

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

July 2024

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WWW.NODPA.COM

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SAVE THE DATE!
For the 24th Annual
NODPA Field Days
September 26 & 27th, 2024



Brothers John and Joe Engelbert lead the cows in with the help of Joe's daughters.

FEATURED FARM: ENGELBERT FARMS, NICHOLS, NY Owned and operated by the Engelbert Family

Another Generation at Engelbert Farms

By Tamara Scully, NODPA News Contributing Writer

At Engelbert Farms, seventh generation New York farmers - brothers Joe and John Engelbert - have taken over operations from their parents, Kevin and Lisa. Unlike many such

transitions, this one was harmonious. Older brother Kris, who chose not to return to the dairy permanently, continues to live nearby and help out as needed, and was onboard with the transition, too.

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Demystifying Succession Planning for Organic Dairy Farms 24th Annual NODPA Field Days Program September 26 & 27, 2024

Nichols Volunteer Fire Department Hall, 106 W. River Rd, Nichols, NY 13812

By Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator

The 24th Annual NODPA Field Days is fast approaching and we hope everyone will find the time to attend for both days because we have an excellent

and very relevant educational program and two farm tours. This year, the NODPA Field

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Message from NODPA Co-President

I hope everyone has been having a good start to the grazing season this year. For us, it started early and then we got a week long heat wave and had very mature pastures before we knew it. It led to some challenges with the milk cow grazing rotation but in the end worked out fairly well. On our last NODPA Board call, as always, we do a regional check in and it seemed like everyone, even though we are all in the Northeast, have had some very different spring weather conditions from one another--from droughts and being short on pasture in June to being too wet to get seedings in.

While I won't be able to make it to the NODPA Field Days this year, I feel we have a great lineup of farms, speakers, and farmer panelists. Farm transitions can be a challenge, whether it's adding a new member to the management team or ownership, transitioning to the next generation, or giving up long held responsibilities. The hope is that learning from what others have done and experienced can help some other farms/farmers with their own farm transitions.

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

Deadline for advertising in the September 2024 issue is August 15, 2024.

Full Page Ad (7.5" W x 9.75" H) = \$660
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A recent graduate review of the literature by Cora Okkema and Temple Grandin, published in the *Journal of Dairy Science* (Vol. 104, Issue 6), suggests udder edema is becoming an "emerging animal welfare issue" in addition to being "quite costly to the dairy operation."

The authors observe it may be present in a high percentage of dairy cows, especially first-calving animals and "can have detrimental effects on the structural integrity of the udder and teats, which then increases risk of mastitis. They note that, "Udder edema is associated with udder cleft dermatitis (udder scald) and increased risk of mastitis."



This is one reason why Emily Pankratz relies on Udder Comfort™ at the home farm today and while she was managing a 150-cow Organic dairy herd in Wisconsin.

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"This includes all fresh cows plus any cow that may acquire mastitis or high SCC at any point in lactation. What I like is how fast it works on edema to get our heifers off to a quick start," she says.

Jonathan Miedema of Dutchlane Dairy agrees. He manages the family's 130-cow Organic dairy near Sherburne, New York.



"Being an organic dairy, it's good to have this natural product for preventive use in fresh cows. Udder Comfort provides relief from swelling. It's part of our management for high quality milk," he says.

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The purpose of this project is to collect key insights and success factors that will help drive the creation of more impactful educational and business development programs. The survey is open to US dairy farms with up to \$1 million in annual sales. A \$150 check will be sent to respondents who complete the 20-minute survey until it closes. This is an anonymous survey, and the results will be analyzed and distributed directly and indirectly through Extension professionals and the Extension Foundation to U.S. small dairy farms. Our work supports small, organic dairy farms and provides valuable data to state and federal policy makers about providing crucial support for small farms.

Atlantic leadership has had their boots on the ground for over a decade working to support organic dairy.

Atlantic has completed small-scale processing equipment projects and multiple willingness-to-pay studies to inform policy makers and wholesale customers about the value and importance of organic dairy. We have worked for local farms as well as for the USDA and have completed projects for the Massachusetts Cheese Guild, State of Vermont Agency for Agriculture, Virginia Department of Agriculture, Maine Department of Agriculture, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, and the Maine Cheese Guild.

Please help us secure our futures by participating in our 20-minute survey.

Dairy farmers interested in completing the survey, please visit:

www.AtlanticCorporation.com/survey

Questions? Please contact Ray Bernier (207) 660-5986

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Final Rule for Electronic Ear Tags for Cattle

Compiled by Ed Maltby

Producers shipping dairy cattle and other types of cattle and bison across state lines might have to use electronic identification (EID or RFID) tags if a final rule developed by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) becomes effective. This Final Rule moves APHIS guidance from voluntary use of electronic ear tags to mandatory use under the same conditions that were under voluntary guidance. Federal funding is available to help producers obtain the EID tags, but USDA admits that the cost of tags in the future would be more expensive for small to mid-size operations that don't have the economies of scale of larger operations, with no guarantee of federal funds in the future. As with past attempts at rule making for electronic ear tags, there are legislative and legal initiatives underway to stop the EID rule from taking effect, with disagreements continuing over animal traceability and EID mandates. Here's an update on the current events surrounding the EID issue.

The APHIS Final Rule

The final rule announced by APHIS on April 26, 2024, and published in the Federal Register on May 9, 2024, will amend

the animal traceability rule enacted in 2013. USDA APHIS is amending the animal disease traceability regulations to require that ear tags applied on or after November 5, 2024, be both visually and electronically readable to be recognized for use as official ear tags for interstate movement of cattle and bison covered under the regulations. It also clarifies certain record retention and record access requirements and revises some requirements about slaughter cattle. The 2013 rule requires "official identification" on certain cattle and bison moved in interstate shipment for the purpose of animal disease traceability. Under the rule, "visual" ear tags are a form of official identification, in addition to certain pre-approved brands and tattoos and group lots. This 2024 final rule does not change the types of animals to which official identification requirements apply, nor does it change the categories of animals that are exempt from official identification requirements. Under this final rule the following categories are required to use electronic ear tags:

- Cattle and bison for interstate movement
- All sexually intact cattle and bison 18 months of age or over

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Final Rule for Electronic Ear Tags for Cattle

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- All female dairy cattle of any age
- All male dairy cattle born after March 11, 2013
- Cattle and bison of any age used for rodeo or recreational events
- Cattle and bison of any age used for shows or exhibitions

The regulations will continue to exempt the following from official identification:

- Most feeder cattle (beef cattle less than 18 months of age) requirements.
- Direct-to slaughter cattle, including cull cattle.
- Cattle and bison that do not move interstate, unless required by APHIS program disease regulations or state regulations.
- Under a commuter herd agreement between a livestock owner and State or Tribal animal health officials, cattle and bison may be moved interstate between two premises, without a change of ownership during normal livestock operations.

Effective Date of the Rule

The EID requirement is not yet effective. The final rule will take effect 180-days after the rule was published in the Federal Register. USDA published the final rule on May 9, 2024, making the effective date Nov. 5, 2024. For animals tagged after the rule's effective date, the ear tags "must be readable both visually and electronically (EID)."

Funding for EID Tags

Before APHIS finalized the rule, Congress approved funding to help producers voluntarily obtain EID tags, which cost around \$3 each. The Consolidated Appropriations Act passed in March of 2024 allocated \$15 million for EID.

EID Bill in Congress

A bill introduced on May 8, 2024 by Senator Mike Rounds (R-SD) would counteract the APHIS final rule. The one-paragraph bill simply states: "The Secretary of Agriculture shall not implement any rule or regulation requiring the mandatory use of electronic identification ear tags on cattle or bison."



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Why the debate over EID?

Animal traceability has long been a controversial issue for the livestock industry. APHIS and Senator Rounds capture the two sides of the controversy well with their recent statements summarizing their efforts. APHIS explains that “the most significant benefits will be enhanced ability to limit disease outbreak impact in the U.S., as well as maintaining foreign markets.”

On the other hand, Sen. Rounds states that “USDA’s proposed RFID mandate is federal government overreach, plain and simple. If farmers and ranchers want to use electronic tags, they can do so voluntarily.”

What’s next?

Given the slow pace of legislative activity in Congress, it’s unlikely that Senator Rounds’ proposal will affect the November 5th effective date of the EID final rule. Several associations have threatened to bring legal action against

the rule, however, so it’s likely we’ll see litigation and other legal challenges. As seems always to be the case with animal traceability, we still don’t yet know what the future holds. ♦



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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices July 2024

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has published estimated organic fluid product sales nationally, for March and April 2024. They show a continued increase in the sales of Whole Milk packaged fluid products of 12% percent over March 2023, with a 9.9% reduction in Reduced-Fat Milk over the same period. In April 2024, sales of organic Whole Milk continue to increase year over year by 18.1% over April 2023 and sales of organic Reduced Fat milk increased by 10.7% over April 2023.

Total US sales of organic fluid milk products were 257 million pounds in March 2024, with Whole Milk sales at 137 million pounds, and sales of Reduced-Fat Milk at 119 million pounds. In April 2024, total sales of organic packaged milk were 251 million pounds, with sales of organic packaged Whole Milk at 130 million pounds, and sales of organic Reduce-Fat Milk at 119 million pounds. The continued increase in sales of organic whole milk reflects the general industry trend within all of dairy for consumers' preference for whole milk but organic milk stands out as increasing fluid milk sales where conventional milk is losing fluid sales and increasing butter and cheese sales.

The average retail price for organic milk has ranged from \$3.81 per half gallon in 2008 to \$4.88 per half gallon for 2023. In May and June of 2024, the average retail price was \$4.81 and 4.82 respectively. In June 2024, the highest retail price was in Pittsburgh PA at \$6.59 per ½ gallon, and the lowest in 8 separate cities was \$3.99 per ½ gallon. The increase in sales despite increase in retail price, indicates that demand by consumers for organic dairy is inelastic. The retail prices were collected by the FMMO based on a survey conducted between the 1st and 10th of each month in selected cities or metropolitan areas. The largest and second largest food store chains are surveyed.

Federal Milk Market Order 1, in the Northeast, reports utilization of types of organic milk by pool plants for products packaged in the FMMO 1. Data on milk in the other classes are not published separated by production practice, neither is milk that comes into the order already packaged to be sold in the order. According to FMMO 1 the data is "Derived from reports submitted by pooled handlers." A Pool Handler is defined as "any person

who operates one or more pool plants, or an association of milk producers which is incorporated as a cooperative association, and which has been approved by the bureau for the marketing of milk produced by pool producers." FMMO 1 reported that in April 2024, fluid organic Whole Milk utilization totaled 19.53 million pounds, higher than the previous year of 16.597 million pounds. In April 2024, the utilization of fluid organic Reduced Fat milk, 16.147 million pounds, increased from 14.921 million pounds in April 2023. In May 2024 organic Whole Milk utilization was 21.434 million pounds, an increase on May 2023 which was 18.581 million pounds. In May 2024 organic Reduced Fat utilization was 17.512 million pounds, approximately the same as May 2023 which was 17.663 million pounds. In April 2024, there was 135.939 million pounds of milk marketed as Class 1 in FMMO 1 from outside the FMMO 1 marketing area, and in May 2024 there was 135.493 million pounds, approximately 19% of total Class 1 utilization in the Order.

Central Federal Order (FO) 32, Mideast FO 33 and California FO 51 also publish reports of the utilization of organic milk separately by month and year. The Upper Midwest, FO 30 does not report on

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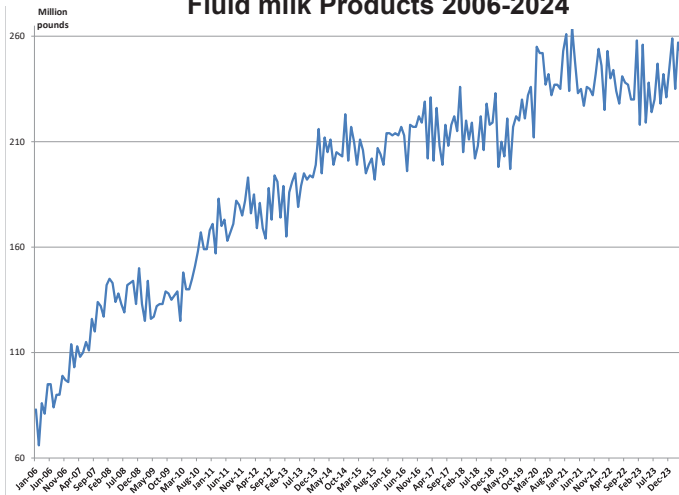
Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	Mar-24	2024 Year to date	Mar-23	Year to date
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	137	392	12.0%	11.1%
Flavored Whole milk	1	2	-34.6%	-12.7%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	81	238	-2.6%	-0.1%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	21	66	-18.9%	-11.0%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	11	34	-22.1%	-15.6%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	5	16	-34.0%	-27.4%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	1	222.0%	80.4%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	119	355	-9.9%	-5.5%
Total Organic Milk Products	257	750	0.5%	2.5%

Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	Apr-24	2024 Year to date	Apr-23	Year to date
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	130	522	18.1%	12.7%
Flavored Whole milk	1	3	110.0%	7.9%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	78	316	13.4%	3.0%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	19	86	-3.5%	-9.4%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	11	46	-13.0%	-15.0%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	10	26	83.3%	-4.9%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	1	-40.5%	36.1%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	119	474	10.7%	-1.9%
Total Organic Milk Products	251	1,001	14.60%	5.3%

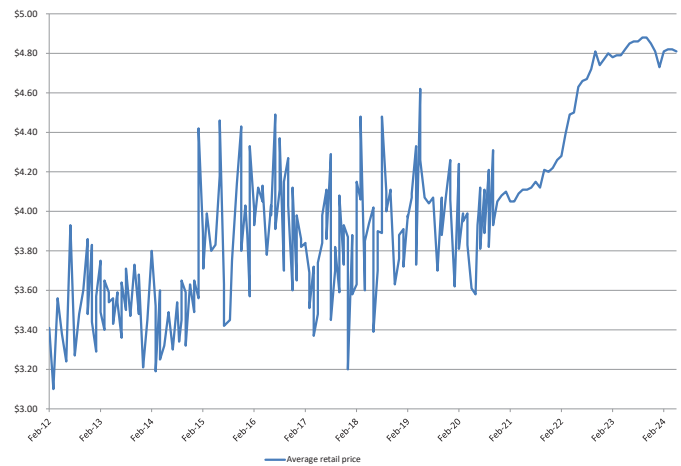
Data may not add due to rounding to the nearest million pounds

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

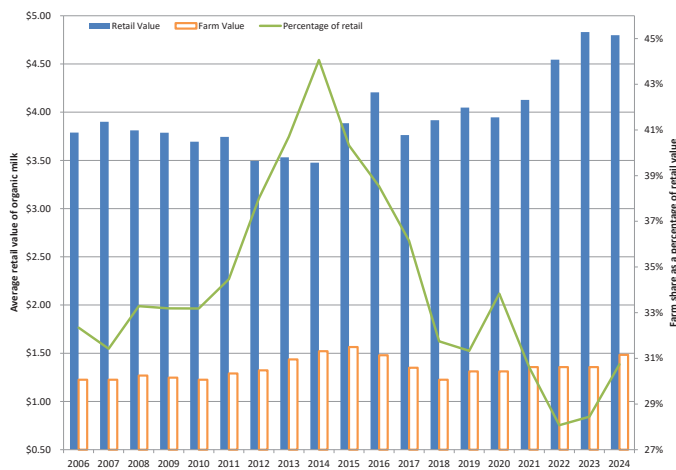
Estimated Total U.S. Sales of Organic Fluid milk Products 2006-2024



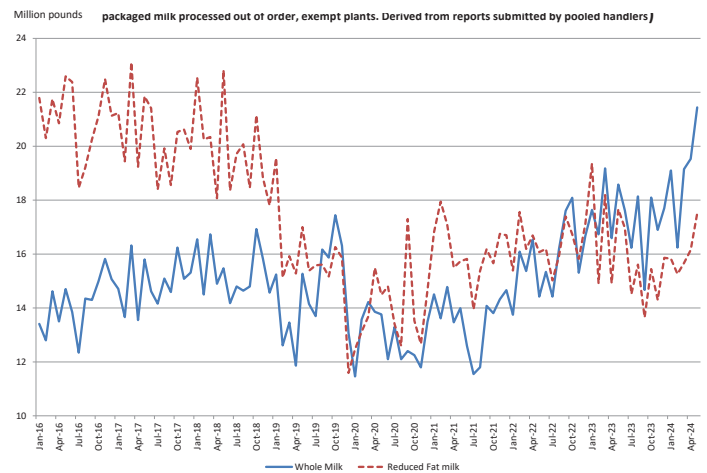
Average Organic Retail price for 1/2 gallons as reported by USDA AMS 2012-2024



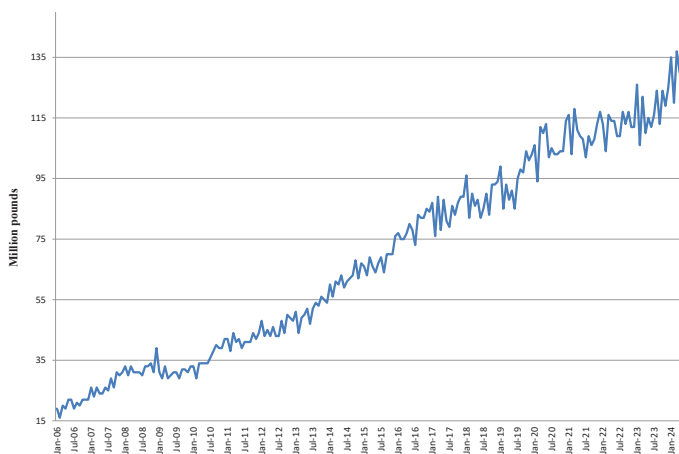
Average retail price, average farm share and percentage for half gallon of organic milk



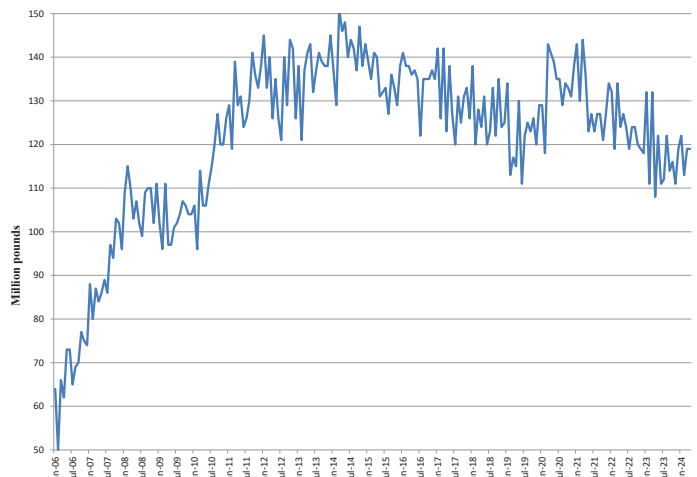
Utilization of Organic Fluid milk in FMMO 1 2016-2024 (not including fluid packaged milk processed out of order, exempt plants. Derived from reports submitted by pooled handlers)



Organic Whole Milk Retail Sales 2006-2024



Organic Reduced-Fat retail sales 2006-2024



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices

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fluid organic milk, I assume because only 5.8% of total utilization of fluid milk is Class1. FO 5, Appalachian, with an average of 70% Class 1 utilization, has organic under “Restricted data due to less than 3 handlers. Data is included in the buttermilk packaged disposition.” FO 32 and FO 51 publish volumes of organic milk sales on routes inside the order and those sold in other orders. With the data currently published by five of the 11 Federal Milk Marketing Orders and the monthly data from the national monthly report, Estimated Fluid Milk Products Sales Report, we know that approximately 57% of fluid package organic milk comes from these five orders. The Southwest Federal Order 126 made up of Texas and New Mexico, which have the largest number of organic cows of any FO (according to 2021 census data), does not separate out their fluid packaging of organic milk from conventional milk in their published reports even though those numbers are reported to AMS to make up the national data. In May the highest volume of organic milk reported as Class 1 was in the Central FO 32, with 51.32 million pounds. Aurora’s two processing plants and 25,000 milking cows are located in this FO. The next highest published report on organic packaged sales is the Northeast FO 1 with 38.95 million pounds followed by California FO with 38.14 million pounds.

The chart below shows a consistent volume of organic packaged milk marketed out of Order FO 32. Sales of packaged organic fluid milk are increasing nationally. Handlers in the Central Federal Milk Marketing Order sold 523 million pounds of organic packaged milk outside of their order in 2023. We can only assume that retail buyers are using that ready-made supply to provide product for any increase in retail sales in their stores.

UTILIZATION OF ORGANIC FLUID MILK PRODUCTS AND CREAM BY POOL PLANTS (Million pounds) in FMMO 1 (Northeast) not including packaged out of order					
Month	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2024	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2023	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2022	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2021	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2020
JANUARY	34.93	37.00	29.14	31.32	23.93
FEBRUARY	31.50	31.65	33.65	31.56	26.69
MARCH	34.82	37.37	31.56	31.87	27.90
APRIL	35.68	31.51	33.23	28.97	29.35
MAY	38.95	36.24	30.49	29.72	28.25
JUNE		34.59	31.53	28.41	26.90
JULY		30.75	29.44	25.50	26.70
AUGUST		33.75	32.12	27.18	24.70
SEPTEMBER		28.32	35.00	30.26	29.70
OCTOBER		33.54	34.83	29.47	25.78
NOVEMBER		31.19	31.13	31.07	24.47
DECEMBER		33.56	33.78	31.36	28.13
ANNUAL		399.47	385.90	356.68	322.50

UTILIZATION OF ORGANIC FLUID MILK PRODUCTS AND CREAM BY POOL PLANTS (Million pounds) in FMMO 32 (Central)									
Month	2024	2024 in order	2024 out of order	2023	2023 in order	2023 out of order	2022	2022 used in order	2022 used out of order
January	56.23	6.41	49.82	55.21	6.51	43.63			
February	51.88	5.77	46.12	49.11	5.49	43.98			
March	53.96	5.93	46.29	52.73	5.59	45.35			
April	54.13	6.04	48.09	49.18	5.64	45.44	51.93	5.54	46.39
May	51.32	5.81	45.51	48.21	5.40	42.78	51.13	5.84	45.29
June				45.20	5.57	39.63	51.58	5.62	45.96
July				48.45	5.70	43.64	49.67	6.04	43.64
August				48.47	5.63	42.85	52.16	6.20	45.96
September				48.75	5.58	43.18	51.04	6.31	44.73
October				49.73	5.48	42.48	52.06	5.86	44.53
November				49.60	5.48	42.48	52.31	5.96	46.35
December				54.17	6.08	48.10	55.94	6.29	49.55
Annual Total				598.81	68.14	523.53			

In recent reports from a NOFA-NY-certified livestock auction in New Berlin, New York, organic cull cows traded, on average, above conventional cows in May and June 2024. The average price for conventional cull cows ranged from a low of \$95/cwt to a high of \$113 /cwt. The average price for organic cull cows ranged from a low of \$105/cwt to a high of \$125/cwt. Organic milking cows were selling well at an average of \$1,386-\$2,700 each in May and June 2024. USDA AMS reports that in a recent report from a Pacific Northwest livestock auction, the top 10 organic cull cows traded higher than conventional cull cows, and the overall average for organic cull cow prices traded higher than the overall average for conventional cull cows in May 2024. The average price for the top 10 organic cows auctioned was \$183.81 per hundredweight, compared to an average price of \$146.37 per hundredweight for auctioned top 10 conventional cows. The average weight for the top 10 conventional cows was 1502.0 pounds compared to 1620.5

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

pounds for the top 10 organic cows. The overall price for organic cows auctioned was \$143.34 per hundredweight with an average weight of 1240.1 pounds, while the overall price for conventional cows auctioned was \$121.28 per hundredweight and had an average weight of 1345.0 pounds.

News on Organic Dairy

CROPP/Organic Valley producers report that they had their regional meetings attended by their CEO Jeff Frank. There were positive reports from the management team that the company had improved their financial position and that debt had been reduced from \$80 million to \$30 million. There was no indication that the pay price would be increased other than the annual increase already published of 50 cents per hundredweight. CROPP announced in their press release that it “has welcomed more than 50 new family farms into its fold in the first four months of 2024, and expects to bring in over 60 more by the end of the year.” Shawna Nelson, Organic Valley’s executive vice president of membership is quoted as saying: “It fills us with excitement to bring these new farms into the fold of our cooperative, where we will join forces to further our cause and our dream of revolutionizing the food system,” said. “Aligned with our roots of nourishing organic food, sustainable family farming and thriving communities, these farms are passionate about contributing to a movement that champions the interest of both farmers and consumers.” The newest farms are from Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, New York, Indiana, Ohio, Missouri, and Iowa. Producers were informed that the cooperative was short on milk.

Vermont published their latest report that the number of organic dairy farms in the state was 118 in the first quarter of 2024 down from 203 in 2016 and 169 in 2020. Organic dairy farms in New England have only one option for selling to a national brand, CROPP Cooperative, with limited interest from buyers for regionally based Lactalis/Stonyfield and Upstate Niagara cooperative.

Maple Hill report that they continue to increase the signing of producers in Pennsylvania and New York with their unique incentive plan as they expand their supply in that region. They are also looking at how to share the cost of trucking more equably to lessen the cost to producers.

National Federal Milk Marketing Order Pricing Formula Hearing, 2023-2024

The USDA AMS issued a Recommended Decision on its website proposing to amend the uniform pricing formulas applicable in all 11 Federal milk marketing orders (FMMOs) on July 1st, 2024. Under the AMS recommendations, the minimum price for Class I milk would return to how it was calculated before the changes in 2018 and be based on the higher of the Class III or Class IV price plus the differential for Class I production. Besides the price of fluid

milk, the AMS amendments would increase the amount of protein in Class III and IV milk; remove 500-pound barrel cheese prices from the formula for the monthly average cheese price; increase the estimated costs to processors for making cheese, butter, nonfat dry milk, and dry whey; and introduce location-specific Class I differentials to reflect current marketing conditions while retaining the base differential of \$1.60 per 100 pounds of milk. This final point is of the most interest to organic dairy as the USDA refused to consider that the marketing of organic milk is different from the conventional market therefore should not have to pay into the Pool which determines the pay price conventional farmers receives. Organic milk buyers and processors use the argument that this payment into the Pool restricts what they can pay producers but there is no evidence that if organic was exempt from Class 1 payments into the Pool that the savings would go directly to producers. Also, CROPP/Organic Valley testimony had a chart that showed the utilization of organic milk within the different FMMO Classes, with only 55% within Class 1 utilization that would have to pay this ‘tax.’ The most interesting analysis of how the FMMO does not relate to the organic market is *PROPOSED FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW SUBMITTED BY MILK INNOVATION GROUP* date 4/1/2024 and submitted under the Post Hearings Briefs at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/moa/dairy/hearings/national-fmmo-pricing-hearing>.

Table 1 Organic & FMMO Total Milk Utilization by Class				
	I	II	III	IV
Organic ¹	55%	20%	15%	10%
FMMO Total ²	27%	9%	54%	10%

Of interest to organic also was the new approach to fluid products packaged by the Extended Shelf Live (ESL) processing which is used for most organic products. For milk packaged using ESL processing, the base Class I skim milk price will be the Class I mover plus an ESL adjustment. The ESL adjustment would be announced simultaneously with the Class I mover - on or before the 23rd of the prior month. The proposed ESL adjustment would be computed from the current month’s average of the advanced Class III and Class IV skim milk pricing factors (AO) plus the higher of the advanced Class III and Class IV skim milk pricing factors (HO) minus the AO for the average of each of the preceding months minus the current month’s HO which will equal the current months Class I Skin milk ESL adjustment. This may be either a positive or negative number. There are examples of how this will work on their website at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/moa/dairy/hearings/national-fmmo-pricing-hearing>.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Update on DMC and ODMAP Programs

There was no Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) Program Tier 1 payment in April and May 2024, with no payment forecast for the rest of the year. The All-Milk price for April 2024 was \$20.50/cwt and \$21.95/cwt in May; corn was at \$4.36/bushel in April and \$4.39/bushel in May; Alfalfa was at \$260/ton in April and \$224/ton in May with soymeal at \$357/ton in April and \$388 in May. The margin in April 2024 was \$10.90 and in May \$10.60.

There are no further updates on any next payment from the Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program (ODMAP) from the funds that were not used from the \$105 million allocated to the program in January 2023. USDA FSA report that they have competing priorities which have delayed the launch of payments in 2024. The formulae that were used in 2023 payments was flawed in assessing marketing costs of the average organic dairy by using conventional data. The hope is to expand payments to organic dairies by increasing the volume of milk on which payments are made to 7 million pounds annually and the dollar amount per hundredweight to more accurately reflect the organic expense of marketing organic milk as a segregated product, especially on trucking fees.

Organic Milk Exports

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) releases monthly export data which includes export volumes and values for organic milk categorized as HS-10 code 0401201000. Recently released data for April 2024 indicated organic milk exports were 136,395 liters (309,720 pounds), up 3.2 percent from the month prior, and up 37.5 percent from 2023. Exports of organic milk from the start of the year through April 2024 are up 12.8 percent, compared to the same period one year ago.

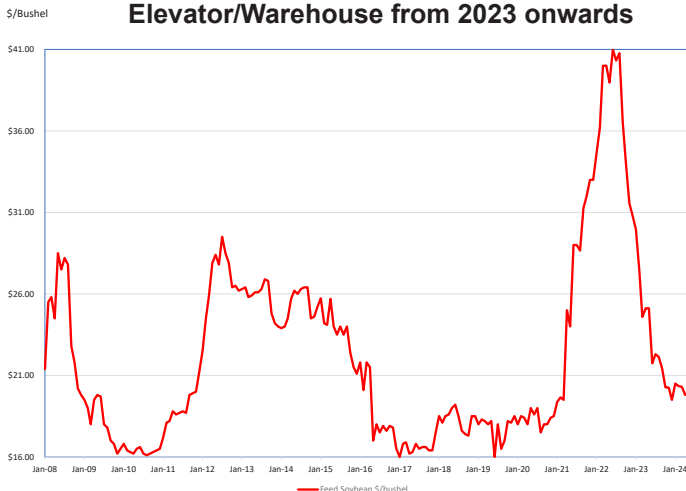
Addition of new pain relief drug for use in organic livestock

The September issue will have an article on the practicalities of when and how to use Meloxicam. There are questions around withdrawal time for both milk and beef if it is allowed for use in mature and lactating livestock when there are several days of treatment to account for the build up of residue in the animal. Another question will be on annotations about how widespread the drug can be used and on what species. The petition submitted is to add the treatment aid/agent Meloxicam to section 205.603 of the NOP's National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (National List). It is currently under NOSB Review.

Feed

National data from USDA and Argus has organic feed corn delivered to the elevator averaging \$8.09 per bushel on the East coast in July 2024, down approximately \$3 /bu. from 12 months prior. Argus reports that some elevator and warehouses are thinking of selling domestic organic corn into the conventional market to create space for new crop because of the declining margin between organic and conventional corn which is now at \$4.40/bushel Organic feed soybean delivered to the elevator averaged \$19.26/bu. in July 2024, down approximately \$3/bu. from 12 months prior. With the expected high volumes of organic soybeans from Argentina, estimated by Argus at 80,000 tons in 2024 (up from 20,000 tons in 2023) due to start arriving in the US in July, the market for organic soy is depressed. Soybean meal is currently trading at \$862/ton, about \$4.13/cwt. lower than 2023 and is in high demand, with the price projected by Argus to increase. These prices take no account for the cost of transport or dealer charges. Costs of organic Alfalfa are about the same as conventional at \$225 per ton but there are limited reports on hay sales of new crop hay. ♦

Organic Feed Soybean \$/bushel 2008-2024
-USDA Market News Data - FOB Farm and FOB Elevator/Warehouse from 2023 onwards



Organic Corn Price \$/bushel 2008-2024 supplied by USDA AMS FOB the Farm and FOB Elevator/Warehouse from 2023 onwards





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24th Annual
NODPA Field Days

Demystifying Succession Planning for Organic Dairy Farms

continued from page 1

Days focuses on demystifying the succession planning process for organic dairy farms.

While there are any number of different webinars, workshops and presentation on farm transfer, none approach the challenge from an organic dairy perspective. A few examples raised by producers are: Should the farm stay organically certified which may have been a priority for the current owners but may not play such a high role for the next generation who see many alternatives in the marketplace that are more financially secure. Organic dairy requires more pasture for grazing as opposed to conventional dairy, and the alternative return on assets, in keeping land in organic dairy, is a lot less than selling some for development or more intensively managed crops that yield more return per acre. The lack of any federal safety net, no transparency in pricing, and the lack of security in individual contracts, plus the loss of organic integrity in the marketplace, may not provide the necessary security required by lenders and family members. Lifestyle may also be an important concern as the next generation may not want a life tied to the farm with possibly limited financial return and room for expansion. None of these problems are insurmountable and there are many ways to come to agreement to meet different expectations. Sometimes assumptions made by either party may be incorrect, BUT the sooner a process can be started to address these and other issues, the more likely there will be good decisions made in anticipation of change rather than as a reaction to it.



**Our meeting will be held at Nichols Volunteer Fire
Department Hall, 106 W. River Rd. Nichols, NY 13812**

At the NODPA Field Days, we will bring together all of the topics, experts, and experiences that will help guide you through a complex process. We will hear from farmers who have successfully and not so successfully, been through the process, from farmers in the midst of it; from those farmers who have moved on and those who are getting started. Regardless where a person or family is in the farm transfer process, everyone admits that it's stressful and stirs up a lot of emotion and feelings. Come to hear how everyone has dealt with it, and share your own experiences, concerns and questions.

According to NODPA Co-President Kirk Arnold, "Farm transitions can be a challenge, whether it's adding a new member to the management team or ownership, transitioning to the next generation, or giving up long held responsibilities. The hope is that learning from what others have done and experienced can help some other farms/farmers with their own farm transitions."

Thursday morning, we will meet at MK Dairy, Owego, NY, a recent generationally transferred farm that is owned and operated by Madeline and Bruce Poole. This young couple, along

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FARM CREDIT EAST

with their three young children, will host the tour and share their experiences of taking over the farm from Madeline's family, implementing new practices that match their farming goals. We then move to the Nichols Volunteer Fire Hall at noon where registration and lunch kick off the start of the educational program.

At one o'clock the educational program begins, showcasing a line-up of experts, including Ted LeBow, Christopher Anderson, Jen Miller and Sarah Flack, who've helped many farm families put transfer plans in motion. Over the course of the two days, they will tell you how to get started, gather the best team to guide you, and set up your farm business for a successful transfer. They will be presenting alongside farmers who have been through the process or are in the midst of it, allowing for very lively discussions.

As the Plain Community continues to grow and seek farmland in the Northeast, Nathan and Alex Weaver share their generational farm transfer within the Plain Community, and George Wright maps out how he has successfully transferred his land to a Plain Community farmer.

Thursday late afternoon features the Social Hour and Trade Show, a time for socializing and visiting the trade show vendors, all of whom are great supporters of both NODPA and the organic dairy community, so plan to spend time with them. Over light refreshments, meet new friends and catch up with old ones. Following the Social Hour, we will enjoy a delicious banquet and have the annual NODPA Annual

continued on page 16

NODPA Field Days Lead Sponsor



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24th Annual NODPA Field Days

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** Trade Show Participants*

^ Product/Food Donations

September 26 & 27, 2024
Nichols Volunteer Fire Department Hall
106 W. River Rd, Nichols, NY 13812

**24th Annual
NODPA Field Days****Demystifying Succession Planning
for Organic Dairy Farms***continued from page 15*

Meeting where we hear from the NODPA Board Co-President and the NODPA Executive Director.

The Thursday evening program, a conversation with a farmer panel and all attendees, will be especially relevant as we hear the stories of those who have been through or are going through a farm transfer. We will hear about creative successful transfers and ones that weren't so successful-all helpful to learn from. Plus, we will hear from farmers about the emotional experience of changing roles and identities as the succession plan occurs. The audience will be encouraged to be active participants in the discussion, adding their stories, too.

Friday morning starts early, at 6:30 am, with continental breakfast followed by the Producer-Only meeting at 7:00 am. This meeting offers producers the opportunity to share their thoughts and concerns in a setting without processors or other industry representatives, and discuss the future goals for NODPA and the future of organic dairy.

At 9:00 am, the educational program continues with Jen Miller's and Sarah Flack's presentation on setting up your farm business for a successful transfer. They discuss financial planning, analysis, and management for generational profitability, sharing lots of practical information.

Sarah Flack facilitates the next session on Succession Planning in the Plain Community, when Nathan and Alex Weaver describe their recent farm transfer, and George Wright shares his experience of selling his farm to a Plain Community farmer, and the unexpected opportunities that have resulted for himself and the community.

The closing session on Friday will be an introduction to Engelbert Farms, the site of the afternoon farm tour. Joe and John Engelbert, who have taken over management of the farm from their parents, Kevin and Lisa Engelbert, will discuss their farm operation and share their generational transfer experiences, including the roles that everyone has assumed over time, for example, Lisa started up and manages their farm store.

The 24th NODPA Field Days come to a close with Friday lunch, final announcements and the door prize drawing, which includes a **\$250.00 gift card to King's AgriSeeds** and a **50# bag of Thorvin Kelp**, and more. Everyone heads over the Engelbert's, a short 7 minute drive away, for the farm tour. ♦



NODPA Field Days Sponsors



24th Annual NODPA Field Days

Take Advantage of the Early Bird Rates!

Are you planning to come to the 24th Annual NODPA Field Days? Would you like to save some money? You can take advantage of the Early Bird rates by registering no later than Saturday, September 14th. If it's more convenient, you can pay when you arrive on-site but we must hear from you by the early bird rate deadline in order to get the money-saving rates. So, please register early! Details and the registration form on this page, plus the NODPA Field Days brochure will be in your mailbox in the next few weeks.

Final Details

Once again, NODPA is keeping the costs of attending Field Days as low as possible, with free registration for all farmers and their families, and a minimal registration fee for non-farmers, and only the cost of meals passed along. We are grateful for our sponsors, supporters, and trade show participants for helping us keep the costs low, and for their ongoing support for NODPA's work. Please be sure to visit all of them at the trade show!

Lodging

There are many options for lodging in or near Nichols, NY. Owego, NY is very close by and offers many more options. Hotels are booking up fast and the rates will rise the closer we get to Field Days, so you are encouraged to make plans now rather than waiting until September. A Google search of your favorite travel site is the best place to start. These days, cancellation policies are pretty flexible, so keep that in mind if you aren't totally sure you will be able to attend. In addition to hotels, inns, camping and RV sites, VRBO (www.vrbo.com) and Airbnb (www.airbnb.com) offer vacation rentals, ranging from single rooms to whole houses. We hope to see you at the 24th Annual NODPA Field Days in Nichols, NY on September 26th and 27th and we hope you will register today! Please contact Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator, if you have questions or to register early. Call 413-772-0444, if you reach the voicemail, please leave a message, or email her at noraowens@comcast.net. ♦



REGISTRATION FORM

The 24th Annual NODPA Field Days
and Producer Meeting and Dinner
September 26th and 27th, 2024

Early Bird
Rates Until
September 14th!

	COST		QTY	TOTAL
	Early	On-Site		
REGISTRATION: Thursday & Friday				
Organic dairy & transitioning dairy producers	FREE			\$0
All who aren't organic dairy producers	\$35	\$50		\$
MEALS: Thursday & Friday				
Thursday lunch for Adults	\$10	\$15		\$
Thursday lunch (under 11)	\$5	\$10		\$
Thursday dinner for Adults	\$25	\$35		\$
Thursday dinner (under 11)	\$12.50	\$15		\$
Transitioning farm member. Thursday evening dinner	Free			\$0
Friday breakfast (7:30-9am)	\$5	\$10		\$
Friday lunch	\$10	\$15		\$
NODPA NEWS SUBSCRIPTION (6 issues)	\$50			\$
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YOU CAN ALSO REGISTER ONLINE AT:

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24th Annual
NODPA Field Days

Schedule

Thursday, September 26, 2024

8:30-11:30 am ***Farm Tour: MK Dairy, 5932 Waite Road, Owego, NY 13827, hosted by Madeline and Bruce Poole.***

Presenters: Ted LeBow, Kitchen Table Consulting, Jen Miller, NOFA-VT Farmer Services Director, and Chris Anderson, Nordic Geo Solutions.

Noon - 1:00 pm **NODPA Field Days Registration and Lunch**
Nichols Volunteer Fire Hall, 106 West River Road, Nichols, NY 13812

4:30 – 5:30 **Trade Show and Social Hour**

1:00 - 1:30 ***The State of the Organic Dairy Industry in the Northeast and the importance of succession planning now.***

Presenter: Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

5:30 – 7:00 **NODPA Annual Meeting and Banquet**

7:00 – 8:30 ***Sharing our Succession Experiences: a facilitated discussion with farmers and families at all stages of the succession process.***

Presenters: Klaas Marten and Zach Pizzenti (invited), Marten Organic Dairy, Penn Yan, NY, Dave Johnson, Provident Farm, Liberty, PA, Henry Perkins, Bison Ridge Farm, Albion, ME and Jacki Perkins, MOFGA Organic Dairy and Livestock Specialist, Unity, ME, and Roman Stoltzfoos, Spring Wood Organic Farm, Kinzers, PA.

1:30 - 2:30 ***Where to Start? The most important questions to be answered to get started, and why this is a critical time to begin.***

Presenter: Ted LeBow, CEO, Kitchen Table Consultants, Bala Cnwyd, PA

8:30 pm **Program ends**

2:30 - 3:30 ***What Does the Succession Planning Structure and Process Look Like?***
Presenters: Christopher Anderson, Nordic Geo Solutions, Southern Tier, NY, Madeline Poole, MK Dairy, LLC, Owego, NY, and Liz Bawden, Bawden Family Farms, Hammond, NY

3:30- 4:30 ***Building Your Team: the nuts and bolts of assembling a team of professionals. Who to include, when and why, and the costs to expect; plus where to look for financial assistance.***

Visit the NODPA Field Days webpage to read more and register today.



NODPA Field Days Supporters



Schedule

Friday, September 27, 2024

- 6:30 – 9:00 am **Continental Breakfast:** Nichols Volunteer Fire Hall
- 7:00 – 9:00 **Producer-only Meeting:** *A meeting in which producers can speak freely about all things related to the organic dairy industry*
- 9:00 – 10:30 **Setting up Your Farm Business for a Successful Transfer:** *financial planning, analysis, and management for generational profitability.*
Presenters: Jen Miller, NOFA-VT Farmer Services Director and Sarah Flack, Sarah Flack Consulting, Northern Vermont
- 10:30 – 11:30 **The Plain Community Succession Planning and Farm Transfer:** *within families and farm transfers from outside the community.*
Presenters: Nathan Weaver, Windhover Farm and Alex Weaver, Grunen Aue Farm, Canastota, NY, George Wright, Wright Dairy, Hermon, NY, and Sarah Flack, facilitator.
- 11:30 – Noon **NODPA Field Days Farm Tour: Engelbert Farms Nichols, NY 13812.** *An introduction to the Engelbert's and their family farm. Joe and John Engelbert*
- Noon – 1:00 pm **Lunch;** door prize drawing, final announcements
- 1:15 **Travel to Engelbert Farms, 182 Sunnyside Road, Nichols, NY 13812**
- 1:30 **Farm Tour: Engelbert Farms, Nichols, NY**

Farm Tours

Thursday, September 26, 2024

**Madeline and Bruce Poole
MK Dairy LLC
5932 Waite Road, Owego, NY 13827**

Madeline, Bruce and their three young children farm MK Dairy in Owego, NY, an organic dairy farm that Madeline's grandparents started in 1943. Since 2017, Madeline and Bruce have been in the process of acquiring the farm from her parents. The generational transfer process has included purchasing, over time, the land from her parents, and by 2026, they will own over 500 acres with 230 additional rented land. Come visit the farm and learn about the complex process of this generational transfer and learn of their farming practices.

Friday, September 27, 2024

**John and Joe Engelbert
Engelbert Farms
182 Sunnyside Road, Nichols, NY 13812**

Engelbert Farms, LLC is a certified organic dairy farm and a true family farm, farming in the same location since 1911. Kevin, Lisa and their sons, Joe and John, all actively work on the farm, with Joe and John managing all aspects of the farm these days, following their successful generational transfer.

The Engelbert's were the first certified organic dairy farm in the United States and have been farming organically since 1981, and have been certified organic since 1984. They joined CROPP Cooperative and started shipping milk to Organic Valley in August 2001. The Engelberts own over 600 acres and rent over 550 additional acres for crops. The Engelberts will be on hand to lead this tour and describe their farming practices and share their generational transfer story.

NODPA Field Days Supporters



**24th Annual
NODPA Field Days**

Speaker Spotlight

TED LEBOW

Ted LeBow is a serial entrepreneur. His first business venture (in 1980) was a farm in Idaho where he bought his first tractor, signed his first loan with the Production Credit Association and started waking up in the middle of the night worrying about the rain ruining his hay crop.

He graduated in 1989 from Cornell University School of Agriculture with a Business Management Degree. He's run eleven small businesses, six of which he owned all or part of. Since 2008, he's grown two small business management consulting firms. As of 2017, JRI Consulting and Kitchen Table Consultants have served over 200 small businesses. Ted is currently focused on building Kitchen Table Consultants (which he co-founded)—a practice that serves sustainable food and farm related companies. He and his team are an Entrepreneur's Best Nightmare. Ted has worked with farm families who are in the midst of succession planning, many of whom admit they couldn't have made the transition without him.



Ted LeBow

CHRISTOPHER ANDERSON

Christopher Anderson is the owner of Nordic GeoSolutions, LLC, and is an Accredited Rural Appraiser with the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers, a New York State Certified General Appraiser, and farm business consultant. He began his agricultural career as a herdsman on a small dairy in the Southern Tier of New York in 1994, worked as a feed salesman in Northeast Pennsylvania from 1995 to 1997, then started with the Farm Credit system. He has been appraising farm, agribusiness, commercial, and industrial properties since 1997, and began working with farm families on tax, estate, and succession issues in 2002. Chris had multiple roles within Farm Credit, including senior appraiser, business consultant, tax specialist, team leader, and loan officer. He also became an FAA-licensed commercial remote pilot for small unmanned aircraft systems (i.e., drones), and worked with geolocated 3D imagery, photogrammetry, aerial photography, and multi-spectral crop analysis. Chris began his own business in 2021, offering appraisal, estate and succession consulting, and geospatial services. In working with farm families on estate, succession, and retirement planning, he believes firmly that the estate and succession planning process can be one of bringing families together. Chris is pursuing his PhD in Geographic Information Science at Texas State University. He lives in Marathon, NY.



Christopher Anderson

JEN MILLER

Jen Miller is the Farm Business Development Program Director at NOFA-Vermont and provides in-depth business and transfer planning services to farmers, supporting them in reaching their financial, production and quality of life goals. Jen also implements the Vermont Organic Dairy Cost of Production project which aggregates financial and labor efficiency benchmark data for organic dairies on an annual basis.



Jen Miller

SARAH FLACK

Sarah is an author, consultant, and speaker specializing in grass-based livestock farming systems. She is passionate about helping farmers find ways to be financially viable while caring for both their land and livestock. She lives on the farm she grew up on in Northern Vermont where she is surrounded by pastures, wetlands, forests, livestock and wildlife.



Sarah Flack

NATHAN AND ALEX WEAVER

Nathan Weaver's and Alex Weaver's farms are located in Madison County, NY. Both farms are producing 100% grassfed organic milk. They milk 40-60 crossbred cows on each farm. Alex and his wife, Rita, have recently purchased the family farm, Grunen Aue Farm, from his parents, Nathan and Kristine, along with the rest of their family still living at home, moved five miles away to start up their new dairy farm, Windhover Farm.



Nathan Weaver

MADELINE POOLE and her husband Bruce are the owner operators of MK Dairy LLC, Owego, NY. They took over the farm from her parents and have been working on a successful transition process for a number of years (MK Dairy was the featured farm in the May, 2024 NODPA News issue.). NODPA Field Days Thursday morning farm tour will take place at MK Dairy.



Madeline Poole and her children

Speaker Spotlight

THURSDAY EVENING PANEL:

- Roman Stoltzfoos, Spring Wood Organic Farm, Kinzers, PA
- Klaas Martens, Lakeview Organic Grain and Zach Pizzenti, Penn Yan, NY
- Henry Perkins, Bison Ridge Farm, Albion, ME and Jacki Perkins, MOFGA Organic Dairy and Livestock Specialist, Unity, ME
- Dave Johnson, Provident Farms, Liberty, PA



Roman Stoltzfoos



Klaas Martens



Henry Perkins



Jacki Perkins



Dave Johnson

LIZ BAWDEN

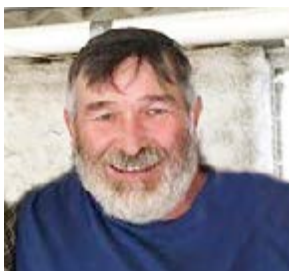
farms with her husband Brian and son and daughter-in-law Nathan and Courtney Bawden at Bawden Family Farms, Hammond, NY. The whole family is in the midst of succession planning.



Liz Bawden

GEORGE WRIGHT

of Wright Dairy, Hermon, NY sold his farm to a Plain Community farmer and has worked with him for a successful transfer.



George Wright

JOE AND JOHN ENGELBERT

Engelbert Farms, Nichols, NY

John and Joe Engelbert have assumed management of the Engelbert Farms from their parents Kevin and Lisa Engelbert. They will share their experiences

of that process, and their farm will be the site of the Friday afternoon NODPA Field Days farm tour.



Joe and John Engelbert

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Effective Succession Planning for Dairy Farms

By Ted LeBow, Co-CEO, and Evan Driscoll, Business Consultant Kitchen Table Consultants

Many of the dairy farms we work with are family businesses. There are two core components to a family business: Family and Business. For many of our clients, the mixing of these two ingredients brings a great richness to their lives, spending many hours in the day together as a family, running and operating their dairy businesses. Sometimes, grandparents, parents, children, and grandchildren will all be actively involved in the daily operations. This dynamic often leads to a key decision point: Are you a **family-first business** or a **business-first family**? These phrases explore the priority setting between focusing on the needs and interests of the family versus the demands and goals of the business, which is a crucial balance to maintain for familial harmony and business success.

The main benefit of running a family business tends to be the family part. That said, it is critical for the business part to be built and managed in a way that allows for longevity and sustainability. It is half of the recipe, after all.

Family-operated dairy businesses experience change, and this change must be actively managed. Family members grow older and want to retire. Some children in the family stay on the farm, while others leave to pursue other interests. Family members move in and out of ownership in the business. Family strife, divorce, and death can create great waves of upheaval.

Being ready for these changes to your dairy business is essential for the family and the business. This is what we call 'succession planning.' It includes preparing financially and operationally, as well as thinking about the emotional and relationship aspects. Good succession planning involves all these areas, and, in some cases, it can take years to get everything aligned properly.

Dairy farm owners need a thorough plan to ensure the succession goes smoothly. This plan should cover fair wealth distribution, fairness, financial matters, family relationships, and whether the next generation is ready to take over. Here, we provide detailed considerations to create a solid succession plan to align with your goals and help your farm thrive and prosper.

Starting with the Basics: Assessing What There Is to Pass On

For dairy farms, the path to a successful succession begins with a clear understanding of the farm's current financial and operational health. This comprehensive view is crucial because it lays the foundation for all subsequent planning steps, ensuring that the transition from one generation to the next is smooth and sustainable.

Detailing Financial Records

At the heart of financial assessments is the balance sheet. This document provides a snapshot of the farm's financial health at any moment. It's important to keep the balance sheet well-maintained because it directly shows the business's value, which is necessary for planning its future or selling it.

The Profit & Loss Statement must also tell a compelling and clear financial story about the farm's profitability. Profits from the business often fuel succession planning, providing the internal financing needed to fund ownership transfers. If there are profitability issues, we will start here and work on fixing this.

Maintaining Clean Financial Records

"Clean financial records" mean books that are accurately reconciled, making sure the P&L statements and balance sheet reflect the farm's real financial performance. This requires setting up a chart of accounts that tells a clear financial story. The books need to be closed consistently every month. These practices make sure the financial information is trustworthy and useful for decision-making.

Consider a dairy farm worth \$1 million, including land, buildings, livestock, and equipment, but losing \$10,000 annually for the last ten years. The financial difficulties are clear. If the next generation wants to take over, they might need external financing to cover the difference between the farm's value and its profits. This could mean getting extra cash or a loan. And, they would be buying a business that—if operated similarly— would continue to lose money every year. If the farm were making money, it could potentially finance itself over time through internal financing.

These financial documents—the balance sheet and clean P&L statements—are essential. They are key to fully understanding the farm's value and its ability to keep running, which are vital for planning a successful transition.

The Conditions for a Smooth Succession Plan

Start Early

Succession planning should ideally begin at least three years before the planned handover date. This gives enough time to address any financial or interpersonal issues that might complicate the transition.

Addressing Financial Challenges

Sometimes, a financial turnaround is necessary. If the farm isn't making money, it's crucial to understand why and take steps to

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become profitable. Look at the specific reasons the farm is not profitable. For dairy farms, key areas often include the size and composition of the herd, herd productivity, and the cost efficacy of feed programs.

To download our FREE Herd Model Template, [click here](#). The worksheet enables you to track key herd metrics and project revenue.

Addressing Interpersonal Dynamics

It's also vital to get ahead of any toxic dynamics within the family. Ensuring that everyone can have productive conversations without hurt feelings is essential for a smooth succession. This may require family counseling to help resolve deep-seated issues and promote a unified approach.

Succession Planning: A Team Effort

Succession planning involves many different people: the current owner (seller), the future owner (buyer), family members, a CPA, attorneys, appraisers, and sometimes a facilitator. Each person has a specific role, like managing taxes or the legal details of the transfer. It's critical to work with professionals who specialize in succession planning.

They can guide the process and help avoid any conflicts or misunderstandings.

Checking Readiness for Transition

Assessing the Readiness of Potential Successors

It's vital to evaluate whether potential successors are ready to take over. This involves setting specific criteria and providing training to ensure they're prepared for farm ownership. Criteria might focus on their understanding of farm operations, management skills, and financial knowledge. Sometimes, the next generation has worked on the farm their whole lives and has a deep understanding of the operations and day-to-day.

However, they might have never touched the financials, applied for a loan, or managed key-buyer relationships. The current owners need to ensure the next generation has adequate training and ongoing support, even after the succession has occurred.

Understanding the Current Owner's Post-Succession Role

Planning for the current owner's future is also crucial. They might consider roles like consulting, taking up hobbies, or community involvement. If they want to continue to be involved with the farm, clearly outline how they will be involved. Will they retain a small percentage of ownership in the long term? Will they serve as long-term staff? What will they be responsible for, and are all parties okay with that? These activities can help them transition smoothly after handing over the farm.

Setting a Clear Deadline for Succession

Establishing a firm deadline for the succession ensures everyone is clear about the timeline. This deadline should be based on the readiness of the current owner and the successors. A defined timeline helps motivate preparation and aligns expectations for a smooth transition.

Practical Steps to Start the Succession Planning Process

Beyond having clear financial records, consider the following to kick off a smooth transition:

Ensuring Fairness in the Succession Plan

Fairness is crucial in succession planning. Sometimes, creative solutions are needed to balance financial equity with the emotional expectations of all involved. This might include structured payment plans or specific roles within the farm to acknowledge each family member's contributions.

"Cleaning the Closet"

Think of sorting the components of a succession plan like "cleaning the closet." This involves organizing and deciding what to keep, what needs attention, and what to let go of, ensuring everything is ready for the next generation.

Trust the Process

Using a checklist can help keep the succession planning process systematic and thorough. This tool ensures all essential steps are completed, nothing is overlooked, and progress is steady toward the set goals.

For dairy farms, succession planning isn't just about maintaining the farm; it's also about respecting a family's legacy and improving the farm's success in the future. Dairy farm owners should begin the planning process with a clear understanding of their goals, the financial and emotional aspects involved, and the steps needed for a smooth changeover. This thorough approach helps protect the farm's future and helps ensure its continued success for generations to come. ♦

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**ENGELBERT
FARMS,
NICHOLS, NY***continued from page 1*

The reasons for this successful passing of the torch? Mutual respect, reality-based financial expectations, and a heartfelt desire for the family's dairy farming tradition to profitably continue into the future were the foundation upon which this transitional plan was built.

"It's family first. We all want to see the farm succeed," John said. "Our parents wanted us to take the farm in the needed direction while we were still young and ambitious."

And that's what Joe and John have been successfully doing since 2010.

Kevin and Lisa were only in their early 50s when they opted to hand the reigns over to their sons. Kevin's father had done the same: turn over farm operations to the next generation so they could build their own business. In the family tradition, the older generation stays on-farm, helping out as needed, and being supported by the farm. Everyone in the family benefits when the farm is successful.

After taking over from his father in 1980, Kevin realized that the chemical fertilizers and crop protectants his father had used, plus a focus on keeping productivity high, was correlated to an increase in health problems in the herd as well as costing a large amount of money in inputs. Kevin experimented with eliminating some of the chemical farming techniques and saw great results. He abruptly stopped using chemicals the next year, and things continued to improve. Eventually, he took the cows out of the barn and put them outside onto rotationally grazed pastures, further enhancing herd health.

**Kevin and Lisa Engelbert****Joe and John Engelbert**

Engelbert Farms is a pioneer in organic dairy farming: they were the first certified organic dairy in the United States. The farm became certified organic in 1984, when there were no established organic dairy standards. They sold their organic milk on the conventional market until 2001. They then joined the CROPP cooperative, and began shipping to Organic Valley, as they do today.

Joe and John worked the farm organically with their parents during their formative years. While all the boys had worked on the farm as teenagers, Joe was the one who always wanted to farm. John was a senior in college in 2010, when his parents

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Inside the Engelbert Farms store



proposed the transition. He realized that he didn't want to sit at a desk all day and returning home to continue the family organic dairy farming business was the right option.

There were no points of contention regarding the transition, John said. They didn't need a mediator. Instead, the family worked solely with an experienced farm planner to assist with paperwork aspects of the transition.

"We get along well as brothers, and we all get along with our parents," John said.

Their parents had added several profit streams to diversify the farm - beef, veal and pork, vegetables, a farm store, a wholesale meat and cheese business, and a grain growing and custom mixing operation- and would continue to be involved in some aspects of the farm during and after the transition. The brothers would immediately begin to manage the cows, while Kevin handled the grains, and Lisa retained operation of the farm store, which sells their own beef, veal and pork as well as local produce, dairy, and other farm products, and which she continues to run today.

Two limited liability corporations (LLCs) were formed - one with Lisa and Kevin as members and one consisting of Joe and John, with Lisa as a silent partner. This arrangement allowed them to more easily transition farm assets from one generation to the next.

Growth and Change

Joe and John were proud of the organic status of the farm, and had no plans to change that. However, they did make some immediate changes to the dairy operation. The first decision the brothers made was to grow the dairy herd. Kevin and Lisa had a 90-100 cow milking head. But Joe and John wanted to have employees at the dairy to free them up from twice per day milking and allow them a better work-life balance with their families. The impetus to growing the dairy herd was the need to economically support hiring farm labor to assist with the milking and daily chores. Today the farm has the equivalent of five full-time non-family employees.

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“We tried to make it work efficiently, so it runs better, and is more profitable,” John said of their decision to expand.

Joe and John can both interchangeably do all aspects of the farm and dairy work. Joe doesn’t do the paperwork, however, and John primarily leaves the growing and harvesting of the crops to Joe. John also has taken over the breeding in the past few years. They have a full-time “fill-in” who can replace either John or Joe, doing whatever needs to be done with the cows or the fields. They also have a mechanic, an employee to assist with daily chores, and several part-time high school students who help as needed.

In order to hire the labor and remain profitable, they had to double the herd size, John said. And doubling the herd size required a bigger parlor.

They built a double eight parlor in 2013. The old parlor was similar in design, but just didn’t have the room they needed for a larger milking herd, and neither did the barn. In 2014, they built a sand-bedded freestall barn for the milking herd and dry cows. They also switched from feeding baleage to using bunk silos and chopping feed. They then added a custom chopping operation, providing this service to neighboring farms.

They began to feed a small amount of grain to the milking herd, year-round. Their parents already had the grain operation, so adding grain to the milking herd’s feed made sense. They wanted to increase productivity and balance the diet precisely, which has also contributed to better reproductive rates, John said. They now use a nutritionist - another change from their parents’ management - to implement precision feeding. The milking herd receives four - five pounds of grain and 10 pounds of snaplage in the summer, with the grain increasing to 10-12 pounds in the non-grazing season.

“The diet is so precise now that if there is too much feed left over, they have less heat,” John said.

Another change was the addition of ear tag monitoring, implementing Select Sires Cow Manager® in 2020. The system is integrated with their Dairy Comp Herd Management



Tractor consolidating feed in the bunk silo

system, allowing them to closely manage cow health and detect heats, increasing reproductive efficiency. With a smaller herd size, Kevin and Lisa were able to be more hands-on with the cows, and able to spend the day with the cows and monitor them up-close. “Joe and I are not avid cow people. We are not herdsman,” John said.

Instead, they rely on alerts sent to their cell phones by the Cow Manager system. If a cow isn’t ruminating, or her temperature is higher than normal, they’ll be alerted by the system and can look more closely at that cow’s statistics, and make a point to observe her and catch any illness as early as possible. The system also detects heat, for better reproductive success. “It’s a great employee, 24/7,” John said.

During the 14 years since taking over the dairy, Joe and John slowly began managing more of the grain operation. Today, they have full control of the decision-making on all aspects of the farm operation, with the exception of the farm store, which

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remains Lisa's domain. The store provides their parents a source of income from the farm, and boosts sales of the farm's meats, benefitting the entire family.

Land and Livestock

The brothers farm 1800 acres of tillable land, both owned and rented. The farthest acreage is about 12 miles from the home farm. They chop 450 acres of hay, taking four cuttings per year. They also make dry hay on 400 acres, taking one cutting per year. Most fields are dedicated hay or pasture, but a few fields are used for both. About 420 acres are in pasture.

They grow 300 acres of corn and about 150 acres of soybeans each year, plus 30 acres of oats. They occasionally will plant sorghum as a rotation crop on land that won't support soybeans. Otherwise, they follow a corn - soy - corn - alfalfa (or clover, depending on soil type) rotation. Their soils are high in organic matter, and they regularly lime and use chicken manure and focus on maintaining a balanced soil pH and optimal fertility.

All the grains fed to the cow are homegrown. They also sell their grains to other farmers in mixed rations. John has found that the row crop operation is very involved, and requires a lot of time and effort to properly manage the fertility.

Liquid manure from the milking herd's freestall barn, along with the liquid portion of manure from the heifer barn, is stored in a concrete tank which has a three or four month capacity. This is then spread on fields as warranted, and is also applied after each cutting of hay. Solid manure from the freestall barn, where the calves and heifers are housed, is spread in the spring

when planting crops. The fields further from the home farm are fertilized with chicken manure, rather than hauling manure from the cows that far down the roadways, and are used to grow alfalfa.

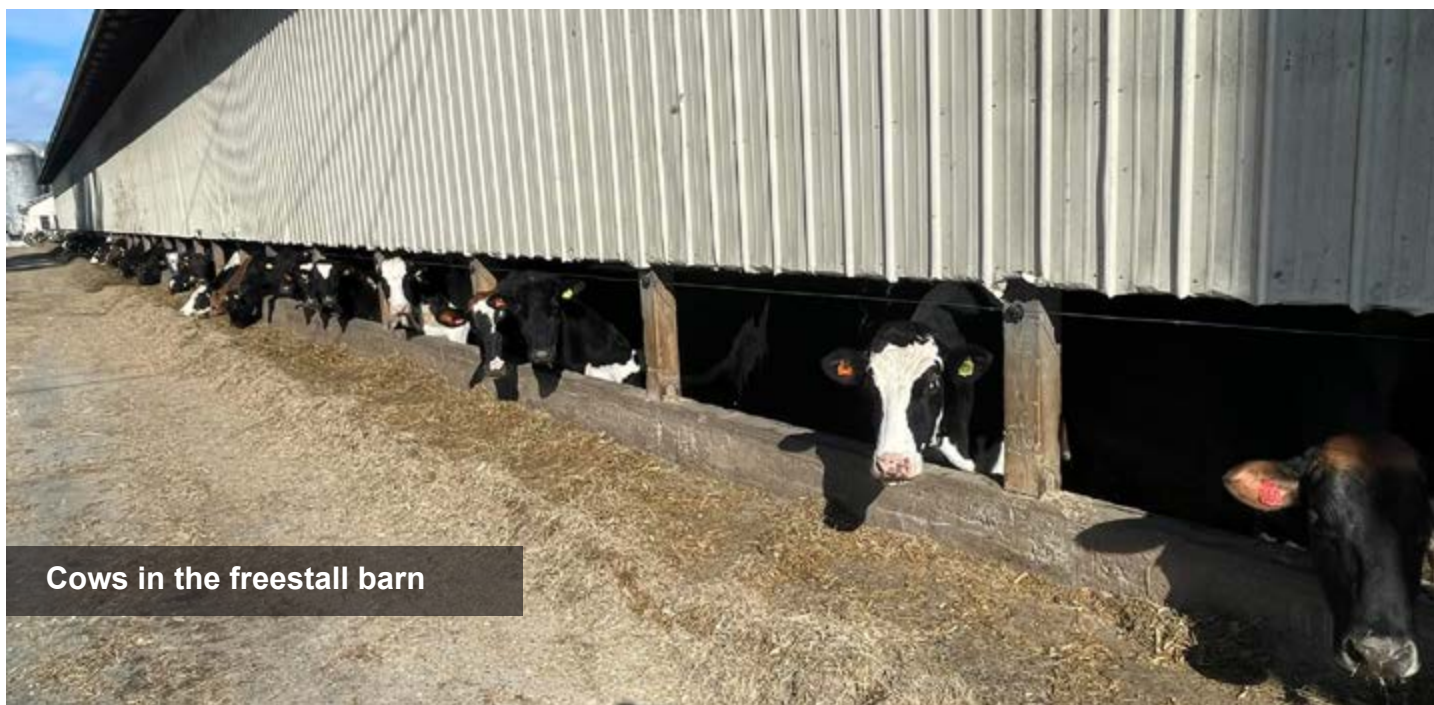
Pastures are primarily native grasses, with no special species being seeded. They trim pastures after every two grazing sessions, "primarily to keep weeds from going to seed," John said. Their weed pressure is low, and they will seed over each paddock every few years. They don't soil test often, but judge what is needed by observing what is growing in the pastures.

The cows are milked twice per day, at 5am and 4:30pm. Following each milking, they go into their freestall barn and receive a total mixed ration. The TMR consists of a custom mix of corn silage, soybeans, snaplage and grain, along with a complete mineral mix, and is adjusted as needed by their nutritionist.

The average somatic cell count is 140,000. Butterfat is about 4.2 percent, while protein is 3.1 percent. Their target for production is 48-55 pounds of milk per cow, per day on average.

After feeding, the cows are let out to graze each evening during the early May until mid-October grazing season. They don't graze during the daytime in the summer heat. The cows are turned out into a fresh one and one-half acre paddock each day. Paddocks are permanently fenced. They don't break down the paddocks any further with temporary fencing. Instead, the cows rotate through a fresh paddock daily, and each paddock is given a 28 -30 day rest

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Cows in the freestall barn

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period before being regrazed. On average, the cows receive 40 percent of their DMI from pasture during the grazing season.

The herd is primarily Holstein genetics, with some Jersey genetics in the mix. John selects for feet and legs, and well as for reproduction. They raise 50 heifers per year, raising all of their own replacement heifers. Heifers are another profit center on the farm. They quickly sell any heifers who don't meet their standards. They also breed some of the heifers to Angus, for their beef operation, raising about 50 head for beef each year. Heifers are pastured 24/7 during the grazing season, receiving all their nutrition from grazing, and are housed in their own freestall barn during the winter.

They typically have 30 or 40 dry cows at a time, which are pastured 24/7 during the grazing season. The dry cows receive

supplementation with dry hay, corn silage and mineral mix while grazing, and are housed in the new freestall barn along with the milking herd.

Calves are raised year-round. They currently are housed in individual pens until weaning at ten weeks of age. To meet Organic Valley's standards, they may need to eliminate individual calf housing in the near future. Calves receive a calf starter grain, some TMR from the milking herd, milk from the bulk tank and some second or third cutting dry hay. They are weaned by cutting down the milk gradually over a seven to ten day period. A 50/50 milk and water mix is fed for four days, then further diluted in half for another four or five days. This reduced the stress on the calves, John said.

Calves will be pastured at six months of age during the grazing season, with some being turned out at three months, primarily to minimize the work load.

A veterinarian is used for dehorning calves and for consultation if anything unusual occurs. Otherwise, the herd is relatively healthy. Scours is the biggest challenge with calves, but they've

Cows on pasture at Engelbert Farms



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begun using organic raw apple cider vinegar with “extremely noticeable” improvement, John said. Calves are vaccinated with Inforce 3® at birth.

Cows are given a multivitamin twice per year, and also receive Presponce® once per year. Mastitis is not really a concern. When it does occur, it usually is related to a stressor, such as heat stress or a ration change.

Insights

The biggest concern John sees for organic dairy farming is the pay price, which hasn’t reflected the increase in inflation during the past three years. They were lucky to expand when organic milk prices were high, and are careful not to take on any further debt when prices are low.

The expansion of the herd - and the parlor and the new barn which the expanded herd required - helped to make the dairy more efficient. That efficiency has helped Engelbert Farms during the price drop.

The diverse profit centers on the farm which their parents established have also helped position the next generation for success. They also raise about three veal calves per year for meat sales at the farm store. The veal are raised on pasture with the

other calves and harvested at three or four months of age. Two dozen pigs are also raised outdoors for meat sales at the store. They have been able to utilize the grain for their own herd, and continue with grain sales to other farms. They now added custom chopping operations for local farms. Heifer sales are another ancillary income stream for the farm.

Taking over the farm from the previous generation doesn’t have to be a struggle. As the Engelberts have demonstrated, putting the needs of the farm first, and having a family in which all individuals look out for each other’s well-being, are the two key components to a smooth generational transfer.

The Engelberts realize how fortunate they are, and hope others are able to find a path to a functional transition of power to the next generation. Their family’s journey remains proof - 14 years after the fact - that farm succession can be successful. ♦

The Engelberts can be reached at the farm: Engelbert Farms Organic, LLC, 182 Sunnyside Road, Nichols NY 13812 Email: engelbertfarmsorganic@gmail.com, Website: www.engelbertfarms.com; Facebook: Engelbert Farms Store and Creamery. To reach Lisa at the farm store: Engelbert Farms Store and Creamery, 263 W River Rd., Nichols NY 13812

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Ask the Vet

Dayna Locitzer, DVM



Dear Ask the Vet readers,

Thank you so much for reading this column! It has been so wonderful to hear your feedback and suggestions. This column is for you, so I hope it continues to serve your needs. This month's column is written by Dr. Alex Schaff, who is a new Associate at Midstate Veterinary Services in Cortland, NY. A couple issues ago, Dr. Elizabeth Martens wrote an article. I am hoping to recruit more veterinarians to contribute to the NODPA newsletter to provide readers with diverse perspectives as well as demonstrate all the veterinarians in the Northeast with knowledge and interest in organic dairy. Do you have a good relationship with your veterinarian? Would they be interested in writing a column about a topic you've discussed at your most recent herd check? Have them reach out to me, daynalocitzer@gmail.com

For now, keep your questions coming!

Cheers, Dayna

Holistic Approaches for Treating Metritis in Cows

By Alex Schaff, DVM, Midstate Veterinary Services, Cortland NY

My dad's a tool guy. For any project, he always has the tools needed and the skills to know how to use them. Beyond the Dewalt and the Black & Decker, my dad also collects tools from a bygone era—hand tools with unique curves and mechanisms for specific jobs that have become obsolete as a result of multipurpose power tools. However, he doesn't just collect these tools, he also has collected knowledge of older ways that often solve issues like no power tool can.

Like my dad, I appreciate tools in my truck and knowledge in my head for my veterinary practice. Similarly, in addition to my regular practice, I also enjoy learning about how cows used to be treated. The other day, a farmer explained to me how right displaced abomasums were often treated with a drench of coffee grounds. As an open-minded practitioner of medicine, I want all the tools and skills to care for cows thoroughly. This means using a combination of modern and traditional medicines to optimize and support cow health, embodying a truly holistic approach.

To guide me, in addition to my close mentors, I highly recommend the research of Dr. Stephen LeBlanc from the University of Guelph, Dr. Hubert Karreman's series of books on Treating Cows Naturally, Dr. Bradford Smith's Large Animal Internal Medicine, and the previous NODPA Ask-A-Vet columns from our very own, Dr. Dayna Locitzer. If only we could have these veterinary legends guiding us as we care for our cows. Opting for second best, I hope to distill their knowledge along with my own to tackle a topic that I encounter often: metritis.

Understanding Metritis

When we talk about metritis, there's a scale of severity of uterine infections. Endometritis, the least severe, is inflammation of the endometrium, the innermost layer of the uterine wall. Metritis is the inflammation of all layers of the uterine wall. Pyometra is the accumulation of pus and stinky discharge in the inside of the uterus, usually following a case of metritis.

Uterine inflammation is exacerbated by bacterial infection, which occurs when bacteria enter the uterus. This can happen at calving, at natural and artificial insemination, reproductive examination, and due to defects in the natural barrier like the vulva, and the cervix. While bacterial contamination is inherent to calving, conditions like dystocia, vaginal tears, stillbirths, retained placentas, cesarean sections, uterine torsions and prolapses, first parity calvings, and summer calvings all increase the risk for metritis.

Why Do Some Cows Get Metritis?

While all cows have uterine contamination after calving, not all get metritis. Why is that? Every disease sits on a triangle between the animal's immune system, the environment, and the causative agent, usually bacteria with metritis. In most cases, bacteria are eliminated naturally during the puerperium, the period after calving when the reproductive tract, primarily the uterus, returns to its nonpregnant state. During this time, uterine defense mechanisms, including white blood cells, and a variety of inflammatory mediators, rush into the uterus to clean out the debris and bacteria. In the case of metritis, the uterine immune system is overwhelmed either due to reduced immune function, high bacterial load in the environment, or the virulence of the bacteria. The primarily causative bacteria are gram-negative anaerobes, specifically *Fusobacterium necrophorum*, *Bacteriodes pyogenes*, and *Prophorymonas levii*, but other suspects include *Trueperella pyogenes*, and coliforms, like *E. coli*.

Economic Impact

According to Stephen LeBlanc of the University of Guelph in Ontario, each case of metritis costs on average \$513. This cost is due to reduced fertility, more days open, increased culling, and milk loss. Uterine diseases affect fertility due to the unique anatomy of the female reproductive tract. The uterine vein and the ovarian artery wrap around each other, causing an exchange of blood between the ovaries and uterus, including bacterial byproducts, noxious gasses, mineral abnormalities,

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and inflammatory mediators raging in the infected uterus. As a result of a uterine infection, the ovary can have poor cyclicity, abnormal corpus luteums, and altered reproductive hormones, leading to issues related to egg maturation and fertilization. This leads to fewer pregnancies and more pregnancy losses.

Detecting Metritis

To minimize the detrimental effects of metritis, early detection is crucial. Focus on cows during the first 3-14 days after calving, particularly those at highest risk: cows with assisted hard calvings, retained placentas, twins, near-term abortions, and premature calvings, especially during the summer. Rumination/health monitoring systems like SCR often help to identify ill cows early. Beyond technological aid, observe them when they come into the parlor or are locked up during feeding. According to LeBlanc, evidence suggests that walking the barn, rather than just observing in the parlor, will help you identify a greater number of clinical cows. Check the smelly cows, especially those with vaginal discharge that is custard-colored to reddish-brown, cloudy, and foul-smelling. Additionally, watch for changes in appetite, milk production, and temperature (normal is 100.4-102.8F). Dr. Guy Jodarski of Organic Valley advises that cows off-feed, feverish, and depressed should receive veterinary attention. If metritis progresses to septicemia, symptoms may include fever, depression, partial to complete anorexia, decreased milk production, laminitis leading to being down, abnormal vaginal discharge, and straining. At this advanced stage, the prognosis worsens, and veterinary intervention becomes less effective. To prevent escalation, have your veterinarian check fresh cows with ultrasound during regular herd checks to detect uterine abnormalities early.

Treatment Strategies

Treating uterine infections early and effectively is essential, as chronic infections are particularly challenging to cure, especially with organic therapeutics. While antibiotics and hormones are the standard treatment on conventional farms, there are many tools that can be utilized across both systems. One primary method is uterine lavage. In its simplest form, warm saline is infused with a sterile stomach tube into an open cervix to remove accumulated fluid, bacterial debris, and pus. This fluid should be allowed to return through the tube, inspected, and repeated until the fluid returning is no longer cloudy, continuing daily until the fluid clears or the cervix closes.

Drs. Locitzer and Jodarski recommend a similar infusion of 50% dextrose, which has proven effective in reducing abnormal discharge and improving reproductive performance after metritis diagnosis. However, this method should not be used for large pyometra cases, as the bacteria will thrive on the sugar.

Administering medications directly to the uterus has sparked debate due to the risk of irritation and inflammation. If this approach is chosen, be aware that adverse reactions may occur, and treatment

should be stopped if they do. Despite this, strong evidence supports the benefits of uterine administrations. Iodine, administered as a 1-gram bolus or as a dilution, is the mainstay of antiseptic use, as recommended by my mentor Dr. Doug Evans and Dr. Bradford Smith. This can be administered daily to every other day as needed early after calving.

Exploring Botanical and Herbal Medicine

The world of botanical and herbal medicine is vast. For those interested in herbal medicine for cows, I recommend the instructions in either Dr. Hubert Karreman's *The Barn Guide to Treating Dairy Cows Naturally* or *Treating Dairy Cows Naturally: Thoughts and Strategies*. These texts describe botanical uterine infusions, as well as oral and intravenous treatments to promote uterine and overall health.

Preventive Measures

Preventing uterine infections starts with minimizing bacterial contamination before and after calving. Keeping the maternity stall clean is crucial. When assisting with calving, ensure that our hands and equipment are as clean as possible, and if possible, clean the vulva with a mild disinfectant to prevent bringing bacteria into the uterus. Use clean OB sleeves and keep chains and hooks in warm water diluted with iodine in a bucket. Interestingly, beef cows rarely have issues due to uncontaminated pastures and unassisted calvings.

Post-calving, maintaining uterine health is essential. Dr. Karreman suggests providing a sterile saline uterine lavage or a botanical infusion of caulophyllum and/or pulsatilla in lukewarm water after calving. Additionally, preparing for calving involves providing a sufficient dry cow diet, which includes a properly balanced calcium and phosphorus ration, and ample vitamin E and selenium to support the cows' health and immune systems. Avoid feeding dry cows high energy diets that lead to obesity, as this can lead to greater metabolic problems, retained placentas, metritis, and displaced abomasums. So monitor your cow's body condition closely.

Conclusion

Just as my dad harnesses the best of old and new tools to tackle any project, we too can blend traditional and modern animal care practices to optimize cow uterine health. By embracing a holistic approach, and using all the available tools including uterine lavages, antiseptics, botanical therapies, and preventative medicine, we can give our organic cows the best fighting chance to join the milking herd. Wishing you all a nice summer from the green rolling hills of Central New York. ♦

Dr. Alex Schaff is a veterinarian on the large animal team at Midstate Veterinary Services in Cortland, NY. He and his colleagues work with dairies, beef operations, horse stables, sheep and goat farms, and homesteads of all sizes throughout Central New York. Born in Upstate New York and trained in Colorado, he is happy to be serving close to home. Dr. Schaff's interests include surgery, emergency work, preventative medicine, holistic herd health, and agroecology. Dr. Schaff can be reached at Midstate Veterinary Services, 806 RT 13, Cortland, NY 13045, (607) 753-3315, info@midstatevet.com

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H5N1 on Dairy Farms: Know it, understand it but don't panic

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director


H5N1 is one of several influenza viruses that cause a highly infectious respiratory disease in birds called avian influenza (or "bird flu"). Since 2022, there have been increasing reports of deadly outbreaks among mammals also caused by influenza A(H5) – including influenza A(H5N1) – viruses. Both land and sea mammals have been affected, including outbreaks in farmed fur animals, seals, sea lions, and detections in other wild and domestic animals such as foxes, bears, otters, raccoons, cats, dogs, cows, goats and others.

Despite the long time that the trifecta of agencies (USDA, FDA, CDC) took to recognize and act on it, bird flu, H5N1, does exist in dairy cows and is transmitted by cows' milk, contact between cows and milking equipment and to humans who work closely with cows. It is present in raw milk from sick cows but currently there are no reports of human sickness from drinking raw milk. Authorities advise consumers not to drink raw milk and have completed rigorous testing on pasteurized milk published on June 28, 2024, including the standard High Temperature Short Time (HTST), that show that the virus is not active once it is

pasteurized. While the research did not cover Extended Shelf Live (ESL) and Ultra-high-temperature (UHT) pasteurization which takes the milk to a higher temperature, the assumption is that if the minimum works in killing the virus, the higher temperature would also. From an organic certification point of view, state and federal spokespeople have repeatedly stated that there is not a greater threat to cows that spend more time on pasture.




Testing Required

Testing of lactating animals that travel within each state is controlled by the state and producers need to contact the state veterinary officer to get advice on which animals need to be tested, especially if traveling to fairs. Common sense biosecurity measures that reflect the risk in your area should be put into place on all dairy farms. There is mandatory testing for interstate movement of lactating dairy cattle. The best advice on what you need to do is from your own vet or, if selling at auction, your local auction, as requirements and implementation vary depending on state regulations and if there are any contaminated




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herds in the state. If you are selling raw milk, you will be at risk of suspicion if there are any positive tests in consumers, so protecting your liability through risk management and biosecurity is essential. Testing your lactating cows would seem to be a good precaution for raw milk sales, especially if any recent purchases have been made or you are situated close to any size of poultry operation. The testing has to be done by a veterinarian. USDA is reimbursing fees for veterinarians to collect samples from April 29, 2024 (the date the Federal Order went into effect), up to \$2,000 per premise and up to \$50 per shipment for 2 shipments per month.

Federal Reimbursement

From July 1, 2024 until January 30, 2025, USDA will reimburse for loss production for infected herds through its updated Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP). Applications will go through USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). To apply, producers need to submit proof of herd infection through a confirmed positive H5N1 test (based on USDA's APHIS H5N1 case definition) on individual animal or bulk tank samples and an application for payment certifying the number of eligible adult dairy cows, the month the cows were removed from production,

and the producer's share in the milk production. The sample collection date for the positive H5N1 test will be the start date for reimbursement. The rate of reimbursement will be calculated by multiplying the days of estimated loss by the average national milk production per head during the month that the dairy producer files for herd infection multiplied by the national average milk price per hundredweight, or all-milk price. Cows are expected to have a 21-day period of no milk production, as the cow is removed from the herd, followed by a 7 day period of the cow producing milk at 50pc of normal production, according to the program. Argus Direct calculated the reimbursement for April 2024 as: "A dairy producer with 100pc share in milk production certifies that 75 eligible cattle were removed from production in April 2024, the producer would receive \$24,809.39 from the program. The expected daily production for April is 73.18 pounds of milk per cow, multiplied by 21 days at full value and 7 days at 50pc value to equal 1,792.91 pounds of milk per cow. That amount is then multiplied by the all-milk price for April at \$0.205 per pound, resulting in a payment rate of \$367.55 per cow. The per cow payment rate is then multiplied by the number of eligible cattle removed, the producer's share in milk

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production, then by 90pc to result in the total payment amount of \$24,809.39." An organically certified producer will not get the organic pay price but will get the higher pounds of milk per cow. Every producer will have to assess the impact of the virus on their herd, the challenge and time spent in dealing with federal reimbursement through FSA at the state level and the resulting effect of state and federal monitoring of an affected herd.

What clinical signs are there from lactating cows?

At the time of writing, the USDA has reported 138 dairy cow herds across 12 US states with confirmed cases of H5N1. These are reported cases, and the assumption is that both clinically and sub-clinically the virus is in many more herds. Four human cases of employees working with lactating cows have been reported with clinical symptoms, only one with any respiratory problems.

The University of Michigan has published an article from a producer who has been affected and a summary of what happened to his farm is below. It began in a barn with two

pens of cattle that had three water fountains, the center one being shared. Initial symptoms were detected with the SmaXtec monitoring boluses that they currently have in about 90% of lactating cows. The onset was manifested by a spike in body temperature of 4 to 5 degrees above normal, followed by a decrease in rumination 6 hours later. The decrease of rumination in infected cows was severe with almost no activity occurring. The temperature elevation lasted about two days, and there was a sharp drop in water intake by infected cows from 40-50 gallons to 5-10 gallons. per day. These conditions resulted in severe dehydration in cows. The farm took an aggressive approach to supportive therapy, administering aspirin boluses twice a day to reduce temperature and inflammation. Additionally, they provided Vitamin B and a rumen yeast capsule for a minimum of three days. For cows that refused to drink, they administered hypertonic saline IV. They tried IV Banamine on a limited number of cows but did not see any positive impact. Their goal was to make the cows as comfortable as possible. They wanted to try to confine the disease to a single group or at least a single barn. They changed their wash cycle in milking so that it washed

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after this group of cows. Regardless of their efforts, H5N1 spread to all groups of lactating cattle on the farm. For the first nine days, milk production per cow only decreased by about 5 lbs. and the farm was optimistic they had beaten back the disease. However, by day 12 each cow was producing 21 lbs. less than average, accompanied by a doubling of somatic cell count to 180,000 c/ml. Cows were dehydrated with sunken eyes. Day 15 was the first day that the monitoring report showed fewer cows affected than the day before. Based on the number of cows with elevated temperatures and subtracting out the normal rate, they believe 40% of the lactating herd was infected. By day 24, the farmer said that some cows—approximately 10% that became infected—have not recovered rumen activity. It is likely that these cows will be culled because they are not regaining weight and health. It appears that there are some individual cows that have a “long” form of the disease. He estimates the cost for this herd of approximately 500 cows at \$30,000 – \$40,000.

The best website for information is: <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/avian/avian-influenza/hpai-detections/livestock> or subscribe to ODAIRY at: <https://nodpa.com/p/57/Signing-Up-For-or-Logging-Into-ODairy>. ♦

Classified Ads

ANIMALS

FOR SALE: Jersey Cow due mid-July. Bred to Holstein. Certified 100% Grassfed Organic. \$2,500. Rob Moore 607-699-7968 cowpoke2@verizon.net

Location: Nichols, NY/Owego NY/Bradford County PA area

FOR SALE: eA2A2 Dairy Cow due early Sept. New Zealand Friesian bred to Holstein. Certified 100% Grassfed Organic, \$3200. Rob Moore 607-699-7968 cowpoke2@verizon.net

FEED/HAY

ORGANIC HAY FOR SALE: 3x3x7 bales of first cutting mixed grass hay. Mostly orchard grass. \$70 a bale. 4x4 net wrapped round bales of first cutting mixed grass. \$55 a bale. All hay is stored under cover, and never rained on. Delivery available. Contact Nathaniel Stephens, 973-459-2691, n.stephens4020@gmail.com.

Location: Sussex, NJ

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Calendar

**Friday, August 9, 2024 – 9:00 am until 8:00 pm and
Saturday, August 10, 2024 – 7:00 am until 4:30 pm**

WISCONSIN SCHOOLS OF MANAGED GRAZING

*Marshfield Agricultural Research Station
208356 Drake Ave N, Stratford, WI 54484,*

September 27th and 28th
at the UW Lancaster Ag Research Station

After more than a decade, the Wisconsin Schools of Grazing, organized by GrassWorks, Inc., University of Wisconsin Lancaster and Marshfield Agricultural Research Stations, UW-Extension, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). These highly anticipated events will take place in two locations but with the same agenda:

These two-day workshops are specifically designed to equip farmers with the practical skills and knowledge necessary for successful managed grazing. As soil health and regenerative agriculture increase in popularity, the program aims to address the increasing need for in-depth, practical education in this field. The workshops are limited to 20 participants each to ensure a focused and interactive learning environment. The registration fee of \$175 includes all sessions, meals, a GrassWorks Grazing Guide, and a Pasture Stick. Early registration is highly recommended due to limited availability. To register or for more information, please visit <https://grassworks.regfox.com/grazing-school>.

Contact: Sarah Ditton, Communications and Education
Coordinator, GrassWorks, Inc., (224) 875-0049
outreach@grassworks.org