of my grazing system is based on flexibility,” he said. The lack of permanent fencing allows him to change paddock size at will and to move animals from pasture to hayfield depending on the circumstances.

With no pasture water system in place and few hedgerows for shade, the dairy cows have continual access to a lean-to building with a large overhanging steel roof as well as a bedded-pack hoop barn. Round bales in ring feeders are provided at both locations.

Young heifers and bred heifers are rotationally grazed in two separate groups. Each group has about ten animals. Young heifers are supplemented with one pound of grain per day and are taken off pasture earlier in the season than the milking herd and bred heifers. In Brian’s experience, Jerseys are suscep-

tible to coccidiosis and grazing those young animals on short pasture exacerbates coccidiosis.

“Coccidiosis cysts come out in manure and plants or standing water get splattered with that manure, Brian explained. “If the grass is tall, animals can fill themselves up quickly. If they have been in a paddock too long and are forced to graze close to the ground, every stubby plant will be splattered with infected manure.”

“I try to clip the pastures once per year,” he said, with the goal to begin after the second grazing pass and to be finished by the beginning of July. For the 2018 grazing season, Brian experimented with grazing taller grass and did not clip all of his pastures. Organic Valley agronomists suggest this method to increase components.

“I had no change in components by grazing taller grass because my grazing management is reasonable anyway. What did happen is that we had a sustained drought and the taller grass shaded the ground, preserving soil moisture,” which helped his subsequent pasture re-growth.

Grain rations vary from an average of ten pounds in the non-grazing season and six pounds during the main grazing season. Brian’s goal is 40 pounds of milk a day per cow. Cows peak at over 50 pounds a day during the spring flush. In mid-October, cows were averaging 37 pounds.

Although Brian has developed a system to maximize milk production from pasture, winter is still an inevitable part of farming in Vermont. “I am a cow and pasture guy,” he said. “I tend not to prioritize the earliest possible haying, so I end up with plenty of heifer hay but a shortage of high-quality feed.” He recently purchased an in-line wrapper but his current round baler can’t manage baleage well.

In 2012, Brian put up a 65’x96’ bedded-pack barn. Lower quality bales of swamp hay are used for bedding and are processed with a Valmetal bale processor that can blow the bedding 35 feet to the side. The grinder processes the bales into six to eight-inch pieces. The short length is critical because it allows him to clean the barn out with a front-end loader.

In the winter, Brian rototills the bedded-pack daily with a seven-foot tiller. “If you don’t rototill, the cows make hollows, fill the bottom of the hollow with manure, and they return to those spots. The tiller allows me to take down the high dry spots and move it into the wet cold spots.”

Although Brian correlates the bedded-pack with increased

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**Brian
Howlett**



FEATURED FARM

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mastitis infections, the economics outweigh the risks. “It’s a cost-effective way for me to manage cows. All I have is the cost of putting up the hay,” Brian explained. “Sand must be trucked in from far away. Sawdust, too, must also be trucked in because the wood products industry has died around us.”

The bedded-pack is cleaned once a year in the fall and spread onto ground the cows are no longer grazing. In the winter, the cows spend their time in the hoop barn and are shifted into a stanchion barn only for milking. They are fed their grain ration at this time. There is a pipeline in the barn but the gutter cleaner must be cleaned out by hand once a week.

Brian recently had his 25th reunion from veterinary college. He has worked with pedigreed race horses, can spay a cat “as fast as anybody,” and some might wonder what would lead a successful world traveling veterinarian to exit the industry and return to a Vermont hillside.

“The industry has changed and my client’s needs have changed,” Brian said. “One of the issues that discouraged me with conventional animal husbandry was that so many of my patients suffered from lifestyle diseases- not enough exercise, too much white food, overcrowding, and breathing of poor-quality air. The end result was that I was always putting band-aids on preventable problems. Basically, I lost interest in doing what my clients wanted me to do.”

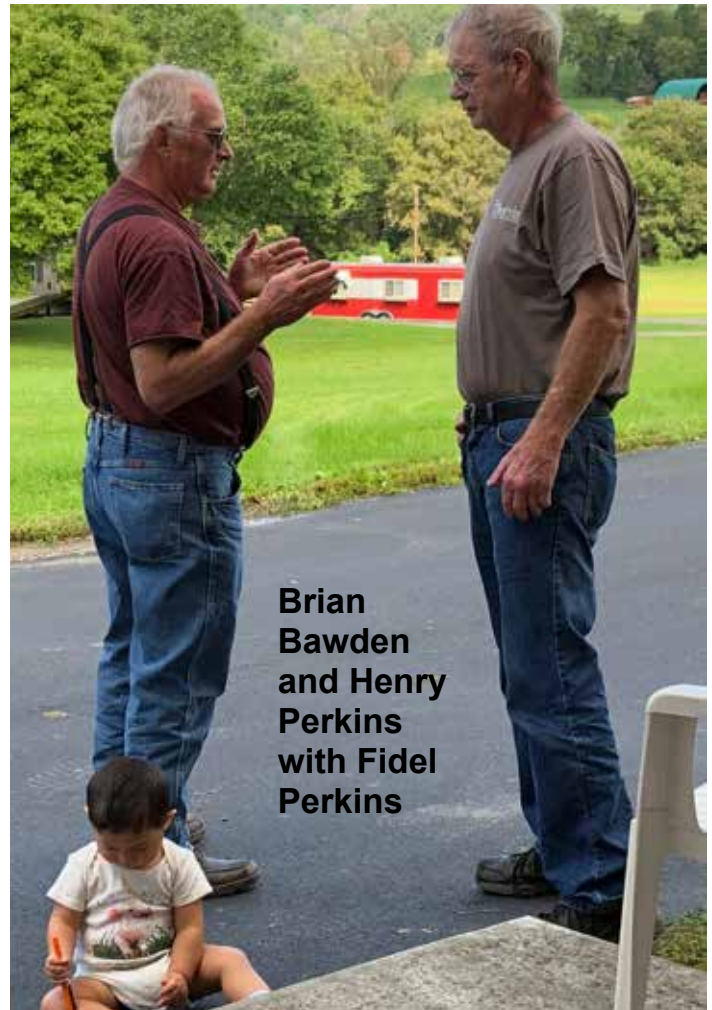
He continued, “I am attracted to organic livestock farming by the necessity of doing everything right the first time. Good management and animal husbandry are really important to me.”

When he returned to the farm from New Zealand, Brian had three goals: to restore the farm into the condition that he remembered as a child, to create a viable business to pass onto his two children, and to demonstrate that small-scale grass-based dairying is viable in Vermont.

Restoring the farm to its classic idyllic ideal has been checked by both time and money. At this point Brian’s two college-aged children do not seem to be interested in carrying on the family farming tradition. At this point though, Brian is satisfied. “Basically, I started this farm with relatively little debt,” Brian said. “I put all my life savings and only had to borrow to build the new barn.”

“In the end I always end up in Vermont working with small family farms. I am glad to have this chance to farm the way I think dairy farming should be in Vermont.” ♦

FIELD DAYS



**Brian
Bawden
and Henry
Perkins
with Fidel
Perkins**

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of its “research in service of the public good” mission.

Following the afternoon workshops, there was time to relax and enjoy the social hour. Folks snacked on cider and cheese and crackers while visiting with all of our Trade Show vendors. Everyone had a good opportunity to catch up with old friends and to make new ones, many of whom were from the Maryland area and new to NODPA. The NODPA Annual Meeting followed and was held during the dinner banquet.

After dinner, Mark Kastel delivered the keynote presentation.

Keynote address:

The Crisis in the Organic Dairy Movement: History, Analysis, and What Farmers Can Do to Level Playing Field

Presenter:

Mark Kastel, co-founder of The Cornucopia Institute

Mark Kastel started out by talking about the emphasis in U.S.

FIELD DAYS

food policy on cheap food and some of the problems it may entail. “We have the cheapest food, bar none, and the most expensive healthcare.” In the last 70 years, healthcare and farming have taken each other’s places as a percentage of GDP, and it may very well be that this helps explain why U.S. health outcomes are so poor in comparison to other developed countries.

This set the stage for a discussion of the organic movement, the rise of organic milk, the current crisis, and Cornucopia’s work as an organic watchdog.

HISTORY OF ORGANIC MOVEMENT

Organic food and farming emerged from two impulses—consumers wanted food that wasn’t grown with toxic chemicals, and farmers were looking for a new way of farming, one where they wouldn’t always be “chasing their tails paying inputs suppliers and getting sick from chemicals.” In the early years of organic in the 1960s and 1970s it was all about informal farmer to farmer education. While the first phase of organic farming focused on fruits and vegetables, organic dairy emerged in the 1980s very

much as a response to the dairy crisis of the 1980s. Organic dairy was put forth as a strategic response that could stem the bloodletting and keep farmers in business by garnering them premium prices from consumers concerned about the health impacts of chemicals on their food supply.

Kastel explained how his personal journey to organic happened when he experienced severe health problems and had to shift his entire diet towards organic, whole foods, and grass-fed livestock products. As he put it — “People who buy organic food are selfish—we’re wired to always be on the look-out for food. Consumers seek out better quality food when children are around, and are willing to fight for better food....But consumers are not just being selfish when buying organic. [They] think they are doing something good for society, good for animals. Advancing economic justice for people who produce our food should be part of the price. They’re not buying the milk; they are buying the story behind the milk.”

INDUSTRIALIZATION OF ORGANIC DAIRY

Kastel transitioned from telling the story of organic’s origin in health, environmental and economic justice concerns to recounting the industrialization of organic dairy. It has now gotten so extreme that six organic dairies in Texas produce more milk than 453 organic dairy farms in Wisconsin.

Cornucopia has done multiple flyovers of these giant organic dairies, which vividly show the paucity of cows on grass; no more than 10% of these giant herds are outside at any given time. Kastel explained that “CAFOS are ruining our reputation” and that farmers need to make common cause with consumers to save the organic label from ruin by a few bad actors.

Aurora Dairy, started by the founders of Horizon, is the leading producer of store brand organic milk, and has created four organic dairy locations, each with several thousand cows. Kastel explained that “their mission was to make organic affordable [But] now organic and conventional are in the same boat. You can’t say organic is a better, more stable life for farmers, whereas before now, except for 2009 during the great recession—the market absorbed all the organic milk, even the CAFO milk. It’s a different story now.”

According to Kastel— “We’ve been a victim of our own success. Multiple standards and certifiers were causing lots of problems—we needed a level playing field But as soon as dollars were involved—the National Organic Program stacked the National Organic Standards Board with industry reps—under Democrats and Republicans.”

Under President Obama the organic industry had high hopes as organic pioneers were appointed to key positions, including

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Ron Holter giving preview of the Holterholm Farms tour



Northeast Organic Milk Buyers

Upstate Niagara

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

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

Natural by Nature

Looking for an organic milk market? Natural Dairy Products Corporation (NDP) was founded in 1995 as a family owned and operated organization producing organic dairy

products under the Natural By Nature brand name. Natural By Nature organic dairy products are produced with great care and distributed nationwide.

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

Dairy Marketing Services Organic

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

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

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At Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Inc. our member dairy farmers work passionately to ensure delicious, high-quality dairy products. Our products have earned numerous awards and customer trust for years.



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www.upstateniagara.com



Calendar

SOIL BALANCING CALL-IN CONVERSATIONS, FALL 2018,

Sponsored by Organic Food & Farming Education and Research, Ohio State University, Columbus OH

- November 14, 2018, 1:30-3:00 p.m. ET
- December 12, 2018, 1:30-3:00 p.m. ET

November 14, 2018 | 1:30-3:00 p.m. ET, Soil Balancing: What do the Numbers Say about its Effects on Soils, Crops, Weeds, and Farms?

Description: Everyone uses numbers to make decisions, although the numbers people have and the ways they use them often differ. These differences can spell both excitement and challenge when trying to understand and use Soil Balancing. Join us to discuss Soil Balancing by the numbers, as farmers, consultants, and researchers discuss the numbers we have and the numbers we wish we had.

December 12, 2018 | 1:30-3:00 p.m. ET, Soil Balancing: The Questions Matter

Description: "You don't know enough to know what you need to know." This recent recollection by a farmer after their encounter with a more experienced one reminds us that the questions matter. Much is said, written, and claimed about Soil Balancing but all is still not clear about it. If there is to be a more useful knowledge base about Soil Balancing—shared by farmers, consultants, and researchers alike—new questions and new ways of addressing them must be shared and accepted by many. Join us to discuss and shape where investigations of Soil Balancing should go next and how.

How it Works

Once registered, you will receive call-in instructions by email. Dial in the day of the broadcast to listen live to the conversation. Participants may send in questions before, during, and after each scheduled conversation. Send questions to moderator Matthew Kleinhenz, vegprosystemslab@gmail.com. The team will begin with some basic conversation on the day's topics. Then we'll start incorporating participant questions and comments. For more details or to register, visit <https://offer.osu.edu/SB-call-in>. If you have trouble accessing the online registration form, contact Stephanie Short, at short.189@osu.edu or (330) 202-2555 ext. 2687.

Who Will Be on the Panels?

Each Conference Call-in will feature Ohio State researchers and specialists, as well as partner farmers, and consultants in the field. We hope to represent a diverse range of viewpoints, knowledge bases, and experiences in each week's groups.

Confirmed panelists include: Steve Culman (Ohio State soil fertility specialist), Doug Doohan (Ohio State weed specialist),

Will Glazik (Cow Creek Organic Farm), Doug Jackson-Smith (Ohio State Environment and Natural Resources), Bob Jones, Jr. (The Chef's Garden), John Kempf (Advancing EcoAgriculture), Matthew Krause (BioWorks), Josh McGrath (University of Kentucky), Bill McKibben (Soil Tech, Inc), Joe Nester (Nester Ag, LLC), and James Schiltz (Midwestern BioAg).

November 19, 20, 26, 27, 28, 29 and December 5th: Determining Rental Rates on the Farm -- various Central NY locations

This program is designed to assist producers in determining fair rental rates on their farms from collected data in surrounding farms/ counties. In addition to land rental rates, determining fair land sale values on farms will be touched upon. This workshop will be presented by Nicole Tommell, Farm Business Management Specialist with the Central New York Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Team. Topics that will be covered are: Determining land rental rates for your specific area, obtaining land sale data for your county, understanding how land is coded for tax purposes.

Free to attend but registration is required! Please pre-register by registering online at <http://cnydfc.cce.cornell.edu/> or by emailing your information to herkimer@cornell.edu. Please call (315) 866.7920 if you have any questions. Registration deadline is one day before workshop. Registration allows us to communicate any cancellations or changes in arrangements.

December 2- 5, 2018, 7th National Grazing Lands Conference: Taking the Gamble out of Grazing -- Peppermill Resort and Casino, Reno, NV

If you are on the fence, our session/speaker line up may help you decide. You can view our program on our registration site under "Agenda." This conference will provide you with a forum for discussion and exchange of grazing land information and technology, an opportunity to identify grazing land research and program needs, and a chance to see new products and services. At this national grazing conference, the NGC endeavors to have livestock producers with very good grazing operations who are also good speakers giving the presentations at the conference. The NGC also tries to have good and equal representation from all parts of the country. This includes producer speakers from the Eastern U.S. that are managing the pasture operations well. Register: <http://www.cvent.com/events/7th-national-grazing-lands-conference/event-summary-564c8780432141b0beb4d2ff69e08a46.aspx>

January 12, 2019 32nd NOFA/Mass Winter Conference, Worcester, MA

Plant nutrition, personal health and soil restoration take a front seat at this year's annual NOFA/Mass Winter Conference as we explore the theme Food As Medicine. We will dig deep knowledge and experience of the amazing community of NOFA farmers, gardeners, foodies and health practitioners with

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FIELD DAYS

Field Days Summary*continued from page 33*

the Deputy Secretary of the USDA, but Kastel asserts the “age of enforcement” proclaimed by NOP Director Miles McEvoy was “a big bust.” Under Obama, as under Bush, organic CAFOs continued operations largely unimpeded.

Kastel argued that parallel to the industrialization of organic dairy we are also seeing increased competition for organic milk from plant based beverages. “It is much easier to crush a few soybeans in water than pay you good folks a good price for your milk. [Doing a nutritional comparison to milk—not much in them.] These products are way more profitable than milk. They can be organic. Organic milk sales are flat, while plant milk sales are growing much faster.”

WHAT TO DO?

Kastel argued that key to building farmer influence in the organic dairy world is getting support from consumers. “The higher authority is the consumer and their money.... there are too few farmers to have a big influence on policy. Our secret weapon together is consumers. They care about our story—and they don’t know how bad it is [for farmers].” Kastel urged those in attendance to educate consumers on a regular basis about the challenges they face and why their milk is superior to conventional milk. “You’re competing against Aurora and the ‘not-milks.’ We need to leverage our voices.”

The Friday Morning Program

On Friday morning there was the Producer only meeting which is reported on in the NODPA Desk on page 3. After a delicious breakfast, the morning program was started with a viewing of the video ‘Voices of Organic Dairy: Healthy Cows, Healthy You, Strong Communities’ created by the NODPA Listening Project and Social Media Committee members Sonja Heyck-Merlin, Annie Murray, Liz Pickard, and Nora Owens. The video was recorded at the NOFA-NY Organic Dairy and Field Crops Conference on March 6, 2018. The video was edited by Kate Morrison, Clovercrest Farm, Charleston, ME. Despite some technical limitation, this was received with great enthusiasm and will be available for use in other venues and for other groups to promote.

ANALYZING YOUR DAIRY PROFITS

Dale M. Johnson, Farm Management Specialist, University of Maryland Extension

The video was followed by a presentation from Dale Johnson of the University of Maryland in Hagerstown, Maryland. Dale kindly stepped in to take over from Sarah Flack who had a family emergency and could not attend. Dale’s presentation was focused on the practical issue of taking information from simple software like QuickBooks or the Schedule F tax form and using it to forecast an annual budget and also compare year to year performance. He was

able to take what could have been a difficult topic and turn it into an easy-to-understand evaluation of success or the need to improve. The concept of net worth and balance sheet performance are an extension of the usual operational profit and loss but an understanding of both are essential to good decision making, especially when operational losses cause stress on budgets and managers. Dale highlighted the data that showed net worth which for too many producers is in their land and livestock. Net worth might only be realized when one retires but is an important measurement when the producer is investing in the land, equipment and livestock. The dramatic cut in pay price for most producers has many caught in a cash flow crunch. Dale was able to show that with the use of simple accounting and using records such as the Schedule F tax form, producers can show performance over a 5- or 6-year period, including an increase in net worth over some if not all of the previous years. This can be used for making operational decisions about the farm’s level of profitability while making plans for future years or in going to the bank to borrow money to temporarily finance operations. It can also be used to make decisions about what pay price is needed to survive and whether to change production practices to save on inputs or increase yield.

What could have sent attendees to sleep not only stimulated good discussion and input of personal situations, but also ran over time; a true test of a great presentation!

NODPA took some time to introduce all the trade show vendors to the attendees and allow for some discussion with Peter Miller, the long time and very knowledgeable CROPP representative.

The DC policy and update presentation was shortened but didn’t suffer because of it, as many of the topics had been covered in Ed Maltby’s report the previous evening. The Farm Bill was stalled at that point and hasn’t moved at all as we move into a lame duck session. We were fortunate to have Patty Lovera, Food and Water Policy Director and a great supporter of producers, and her team at the meeting and she reassured us that we weren’t missing much of importance in DC. One final point was made to encourage attendees to take every opportunity to educate their Congressional and State representative about the benefits of organic production and the need for an open and transparent process around rulemaking.

The last half hour before lunch was used by Ron Holter to give a preview of what folks would see at his farm, Holterholm Farms in the afternoon. His presentation was informative, witty and finished exactly on time as he promised.

Lunch followed with the raffle for door prizes of some excellent and very practical items.

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Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance Producer Milk Check Assignment Form

I, _____ (please print name on your milk check)
 request that _____ (name of company that sends your milk check)

deduct the sum of :

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

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

_____ \$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 INDUSTRY NEWS

ODairy Updates

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or soil hardpan. A soil crust is formed when soil is too wet when it is worked, or when a soil dries up after having been cultivated before it has settled, or as a consequence of too deep plowing when the soil is saturated. "A hard crust also forms when fields are too frequently put into grain crops with insufficient root and green manure crops rotating in between the grains.... A hard pan is formed when wet soil is plowed, or standing water dries up in the surface layers." He went on to explain, "Early and late pasturing have a soil crusting effect equivalent to cultipacking wet soils. Hard pan formation can result from too many years of pasturing when soils are somewhat or mostly saturated causing standing water to dry in soil surface layers. Animal hooves are, in soil effect, cultivation tools."

"A grain crop densely sown when the soil is in moist, not wet, condition, and then followed with a cultivated crop is often the best remedy for reducing horse nettle and the above mentioned weeds. As the farm's economics allow, the grain crop can be mown, grazed, or interseeded with a legume that is incorporated when the grain is in tender flower stage. Cultivated root crops other than potatoes will help break up hardpan. Frequent mowing, grazing, and incorporating green manure crops must be done only when the soil is not wet." And on the positive side, this farmer noted that your poultry will enjoy very young nettles, and nettles stimulate humus formation. "They are endeavoring to heal the soil."

Another farmer suggested regular applications of limestone and gypsum will help to open tight soils, increase soil flocculation, decrease "weed" pressure, and increase forage quality and animal performance.

The alarm went up from a central New York farmer that both grain corn and corn silage are testing positive for mycotoxins because of the unusual weather this year. Specifically vomitoxin, which can affect dairy cows by reducing feed intake, reducing nutrient utilization, suppressing immunity, and cause reproduction problems. She recommended that farmers may want to include toxin binders in their feed ration as a preventative this year. Three different types of toxin binders were identified:

1. Clay/silicate-based products (Desert Dynamine, Redmond Conditioner, bentonite, calcium aluminosilicate) are effective against aflatoxin, but with little effect on vomitoxin.
2. Yeast cell wall extract products (Fuse 207, Check M, Immunowall, FloMatrix, Mycotex, UltraSorb etc) are reasonably effective against vomitoxin.
3. Hydrolyzed yeast product (Alltech's Integral A+) is a relatively new product, but is showing promise in better protecting an animal's gut on a routine basis. ♦

Field Days

continued from page 36

Friday Farm Tour: Holterholm Farms, Jefferson, MD

Friday's field trip to Ron Holter's Holterholm Farms gave us a chance to stretch our legs again and walk over beautiful pastures on this spring seasonal, grassfed dairy. Ron spoke of his pasture management style for his milkers, and talked about his success with raising calves on cows, kept in a separate pasture. One point that was interesting is that he grafts other calves onto a nurse cow; she does not raise her own calf. Ron felt that this allows her to raise the calves without having a "favorite". He talked about how he brings his Jersey cows in to the parlor slowly, so that all the manure is captured in the pasture.

A modern milking parlor with circular holding area and lots of ventilation made it seem like it would be a breeze to milk the herd there.

Farmers from northern areas of our region looked a bit stunned when he told them his grazing season began about April 1 and lasts until the end of October. Spring comes early in these parts. ♦

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

Calendar

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three all-day intensives, 60+ workshops and 70 experienced and knowledgeable exhibitors. This year's Winter Conference unifies our community with connection and camaraderie, carrying on the tradition of sharing experience, enthusiasm and passion for good food, good soil and good health. For more information visit: <https://www.nofamass.org/articles/2018/10/2019-winter-conference-uniting-thriving-food-system-and-ecology> or call NOFA-MA at (978) 355-2853.

January 18 & 19, 2019, Vermont Grazing & Livestock Conference, Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee, VT

Saturday Conference Keynote Speakers: David Montgomery and Anne Biklé. David R. Montgomery is professor of geomorphology at the University of Washington and a MacArthur Fellow. Among David's popular books are *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations*, and most recently, *Growing a Revolution: Bringing Our Soil Back to Life*. Anne Biklé is a science writer and biologist. She draws on over two decades of professional background in field biology, natural history, and environmental planning to investigate and write about connections between people, plants, food, health, and the environment. We are working on the final workshop schedule, so stay tuned for the full agenda and registration! For more information and registration, contact Cheryl Herrick (802) 656-5459, <http://www.uvm.edu/~pasture/?Page=conference.html>

January 18-20, 2019 NOFA-NY 2019 WINTER CONFERENCE, Climate of Change, Saratoga Hilton & City Center, Saratoga Springs, NY

This year's theme—Climate of Change—recognizes the ever-changing world in which we live. It is not only climate change, but also changing markets, changing policies, and a changing understanding of how we relate to the earth and each other. This theme explores how we can remain resilient as an organic community. Our parallel Seed Conference will teach us how to exist as a truly self-sustaining, full circle.

This year, we are thrilled to have Leah Penniman of Soul Fire Farm as the keynote speaker! Leah has embraced the change we seek both on her farm and through her political activism. She will share her journey and her vision to achieve racial justice in the food system. We are also honored to have the conference open with Ken Greene of Hudson Valley Seed Company and Rowen White of Sierra Seeds.

Our Farmers of the Year are Fred and Karen Lee of Sang Lee Farms. The Lee family realized the need for change when they saw that cheap food imports were undercutting their prices as food became a commodity on the global marketplace. They revamped their business model and became certified organic by NOFA-NY in 2007. The transformation has been extremely suc-

cessful and Sang Lee Farms is one of the highest quality farms on Long Island.

Additional speakers will provide well-rounded information on how to farm, garden, and eat in our ever-changing environment and our 13 workshop tracks will provide introductory-level to advanced-level information on everything from beekeeping to marketing to the Farm Bill to organic certification. To register, go to <https://nofany.secure.nonprofitsoapbox.com/winterconference2019>. Questions? We're here to help! Please call NOFA-NY's office at (315) 988-4000 x1.

Saturday, January 26th, 2019, 11th Annual Winter Green-Up Grazing Conference, The Century House, 997 New Loudon Road, Latham (Albany County)

Come join us at our eleventh Winter Green-Up, the Capital District's original grazing conference! Hear talks from grazing experts, get to know other farmers, and enjoy a buffet luncheon featuring local, grass-fed meats and other local products. Speakers include Ridge Shinn of Big Picture Beef, Marc Cesario of Meeting Place Pastures, and others. Cost: \$75.00 per person. If you have questions or need assistance with registration, please call (518) 765-3518 or email cce-caahp@cornell.edu. More information available here: <http://files.constantcontact.com/ad338351501/aa5ece92-cadc-48ad-ba2f-5c5c478f58a9.pdf>

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2019 Ad rates and sizes listed below.

**Deadline for advertising in the
January 2019 issue is December 15, 2018.**

Full Page Ad (7.5" W x 10.25" H) = \$660

1/2 Page Ad (7.5" W x 4.5" H) = \$340

1/4 Page Ad (3.5" W x 4.75" H) = \$190

1/8 Page Ad/Business Card:

(3.5" W x 2.25" H) = \$100

Commit to a full year of print advertising and get 10 percent discount: Full: \$600, Half: \$306, Quarter: \$171, Eighth: \$90.

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).
30 Keets Rd., Deerfield, MA 01342

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Origin of Livestock

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- One time transition for a conventional herd to organic that is tied to place and ownership.
- A one-time, 12 month opportunity for a producer that wants to convert heifers and milk cows that are currently on that existing dairy operation to organic under the supervision of their certifier.
- Anyone wanting to establish a new herd would have to buy organic cows and heifers. There would be no allowance for half the herd to be converted in one year and the rest in future years.
- No continuous transition.
- No allowance tied to what feed was given to transition

livestock.

- Transitioned cows and heifers could not be sold as organic; only animals from the last third of gestation would be able to be sold as organic.
- Implementation would be immediate except for those whose transition has already started.

For some, this would seem harsh to many producers who would follow the intent of the law and want to encourage as many transitions to organic as possible. But we need a regulation that is as simple as possible to implement consistently with no loopholes. We need to maintain the integrity of the organic seal and respect the letter and intent of OFPA, NOSB recommendations and regulation.

This is an emerging story. NODPA will provide continuous updates at www.nodpa.com and in the monthly e-newsletter. If you have questions, you can call NODPA at 413-772-0444.