NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Member Info

Dairy farmers, Peter and Jeremy Mapstone.

FEATURED FARM: PASTURELAND DAIRY

MANLIUS, NY

Peter and Jeremy Mapstone, partners at Pastureland Dairy

Mapping the Move to Organics

By Tamara Scully, NODPA News Contributing Writer

Pastureland Dairy will be one of two farm tours at the 25th Annual NODPA Field Days, Sep. 25 & 26, 2025

Father and son Peter and Jeremy Mapstone are partners in their Manlius, New York family dairy farm, Pastureland Dairy, which was established in 1944 by Peter's father. In 1987, when Peter came home to the farm, the 60 head herd was a confined dairy herd of large Holsteins.

Peter realized early on that grazing was the key to healthy, productive and profitable

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SAVE the DATE!

25th Annual NODPA Field Days, September 25 & 26, 2025

Pompey Rod and Gun Club, 2035 Swift Road, Pompey, NY 13138

By Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator

Save the Date! Join us on **September 25 & 26, 2025**, for the **25th Annual NODPA Field Days** at the **Pompey Rod and Gun Club**, 2035 Swift Road, Pompey, NY 13138. This milestone event will focus on *"Improving Your Bottom Line in Organic Dairy: Exploring Market Trends, Emerging Technology, Better Nutrition, and Cattle Breeding for Success."* Held in scenic central New York, this year's Field Days will feature engaging farm tours, at Tre G Farms

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Message from NODPA Co-President

Profitability Is About the Grass

Overstocking or under moving? Why is that important? As you start grazing this season, keep in mind the following whys and wherefores to keep profitability growing. Here are a couple of things to remember for your spring grazing start-up.

Remember to make as few cow groups as possible to make it easier to move them, preferably at least twice a day. Moving often will be very helpful when you might be overstocked. If you haven't started grazing yet based on pasture growth, wait as long as you can to start; however, nibbling the grass down to the quick once a year will probably work, especially in the spring. Also, if you give your winter grazing paddocks a longer rest to recover, it will help them rejuvenate. Whenever a paddock is abused, whether accidental or intentional, it needs extra recovery time. Also, remember to start grazing at a different place than you did last year. One of the most important parts of planned grazing is that you plan to start and do a different rotation each year. To understand why we do what we do in adaptive grazing read on.

Keep in mind the six principles of soil health.

1. Context: Grow and raise plants and animals that thrive in your environment.
2. Disturbance. There is no mechanical or chemical disturbance in Nature. Animals only used to disturb your pastures will be the best for them.
3. Armor: Cover and build surface armor. Let plants protect your soil.
4. Enhance diversity. You need diversity of plants, microbes, wildlife, and livestock. Nature never grows monocultures. We shouldn't either.
5. Living Roots: Keep living roots in the soil. Roots feed soil microorganisms which feed our plants.
6. Livestock! Grow healthy animals and soil together. Grazing has been an essential component of all good soils at one time or another.

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Then remember the three rules of adaptive stewardship.

1. Compounding: everything we do on the farm or ranch produces compounding and cascading effects, either positive or negative. Effects or never neutral in nature; the goal is to create positive impact with diversity.

2. Diversity is the second rule of adaptive stewardship. Nature never supports or produces a monoculture. Nature always yields incredible diversity in soil, microbes, microorganisms, plants, and animals. And then the third rule of adaptive stewardship is

3. Disruption. Nature becomes stagnant if we settle into a routine with our management practices. So introduction of periodic planned disruptions in order to keep things moving forward is good.

Remember, you are working with Nature, not against it. Therefore, keep in mind the four ecosystem processes you are working with:

1. Energy flow is one of your most important processes in nature. Energy flow is all about solar energy and photosynthesis. Unlike the water cycle and the mineral cycle, solar energy flows in one direction from the sun to the Earth. This solar energy power is the plant/soil relationships, which is necessary for life itself. As plants die or are eaten, their remnants are recycled back into life again through soil biology contribution to other ecosystem processes. Your plants are 100 times more efficient that artificial solar energy!

2. Water cycle is the next important part of the four ecosystem processes. When rain or snow falls on our land, we are responsible for its fate from that point forward. Will it pond and pool and evaporate or runoff? Will it cause erosion and harmful runoff to others? Can we keep it or do we lose it?

3. Next ecosystem process is the Mineral cycle. The three phases of an effective mineral cycle are, number one, moving minerals from below to above the soil surface; number two, placing those minerals on the soil surface, and number three, moving minerals from above the soil back into the soil. Plant roots and animals are good at this. Grazing forages and browsing animals are an important part of this process. The synergism between plants, soil, and minerals cannot be overestimated.

4. The last one of the four ecosystem processes is diversity. This is sometimes called biological succession. It involves the changes in the development of all living things. There is a fundamental rule of succession that is defined by the statement from the Bruce Ward Legacy Trust, "A species will move in an environment when the conditions are suitable for its establishment and will move out of that environment when conditions become unsuitable for it reproduction."

You may be asking: Should I mow my pasture? My experience shows that it's better not to mow pasture. The weeds are there doing their job. They are part of the diverse ecosystem that comes in part because of our poor or good management whichever way you look at it. Having a larger group of animals, and keeping them moving, will largely mitigate the need for mowing. Remember, a mowed off weed cannot do its job. Weeds are providing biodiversity that your soil needs. Check your decisions against the lists above to keep you on track for growing profitability. My belief is that 100% grazing farms with no grain fed are 20% more profitable on the bottom line on average than conventional organic dairies. Just wanted you to know that these principles are true, whether you believe them or not. Why not put them to work for you? My opinions, well that's another story but I believe they are good. Text me with your opinions and if you have questions at 717-278-1070.

May God bless your efforts to steward the soil with the above principles.

If you ever have a chance to take the 3-day Understanding Ag "Soil Health Academy" seminar you will greatly enhance your farms profitability. There's usually one in New York and one in PA every year. Call 256-996-3142 for info.

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Organic Dairy News: May 2025

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The other day, I was asked how organic dairy producers were doing, and it was a rare privilege to immediately describe that Pay Price from most of the milk buyers was increasing to a level that covers the cost of production plus depreciation, and is close to covering the Total Cost to Produce Milk. With the continuing high price being received for calves and replacement organic cows, and heifers fetching a price reflecting the true cost of rearing them, producers are, hopefully, entering a position that they can recoup some of the losses from the last 7+ years without the assistance of Dairy Margin Coverage. With the competitive market for organic milk, buyers have been increasing Pay Price and producers report that Upstate, Lactalis direct supply, and CROPP coop have all increased Pay Price and other premiums; Horizon is signing contracts at the $40+ mark; and new entrant Origin milk will be closer to $50/cwt but with more certification requirements. Maple Hill laid out their 2025 Pay Price in 2024 and will be increasing it to reflect the promised $45/cwt by the end of the year. For those who have decided to leave organic dairy, now is a good time to do it. For those thinking of transitioning to organic or expanding their organic acreage, buyers are offering financial assistance and some incentives to assist with that process

Currently, there is continuing uncertainty about how various tariffs and evolving trade relationships will impact farm operating costs, particularly equipment repair, construction, and capital investment. There is more information being released about cuts in employees at USDA. The most recent information is that more than 15,000 USDA employees have taken one of the administration's two financial incentive offers to leave the agency, representing about 15% of the its total workforce. At the USDA, 3,877 staff signed contracts in the agency's first Deferred Resignation Program in February and 11,305 signed contracts in the second round in April, for a total of 15,182 resignations, and the numbers could rise over the next month because employees over 40 were given more time to decide whether to leave. Those leaving include 674 county employees of the Farm Service Agency and 2,408 staff of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. In the Marketing and Regulatory Programs area, where the National Organic Program is, 478 employees will be leaving. There is unconfirmed

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information that 20-30% of the NOP staff has elected to take deferred resignation.

FMMO implementation of new standards:

The final rule amending Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) pricing formulas was passed by more than a two-thirds producer vote and will be implemented in all 11 federal orders.

The changes that will be implemented on June 1st 2025 are:

• Returning the base Class I skim milk price formula to the higher of the advance Class III and Class IV prices instead of using the average of the two. For Class I products with a shelf life of at least 65 days, an adjustment equal to the average of mover plus a 24-month rolling average adjuster with a 12-month lag was adopted.

- Updating Class III and Class IV make allowances for cheese (up to $0.2519), dry whey ($0.2668), butter ($0.2272), and nonfat dry milk ($0.2393), plus moving the butterfat recovery factor to 91%.
- Updating Class I differentials with location-specific values.
- Removing 500-pound Cheddar barrel prices from the Dairy Product Mandatory Reporting Program survey.

The skim milk composition factor changes, updating skim milk composition factors to 3.3% protein, 6% other solids, and 9.3% nonfat solids to reflect the industry's higher solids production, will not be implemented until December 1, 2025.

Coalition for Organic Dairy Exemption

The newly formed Coalition for Organic Dairy Exemption, which includes Aurora Organic Dairy, CROPP Cooperative and Horizon Organic, has been organized to launch an administrative appeal to exempt organic milk entirely from the Federal Milk Marketing Orders, arguing that organic milk is a wholly different product. First tried by the Organic Trade Association (OTA) in 2015 and again in the most recent Federal Milk Marketing Order Hearing in 2024, it has been rejected both times by USDA. Exempting organic milk from the FMMO would only affect fluid milk which has been estimated at 60% of the total supply by OTA. Calculating the effect on different brands is difficult as payments will vary by location of the packaging plant and volumes of milk on the conventional market within specific Federal Orders. While exempting fluid organic milk seems simple enough, there are complications for producers in the

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future, from losing the protection of the FMMO and all its data, to whether they will benefit from the savings given to processors and handlers. It will all depend on how the appeal is worded and what conditions are attached. If structured correctly, it could make more brands sustainable. A preferred and more acceptable solution is to increase the volume exempt for all milk from the Federal Orders to assist smaller dairies like Strauss Dairy and encourage the few smaller operations that still exist that directly serve individual and small groups of producers.

Origin Milk

Origin Milk is a new organic milk buyer in the area. Their requirements are USDA Certified Organic and Regenerative Organic certified, 100% Grass Fed to the American Grass Fed Association standards, A2/A2 milk and Animal Welfare Certified. Their 2025 Pay Price is $3.75/lb. times Total Solids plus any Quality Premium. Its quality premiums are based on monthly averages (see above, right):

Origin A2 verification standards:

1. All dairy animals must be A2 tested by an approved A2 testing lab using hair, blood, tissue testing or milk testing for individual animals. No bulk tank testing.

Standard Plate Count	<5,000 = $0.25; <10,00 = $0.10
Somatic Cell Count	< 100,000 = $1.00; 100,00-150,000 = $.75; 150,001-200,000 = $0.5; 200,001-250,000 = $0.25; 250,001-300,000 = $0.10;
Preliminary Incubation Count	<10,000 = $0.25 <20,000 = $0.10
Coliforms (Reference)	<10

2. The farm must maintain a herd list with the results of each animal's A2 genetic testing, verified annually by Origin. Any animal that is not A2 verified will be removed.

A2 Testing Resources:

- Central Star, Michigan, A1/A2(beta-casein): blood, tissue or milk $13.75/sample, turnaround 10 days; Michigan Lab: 517-333-8381
- Local DHIA or Dairy One: milk, $15+/sample turnaround two weeks
- Neogen, Ingenity Milk Proteins: blood, tissue or hair $16/sample + sample card, turnaround 2-4 weeks; Nebraska Location: 402-435-0665

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Can Cows and Solar Panels Coexist?

Fig. 1: The 500-kW solar photovoltaic ground-mounted system for solar shading at the University of Minnesota West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, Minnesota, USA.
Photo courtesy of University of Minnesota

By Bradley J. Heins, Extension Specialist, Dairy Management and Professor, Dairy Management, West Central ROC, University of Minnesota, Sabrina Portner, Extension Educator, University of Minnesota Extension, Kirsten Sharpe, Researcher, University of Minnesota WCROC, Eric Buchanan, Researcher, University of Minnesota WCROC, Mike Reese, Director of Renewable Energy, University of Minnesota WCROC

Solar farms are anticipated to cover 5.7 million acres to meet rising demand for renewable energy. Land available for solar farm development is limiting this expansion. Efforts to increase public acceptance of solar farm development include coupling conservation and agriculture practices. Despite growing interest, there is limited science-based data summarizing the impacts of solar panels on plant and livestock growth and development in the Upper Midwest.

Farmers are increasingly interested in combining agriculture with solar energy production, a practice known as agrivoltaics. This approach allows farmers to use the same land for both farming and generating electricity, which can help make solar farms more acceptable to local communities by providing additional benefits, such as agricultural products or wildlife habitats. For dairy farmers, agrivoltaics offers an exciting opportunity. Traditionally, dairy farming relies heavily on fossil fuels for various tasks, from cooling milk to running tractors. But by installing solar panels on their land, farmers can generate their own electricity, potentially reducing their reliance on fossil fuels and cutting down on energy costs. This could help make dairy operations more sustainable and cost-effective.

There was no research that had investigated the use of a ground-mounted solar system to provide shade for dairy cows and to determine the effects on dairy cows. Therefore, our team wanted to investigate the effects of shade from solar photovoltaic panels on the production, health, and behavior of pastured dairy cows. During the summer of 2024, a 500-kW ground mount solar array was added to the existing pasture for shade for grazing dairy cattle (Figure 1). The Morris dairy operation milks 275 cows twice daily and is representative of a mid-size Minnesota dairy farm.

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Twenty-four crossbred cows were assigned to one of two treatments: shade from solar PV or no shade. The no shade cows did not have access to any shade on pasture. A SmaXtec bolus was placed in the reticulum of the cow and recorded internal body temperature as well as activity and drinking bouts of cows. Daytime ambient elevated temperatures during the study ranged from 27 to 34°C. Furthermore, seven forage species and three mixes of grass and legume species were planted underneath two different solar sites and 1 control site without shade. Forage crops included alfalfa, field peas, meadow fescue, orchard grass, red clover, BMR sorghum-sudan grass, white clover and three meadow fescue, orchard grass, and legume mixes with either alfalfa, red clover, or white clover. The objective was to evaluate forage biomass and nutritive value of crops, grasses and legumes grown under different agrivoltaic conditions.

Respiration rates for shade and no shade cows were similar during the morning hours, but during the afternoon, shade cows had lower respiration rates (66 breaths/min) than no shade cows (78 breaths/min). Milk, fat, and protein production were not different for cows whether they had shade or no shade. Hourly body temperature results show that no shade cows had greater internal body temperatures (+0.6°C) than shade cows from 1pm to 12 midnight. Between milking times (10am to 8pm), the shade cows had lower internal body temperatures than no shade cows. All cows had similar body temperatures during the nighttime hours.

Forages grown under solar panels produced less biomass at the 30kW (564 kg/ha) and 50kW (446 kg/ha) solar sites compared to a control site (1,100 kg/ha). Forage biomass and nutrient values varied based on the solar array design and amount of sun exposure. Although less biomass was produced in the agrivoltaic sites compared to the control, forages were of high quality based on similar or higher crude protein, fiber content and digestibility, and mineral levels of the forages in the 30kW and 50kW sites.

Based on the results of this study, cows may have sacrificed grazing time to stand in the protection of the shade. Future research with our solar panels will investigate the reproductive performance of the cows, and long-term effects on milk, fat, and protein production, body weight, body condition, and animal health and well-being. Our study indicates that agrivoltaics may provide an acceptable method of heat abatement to pastured dairy cows, as well as generating electrical energy for farmers, thus reducing the carbon footprint of the dairy operation. Agrivoltaics in the form of forage production grown underneath ground-mounted photovoltaic systems can provide a suitable feed source for organic livestock production, a renewable energy source for farms and economic opportunity for farmers.

A new agrivoltaics project was started in 2023 at our grazing dairy. The project will provide new frameworks that will develop and model innovative structural designs for a combination solar shade for pastured livestock during the summer and windbreaks/ snow fence for cattle during winter. Economic impacts of the agrivoltaics system and land productivity from solar farms will drive the adoption of solar photovoltaic systems on farms. The study indicated that agrivoltaics may provide an acceptable method of heat abatement to pastured dairy cows, as well as generating electrical energy for farmers, thus reducing the carbon footprint of the dairy operation. Future research with our solar panel will investigate the reproductive performance of the cows, and long-term effects on milk, fat, and protein production, body weight, body condition, and animal health and well-being. Economic impacts of the agrivoltaic system and land productivity from solar farms will drive the adoption of solar photovoltaic systems on farm. The project, funded by Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, will involve evaluating these new strategies to assess results and make recommendations to farmers. Overall, agrivoltaics has the potential to make dairy farming more sustainable, efficient, and profitable, offering farmers new ways to improve their operations. ◆

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The NOSB Spring 2025 Meeting: NODPA Comments and Summary of Recommendations

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

NODPA submitted written comments to the NOSB Board on April 19, 2025, and this writer, Ed Maltby, and Kathie Arnold virtually gave three-minute verbal comments on Tuesday, April 22, 2025, in support of those recommendations.

The NOSB Livestock Committee presented their recommendations to the full NOSB Board on Thursday, May 1, 2025. At the time of writing this article, the transcripts of the meeting are not available, but I did listen to the comments made by the committee and the Board. The NOSB Board did approve the recommended addition to the annotation for continued use of Iodine. The addition is that the material must be produced without the use of nonylphenol ethoxylates (NPE's). The livestock committee did note that the industry does already meet these requirements for their teat dips so there will be no effect on producers. With the list of materials for sunset, the committee did note that they need to address the issue of consistency and use of scientific data in deciding on withdrawal times to meet the requirements of OFPA. Over their next committee meetings, they will discuss whether it is better to have the withdrawal time clearly stated in an annotation or use the wording tied to doubling the conventional federal requirements. NODPA has always supported clear directions in the annotation rather than the producer and certifier having to check the federal requirements themselves. The discussion on Oxytocin was in favor of continued listing but with an annotation restricting the use to emergency situations and severe complications in the immediate postpartum, up to 3 days after giving birth. They also agreed to continue the listing of Flunixin (Banamine) as an essential part of the producer's toolbox for mitigating pain and a necessary tool for animal welfare.

Summary of NODPA's written comments to the NOSB

Proposal: Annotation change -Iodine

NODPA supports the development of an annotation restricting the materials that can be included in iodine used as a sanitizer and for topical medical procedures. NODPA supported the proposal from last fall that proposed to prohibit all alkylphenol ethoxylates (APE's), of which nonylphenol ethoxylates (NPE's) are a subclass. And, the iodine listings should not permit iodophors containing alkylphenols or alkylphenol ethoxylates. They should be annotated "without octylphenol, nonylphenol, dodecylphenol, octylphenol ethoxylate, nonylphenol ethoxylate, or dodecylphenol ethoxylate."

Sunset Recommendations

Oxytocin has been on the National List of approved synthetics since the USDA organic regulations were implemented. Those in favor of relisting, state that this is an important material in the dairy health toolkit to assist animals after giving birth, to ensure high standards of Animal Welfare, and pain management. NODPA pointed out that there are preventative measures, as well as other activities that could be performed post birthing, that make Oxytocin unnecessary in organic livestock production. If an organic dairy operation suffers from repeated occurrences of prolapsed uterus, underlying issues, such as hypoglycemia, need to be addressed. Prolapsed uterus should be a rare occurrence on organic farms, and oxytocin might be needed to treat this rare occurrence. In his book, Alternative Treatments for Ruminant Animals, Dr. Paul Dettloff lays out a non-synthetic alternative using organically approved materials - warm water and Aloe Vera mixture and a tincture to induce the uterus to contract, noting, "They (cows) usually breed back and won't prolapse the next time." While allowed on the National List, this material is prohibited for use by some organic milk buyers so that they can make the "no hormones added claim" for their brand. This is a choice that brands can mandate for producers who supply their organic milk. This is a particular concern raised by some retailers and can affect the marketing of products. In 2017, the NOSB voted to delist this material; however, it was not removed through rulemaking. The current annotation ("use in post parturition therapeutic applications") is not detailed enough and as a result some certifiers allow its use for "milk let down," and for treating prolapsed uterus, while other certifiers do not. To be relisted this material should have an annotation that is clear and universally implemented. The annotation should restrict its use to emergency situations, not for preventative routine use.

The annotations should restrict oxytocin to treat conditions related to labor and to an animal's postpartum survival in emergency situations and severe complications in the immediate postpartum period, up to 3 days after giving birth. It may not be administered to increase an animal's milk production (volume) or for milk letdown.

Flunixin 205.603(a)(12) The main drugs used by producers for treating organic cows with fever or pain was aspirin and flunixin meglumine (Banamine® or generic flunixin), injectable (IV-use only) or Banamine® pour-on. There are also natural alternatives in the form of herbal tinctures or homeopathic remedies that may have some efficacy. Several common materials used to treat dairy cattle such as calcium solutions, lidocaine, propylene glycol, sedative/tranquilizers, etc. have never been approved for use in food animals. Most of these are considered unapproved drugs by FDA and regulatory officials. The process to gain approval for food animal drugs is long and expensive. Companies making these materials often do not seek FDA approval because the cost is too

high. Natural remedies used to treat organic livestock fall into this category. Many of these treatments (considered drugs by FDA) can still be used on an individual case basis if there is no approved option available and the material is of low regulatory concern. Aspirin is no longer allowed under this provision and **cannot** be used by organic dairy producers. The relisting of Flunixin on the National List for approved use on organic dairies is essential for producers to maintain the high levels of Animal Welfare and pain management necessary for good herd health and is required under organic certification, plus other certifications made mandatory by organic dairy buyers and some states. In using the pour-on version, animals should be separated until the liquid dries to prevent other animals from licking the drug immediately after application.

NOSB Process Public Comments

During oral public comments, both the individuals giving comments to the Board and Board members asking questions should be respectful of each other. NODPA is alarmed and displeased that over the last few NOSB meetings in which farmers participated, farmers who have made the effort to make oral comments, have not received the respect they deserve. Some NOSB Board members have been unnecessarily aggressive and contrary in their questioning of farmers; twisting the farmer's testimony to suit their own opinion. This was particularly evident during this last meeting in Portland. For example, a Board member talked over a farmer answering questions, and another farmer was questioned and intimidated to present an opinion that they did not agree with. The input of farmers themselves, rather than by proxy organizations such as their milk buyers, veterinarians or trade organizations, is critical to the integrity of the organic seal, which faces constant competition from other labels that lack the third-party certification process backed by federal enforcement and is supported by the organic community through the NOSB.

At the beginning of oral public comments, the NOSB Chair gives a list of ways that commenters should be respectful in giving comments to the Board. These include not questioning the character or integrity of an individual. NODPA requests that the Board also follow these rules when asking questions of commenters. It is the prerogative of the Board to ask difficult questions about the comments a person makes. However, in the asking, Board members should assume that the person is giving comments because they care about organics and have an opinion that they would like the Board to consider. There have been instances where the line of questioning bordered on questioning the integrity of the person commenting as well as the value of their comments.

The NOSB POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL (Rev. May 2024), Section VIII. E. PUBLIC COMMENT, page 34, states that "Individuals providing public comment shall refrain from making any personal attacks or remarks that might malign the character of any individual, entity, or organization." **NODPA requests that there is a similar requirement for Board members when addressing commenters. Steps need to be taken to ensure that commenters can feel respected and make their comments in a safe environment, free of any concern that they may be subject to toxic questioning.** The NOSB Chair should monitor the tenor of questions and keep the discourse courteous and respectful between the NOSB and commenters.

Technical Reviews

The NOSB had developed an unwritten policy of always asking for an independent Technical Review (TR) of any new material being petitioned for placement on the National List. This was ignored at the Fall 2024 meeting, with a proposal on Meloxicam and prevented a transparent and independent process that the NOSB historically has followed. A TR is needed for several reasons:

- TR provides an easily accessible review of how a material complies with OFPA criteria in a publicly accessible format into the future. TRs are posted on the USDA website and can easily be located. Reviews that occur in NOSB write-ups are more difficult to locate since it must be known at what meeting the discussion occurred. Reviews discussed in subcommittee calls are not accessible to the public at all.
- TRs are an independent, third party review following the TR template. If they are incomplete, they are rejected by the NOSB. The third-party review is critical since access to the literature database requires some expertise and search skills. Issues that might not be mentioned in a petition have often been discussed in a TR and the Board has altered or cemented decisions based on the findings of the TRs. While individual Board members might have expertise on a particular material, the independent TR gives all Board members access to the same information and provides a forum for Board discussion.

We understand that TRs take time, but an automatic request for a TR as soon as a petition is accepted should not unduly delay the NOSB deliberations on a material. ◆

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Modernizing Your Organic Dairy Record-Keeping: A Smarter Approach

Save time, reduce stress, and simplify your organic record-keeping

By Lauren Siver, US Dairy Herd Management Software Sales & Support Specialist, UNIFORM-Agri

As an organic dairy farmer, you know that keeping accurate records isn't just about staying organized—it's a vital part of managing your farm, maintaining organic certification, and running an efficient operation. From tracking herd health and grazing schedules to ensuring compliance with organic standards, record-keeping can feel like a never-ending task.

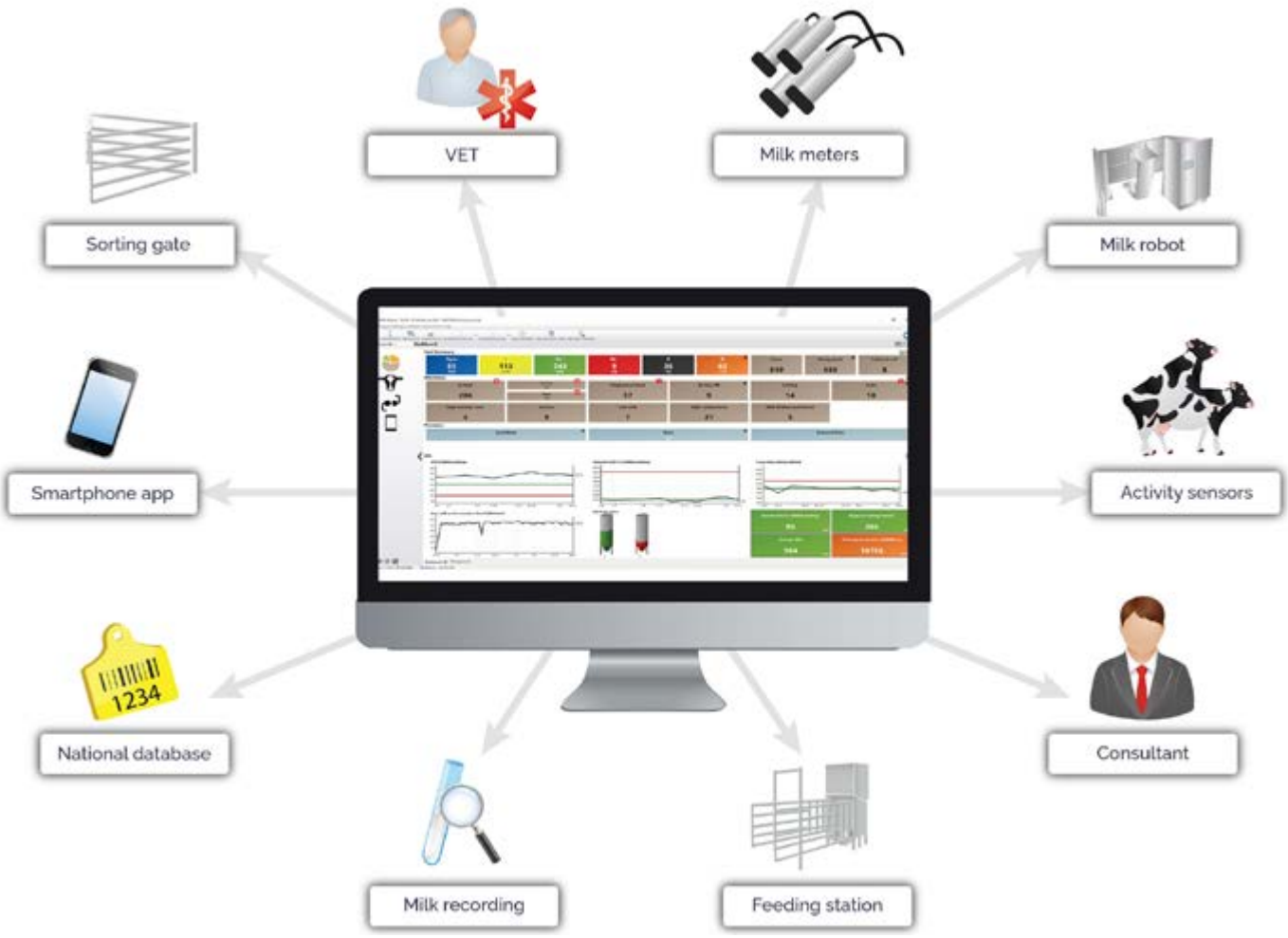
The Challenges of Record-Keeping in Organic Dairy Farming

Unlike conventional operations, organic dairy farms face additional documentation requirements for animal health, pasture access, feed sources, and treatments. Certification audits demand detailed records, and when paperwork piles up, it can take valuable time away from your daily farm work.

Do these challenges sound familiar?

- Keeping up with herd health tracking – Managing treatments, breeding cycles, and herd performance while ensuring compliance with organic rules and regulations.
- Documenting grazing, feeding & pasture management – Recording grazing schedules, rotation patterns, ration changes and pasture rest periods.
- Preparing for certification audits – Scrambling to pull together records when it's time for inspection.

Many farmers still rely on handwritten notes or spreadsheets, but there's a better way to simplify record-keeping and free up your time.



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

How Digital Tools Can Make Your Life Easier

More and more organic dairy farmers are turning to herd management software to streamline their record-keeping. Digital tools can help you:

- Keep all herd records in one place, accessible anytime.
- Automate reports to make certification audits less stressful.
- Reduce duplicate data entry by integrating with other farm tools.
- Set up reminders and alerts to track health treatments and pasture rotation.

Some systems, like UNIFORM, even offer offline, mobile, and online options, so you can update records in the barn, on the go, or at your desk. Having a structured system in place means less paperwork, fewer errors, and better decision-making for your farm.

What's Next for Digital Tools in Organic Dairy?

One area of development is grazing management tracking within herd management software. While some tools exist, they're still evolving—and input from farmers like you is crucial in shaping these solutions. What would make grazing record-keeping easier for your farm? How could digital tools better support your daily workflow?

UNIFORM-Agri is actively seeking feedback from organic dairy farmers to develop better tools for organic herd management and grazing management. If you're interested in contributing, this could be a great opportunity to have your voice heard and help shape future solutions.

Join the Conversation: Webinar on May 22

If you're curious about how digital record-keeping can help you save time and simplify your record keeping, join us for a **free webinar on May 22**. We'll discuss:

- How to streamline herd records with digital tools
- Tips for making certification prep easier
- The future of grazing management tools—and how you can help shape them

Whether you're new to digital record-keeping or looking for ways to optimize your current system, this discussion is for you. Bring your questions, share your experiences, and be part of the conversation!

Modernizing your record-keeping can save time, reduce paperwork, and let you focus on what truly matters—your herd, your farm, and your future.

Sign up for the webinar today to learn how digital tools can help make organic record-keeping easier!

To register, scan this QR code on your mobile device or go to https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/821698471154003808

For more information, contact:

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Ask the Vet

Dr. Micaela LoConte, DVM

What is the best milking preparation routine for my cows?

Each farm will have its own preferences for a specific milking preparation routine, but all of them should include these four basic steps: Strip, Dip, Wipe and Attach. Let's outline some important aspects of each step and things to keep in mind when trying to come up with your own combination.

Strip

This step is important for two main reasons; providing adequate stimulation to improve milk let down for the cow and detecting abnormal milk (mastitis). Each teat should be stripped out 3-4 times for a total of around 10-20 seconds per cow. As soon as stimulation is applied (especially to the teat end) oxytocin is released and travels to the hypothalamus to tell the cow to let down her milk. If cows are not properly stimulated, or are stressed during preparation, this will inhibit the let-down of milk and cause bimodal milk flow. Bimodal milk flow is a high milk flow rate followed by a low or no milk flow within the first two minutes of milking. This is a result of the reserve of milk in the cistern coming out quickly, but the mammary gland itself has not started secreting enough milk to continue the high flow rate. If this is a recurring issue, you can see negative changes in teat end health including rough teat ends (hyperkeratosis), and hardness at the end of teats (edema).

The second reason to strip out each quarter at milking is to detect mild to moderate cases of mastitis. Abnormal milk may have clots, flakes or be an abnormal color. If you are milking in a tie stall barn, strip cups can make identifying mastitic milk easier and will reduce the amount of contamination of milk onto the beds. Once abnormal milk is identified, an aseptic sample should be taken and cultured to identify what is causing it.

Dip

The next important step in milking preparation is the use of a pre-dip to disinfect teats. Teat dip is most effective when teats are clean and not covered in organic matter, so they may need to be wiped off before applying your pre-dip of choice. The dip should cover the entire barrel of the teat but is not necessary up on the udder.

To evaluate the coverage of teat dip you can do the "paper towel test". After the dip is applied, wrap a paper towel around the teat. There should be a singular blot of dip on the paper towel. Any spotty areas indicate where teat dip is missing. Whichever dip you decide to use, it should remain on the teats for a minimum of 30 seconds for sufficient kill-time. Dip cups should be monitored for cleanliness during milking and thoroughly cleaned between milking shifts.

Wipe

Teats should always be cleaned either with a single use paper towel or individual cloth towels. Using towels on multiple animals can increase the chances of spreading contagious pathogens from cow to cow. The entire teat barrel should be wiped clean of all disinfectants before applying the milking cluster.

Careful consideration should also be taken when wiping teats to include the teat end. Any organic material left can potentially be sucked into the teat canal during milking. When performing milking evaluations, I routinely test teat end cleanliness by taking an alcohol-soaked gauze pad and wiping the end of the teat after the milking technician has performed the wipe step. It is amazing how much dirt can become trapped if special attention is not paid specifically to the teat end!

A study performed at Cornell University in 2020 showed that the wipe step alone is not sufficient to provide adequate stimulation for appropriate milk let down (Wieland et. al. 2020). Cows that were prepped without a strip step had longer unit on-times, lower 2-minute milk yields, and more time spent in low flow. Cows will milk better and be happier at milking with proper stimulation!

Attach

The timing of attachment of the milking cluster is critical to successful milk harvest and optimal let down. As a rule, the milking cluster should be attached at least 90-120 seconds after initial stimulation (the strip step). This gives enough time for the milk ejection reflex between the cow's brain and udder to properly activate. If the cow is not properly prepared for the unit to be attached, teats will be subject to high vacuum and low milk flow, which can cause the hyperkeratosis mentioned previously. Cows with poor teat condition are at a higher risk of intramammary infections and higher SCCs. The next time you prepare your cows for milking, get out your watch and see if you are meeting this requirement or not!

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Unit on time is the last component of milking that you should pay attention to. Appropriate time from unit attachment to detachment should be less than 5 minutes at each milking. If cows are properly stimulated, and in a comfortable environment this can easily be achieved. There are always some cows that are an exception to the rule, but on average this should be the goal. Overmilking time, or time in low flow towards the end of milking, should be kept at less than one minute per day per cow (30 seconds/milking for 2X herds or 20 seconds/milking for 3X herds). This will minimize the amount of teat end damage and keep cows from becoming uncomfortable during milking.

Timing plays a crucial role in developing the proper milking preparation routine for your cows. Keep in mind the recommendations listed above when determining what is best for you and your farm! Cows thrive on routine so once established, it should be carefully followed at each milking to keep cows happy and healthy, and to maintain the highest milk quality standards. If you would like to learn more or are interested in having your milking routine evaluated, I encourage you to reach out to your local veterinarian or milk quality specialist! ◆

Dr. Micaela LoConte is a large animal veterinarian in the Finger Lakes region of NY at Keseca Veterinary Clinic. The practice services dairy farms of all sizes as well as beef farms. Dr. Micaela's interests include milk quality, calf care, reproductive management and employee training. She can be reached at Keseca Veterinary Clinic PO Box 267 Geneva, NY 14456, 315-781-1378, mlocontee&@kesecavet.com

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. Micaela LoConte, who is an Associate at Keseca Veterinary Clinic in Geneva, NY. This is part of an ongoing effort to recruit more veterinarians to contribute to the NODPA newsletter. This provides readers with diverse perspectives as well as demonstrates 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!

Do you have a question for Dr. Locitzer, or an area you'd like her to focus on in future issue? Please send them to the NODPA News editor, noraowens@comcast.net who will share them with her.

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What is Virtual Fencing?

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The cattle at Snug Valley Farm in East Hardwick, VT graze within the Nofence boundary.
Photo courtesy of Ben Nottermann and VT Digger.

Virtual Fencing is a technology used to create invisible boundaries for managing livestock without physical fences. The technology uses GPS, wireless communication, and software to control and monitor animal movements within a designated area.

Advances in GPS, wireless communication, and animal behavior understanding have now allowed for the precise control of livestock movements without physical barriers. Animals are fitted with a GPS collar that tracks their location and provides cues like sounds or mild stimuli when they get close to the limits set by the farmers via an app on their phones.

There are four VF vendors available in the US: eShepherd/ Gallagher, Halter, Nofence, and Vence from Merck Animal Health. All the companies operate programs for different livestock, mostly beef, sheep and goats on ranches. Halter is the only one with the software, collar design and experience of working with herds in New Zealand and Australia that is moving forward with a virtual fence for dairy. Dairy farms in New Zealand are seeing the benefits of the solar powered collar that use base stations rather than a cellular network which is quite variable in rural US. One farmer estimates saving 1000 hours of travel a year by reducing time spent on motorbikes to move the herd. Halter dairy systems are **NOT** currently available in the US, but they anticipate expanding into this sector by the end of 2025 into 2026. Halter is currently looking at what other features can be included to assist with herd health and management.

How does virtual fencing work?

All the available virtual fencing options allow a cattle producer to define the boundaries of the virtual paddock/pasture through software on a computer or smart device provided by the company. It is advised that the farm should have a conventional boundary fence. Virtual fencing uses GPS technology and smart collars to manage livestock without physical barriers. Each animal wears a collar equipped with GPS and sometimes other sensors. These collars communicate with a central system that defines virtual boundaries on a digital map.

When an animal approaches or crosses the boundary, the collar emits a series of cues. Initially, these are typically audio signals, like beeps, to alert the animal.

What are the benefits and challenges of virtual fencing?

The challenges for using Virtual Fencing with dairy are around price, adapting to new technology, training cows and heifers, location, damages to the collar from feeding in bunks and stanchions, reawakening the collars after winter housing while still having to deal with shade and water access.

The advantages are not limited to the elimination of time consuming setup and maintenance of physical fences; virtual fencing can also offer producers additional benefits for livestock management:

- **Flexibility**

  Unlike traditional static fences, virtual fences offer farmers flexibility. Through software platforms, farmers can quickly and easily adjust grazing areas, respond to changing conditions, and manage land more effectively.

- **Improved herd health management:** Run smaller groups, customize feeding based on calving date or body condition, and track individual & group rumination levels to monitor and support every animal lactation and breeding, for example:

  1. Daily cows on heat
  2. Days to first heat
  3. Cycling & submission rate
  4. Weekly non-return rate
  5. 6-week in-calf rate and not-in-calf rate

- **Potential cost-savings**

  Virtual fencing eliminates the need for expensive materials and labour associated with physical fences, reducing long-term operational costs. In 2023, New Zealand based company Halter set up virtual fencing for cattle in Tasmania for $8.50 per month, per cow. Virtual fencing can be viable, but farmers need to consider size of operation and other operational needs to determine if it is economically beneficial.

- **Improved Environmental Outcomes**

  Virtual fencing can prevent overgrazing, ensuring the sustained health of natural vegetation and soil, as well as wildlife habitat preservation, as it removes the need for land clearing to make way for fences. Virtual fencing is also seen as a valuable tool for farmers as they adjust livestock management in response to unpredictable shifts in climate conditions.

Tucker Brown, R.A. Brown Ranch, in Throckmorton, Texas, started using virtual fencing out of necessity after wildfire destroyed fencing on their ranch in 2023. "This virtual fence allows us to be more efficient with the land that we have," Brown says. They will continue to utilize it across their ranch to better manage rangeland (Virtual Fencing Pinpoints Location of Cattle Grazing, Virtual Fencing: A Rancher's New Best Friend, *Progressive Farming*, 3/31/2025.)

The *VTDigger* reported that Ben Nottermann, co-owner of Snug Valley Farm, East Hardwick, VT, tested the technology in 2023 and took part in the full pilot program run by the Agritech Institute for Small Farms in 2024. He says that he saves at least 45 minutes a day by moving fence lines on the Nofence app instead of physically changing the posts along his cattle's path.

Comparison between different Virtual fence systems

Virtual Fence Vendors
Basic Comparison (March 2025)

	VF software	Type of base station	Collar battery	Herd size	Pasture size	Up front cost	Yearly cost
eShepherd from GALLAGHER	Gallagher from computer or app	Multiple base stations *OR* Cellular network	Solar charged 7-10 years[1]	No max >4 animals	Min ~45ft X 45ft No max	$250-350/animal[2] $5,000-6,000/base station (if necessary)	*Base station:* $18/neckband *Cellular:* $24/neckband
Halter	Mobile app and desktop (*view mode only for desktop*)	Multiple base stations	Solar charged 5 years[1]	No max >50 animals	Min ~32 ft²/animal No max	$4,500/base station	$66/collar
Nofence	Nofence-app from computer or mobile	Cellular network	Solar charged 5-10 years[1]	5-200 animals	Min 1/2 ac Up to ~10,000 ac	$289/cow $199/sheep-goat	*<50 animals:* $56 $52/collar[2] *≥50 animals:* $42 $36/collar[2]
VENCE Merck Animal Health	HerdManager from computer	Multiple base stations	Replaceable one-time use 6-9 months[1]	No max	Min <200 ac No max	*Vence installation:* $12,500/station *Self installation:* $10,000/station	$40/collar + $10/replacement battery/collar[3]

[1] According to vendor [2] Variable pricing between years and herd size [3] Requires ≥2 batteries/year/animal for year-round use

Virtual fence components from different manufacturers are generally not interoperable or interchangeable. Specific components, GIS data needs, software protocol, software training, frequency and duration of the cues, GPS error, livestock collaring, and livestock training protocols may vary depending on the manufacturer. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations and guidelines. Contact the manufacturer for more information on pricing and availability. The University of Arizona does not endorse a specific product.

Questions? Contact Flavie Audoin (faudoin@arizona.edu)

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When that time is added up over about 200 days of the grazing season, he said, the virtual fence "pay(s) for itself" in labor cost savings. Nottermann said the technology is helpful in emergency situations, too. When historic rainfall struck the state last July, he said he was separated from his herd for five days due to flooding. He said the Nofence app was a "lifesaver" because he could move the fence perimeter away from flooded areas and track each cow to make sure they were safe — all while keeping himself out of harm's way.

The cost and equipment needed is outlined above, and below is the cost as explained by the companies in an article by Jennifer Carrico (jennifer.carrico@dtn.com) of Progressive Dairying, published 3/31/2025. Cost will vary depending on size and location. The cost and maintenance of the equipment is currently estimated to be economical for herds of upward of 100 cows and more.

Gallagher eShepherd: This company offers price breaks based on the number of cattle. For example, a rancher who wants 350 neckbands will pay $250 per neckband, remembering that it's a long-lived product with a three-year warranty.

Halter: Each ranch is unique, and Halter will assess each ranch's needs, opportunities and challenges to help ranchers understand the value of implementing the system. Halter's pricing includes a one-time infrastructure investment starting at $4,500 for the base tower (occasionally two will be needed in challenging terrain), with an annual fee per collar. Halter expects dairy solar-powered collars to be less than $100 per head.. This includes 24/7 support without ongoing battery costs and time-consuming replacements.

Nofence: Pricing for the Nofence subscriptions is based on the number of collars purchased. Actual complete cow collars are $329 each, small collars for goats and sheep are $229 each. These come with a five-year warranty covering any faults that impact the normal use. For the first 12 months, the subscription is $56 per collar with 49 collars or less and $42 per collar for 50 collars or more. Each month after the first year is $6.50 per collar in use per month for 49 collars or less and $4.50 per collar in use per month for 50 collars or more. The subscription price is in addition to the collar cost. Other equipment is available from the company.

Vence: Each base station costs around $10,000. Each collar is sold on a subscription basis of $40 per year, which covers the collar, software and technical support. The battery for each collar is $10.

Anyone interested in the Virtual Fence systems should go to the respective company website and the team will reach out to have a personal conversation about each farm's unique needs and cost. In the past, there have been opportunities for cost-share and grant opportunities to support producers adopting new technology. We hope to have some representatives from the companies at the NODPA Field Days on September 25th and 26th, 2025 in Pompey, NY. ◆

1. Table 4. *Estimated Net Cost per Cow Under Baseline Assumptions, Year 1 & 2, by Vendor & Herd Size* (Economics of Virtual Fencing Technology in Arizona by University of Arizona, published January 2025)

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1. The economic fundamentals of virtual fencing compared to traditional fencing (Society for Range Management by Dana L. Hoag , Ryan Reuter , Daniel F. Mooney , Jeff Vitale , John Ritten ,Nathan DeLay , Paul H. Evangelista , and Anthony Vorster).
2. Virtual fencing systems: balancing production and welfare outcomes by Tony Waterhouse, Emeritus Fellow, SRUC, Hill and Mountain Research Centre, Kirkton, Perthshire, Scotland. Email: tony.waterhouse@sruc.ac.uk. Published 2023
3. Economics of Virtual Fencing Technology in Arizona by University of Arizona, published January 2025
4. Virtual Fencing Pinpoints Location of Cattle Grazing: Virtual Fencing: A Rancher's New Best Friend by Progressive Dairying, 3/31/2025
5. Agritech Institute for Small Farms based in VT had a pilot program in 2024 with Nofence
6. Managing dairy cows with Halter virtual-fencing technology by Author: Megan Verdon Tasmania Institute of Agriculture, University of Tasmania - utas.edu.au/tia

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Save the Date - Field Days 2025

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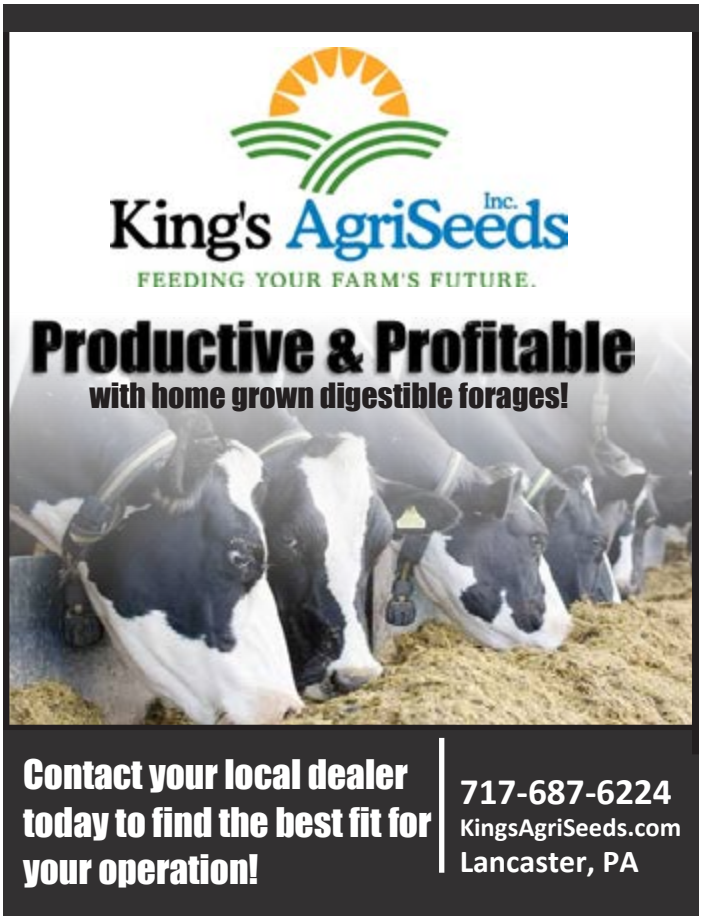
and Pastureland Dairy, in the neighboring village of Manlius, along with a robust educational program designed to help organic dairy farmers thrive in a changing market. Don't miss this opportunity to connect, learn, and celebrate at the 25th Annual NODPA Field Days.

Here's a sample of the program, so far, with full details and registration coming to the NODPA website, www.nodpa.com, and featured in the July NODPA News.

The **"Emerging Technologies" session** will explore cutting-edge technologies transforming the field, including **virtual fencing, robotics**, and advanced **pasture and herd management software**. Farmers already implementing these tools—such as **Kirk Arnold**, **Kyle Smith**, and **Eric Sheffer**—will share their real-world experiences, challenges, and insights. In addition, representatives from leading companies like **Halter Fencing**, **Agro-Tech Pro Software**, and **Lely Robotics** are invited to present, offering a comprehensive look at how innovation is reshaping organic dairy operations.

The **"Trends in Organic Dairy"** session will feature industry experts **Nathan Weaver** and **Sarah Flack**, alongside a diverse panel of farmers providing insights from various perspectives on today's evolving organic dairy landscape. Topics will include **grass-fed practices**, **A2A2 genetics**, and a range of **certification options**, all aimed at enhancing the profitability and sustainability of your farm. This session will give attendees a well-rounded view of how emerging trends can drive success in the organic dairy industry.

"Lessons from Successful Grass-Fed Dairy Farms" will be led by **Sarah Flack**, who will guide participants through the critical factors to consider when evaluating whether a grass-fed system is right for your farm. This session will help you assess how well a grass-fed system aligns with your **land base**, **infrastructure**, **forage quality**, **cost of production**, **herd genetics**, **finances**, and **family goals**. Additionally, we'll explore the key strategies for a successful conversion to grass-fed dairy, including insights from the **multi-year Northeast Grass-Fed Dairy Project**. Attendees will leave with a comprehensive understanding of both the opportunities and challenges associated with adopting this management style.



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The **"Better Nutrition = Better Milk Production, Cow Health, and Profitability"** session will focus on how improving nutrition can enhance milk production, cow health, and overall profitability, regardless of the management system you use. Whether you're operating an organic or grass-fed dairy, optimizing nutrition is key to maximizing your herd's potential. This session will explore practical strategies for feeding your cows to achieve better performance, healthier animals, and higher profits.


Phyllis and Paul van Amburgh, dharma lea farm, Cobleskill, NY

The **keynote presentation** will feature **Phyllis and Paul Amburgh**, who will share their expertise on **recognizing the best cow characteristics for each dairy farm**. They will discuss how to select cows based on key factors such as **genetics**, **breed attributes**, and **body condition**, helping farmers optimize their herds for better performance, efficiency, and sustainability in their specific production system. This session promises valuable insights into making informed decisions that align with your farm's unique needs.

Information for sponsors and supporters will be going out by mid-May. If you'd like information beforehand, or if you have any questions, please contact Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator, at 413-772-0444 or at noraowens@comcast.net. For now, mark your calendar and plan to join us for the 25th Annual NODPA Field Days on Thursday and Friday, September 25th and 26th. Remember, it's never too early to look for lodging if you are staying overnight. You will receive a better rate and have more options, too. ◆

FEATURED FARM

PASTURELAND DAIRY

MANLIUS, NY

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dairy farming. Peter immediately put cows on pasture, and "never looked back," Jeremy said, becoming a prominent early adaptor of dairy grazing more than three decades ago. Peter was on the forefront of the rotational grazing movement, and the addition of crossbreeding with Jersey genetics around the time component pricing came out, led to "smaller, increased mobility cows," which thrived on rotational grazing, Jeremy said.

The farm transitioned to organic in 2007, after being operated as a conventional grazing dairy, when trusted others in the industry convinced Peter that organic dairy farming wasn't much different from what he was already successfully doing: making milk on grass. Most of the pastures and hay ground were able to be transitioned immediately. Some of the crop ground needed to undergo the three year transition period.

He was "pretty much making milk from primarily grass, whether from pasture or harvested haylage" and "management didn't have to change a heck of a lot," Jeremy said. "The DMI from pasture didn't need to change at all, as he was already trying to maximize grass intake.

Today, this family dairy is continuing for the next generation. Peter and Jeremy - who returned to the farm in 2015 - are partners in the dairy. They are the primary labor, along with six full-time employees who milk and do barn chores. Peter is in charge of the crops and machinery, while Jeremy is the herd manager, in charge of employees, cows and breeding. The division of labor is "the way we make it work."

Jeremy Mapstone

"As soon as I left for college, it didn't take me very long to realize that I couldn't see myself doing anything else," Jeremy said of his departure from the farm to attend Mansfield University in northern Pennsylvania on a baseball scholarship. He had dreams of a non-farming life and was studying human nutrition. "It was not a decision I took lightly, but one that I haven't regretted for a second."

After graduation, Jeremy, like his father before him, jumped right into making changes on the farm, mapping the plan to improve the dairy, positioning it to continue for yet the next generation. Peter had been managing the farm

FEATURED FARM

A few of the Pastureland Dairy Herd posing for the camera.

alone for years following his own father's death, and he needed help. Jeremy spoke Spanish fluently and was able to communicate with their full-time workers effectively. And he was eager to make changes to the breeding program and take over the herd's management.

Today, the partnership between father and son has captured their combined forward momentum and ability to discern just what is needed to make their organic dairy farm work more efficiently, and profitably.

Today's Dairy

The Mapstone's dairy today consists of 1400 acres, 500 of which are pasture and 900 dedicated to tillable crops. They grow corn for silage on 200 acres, have 200 acres of triticale, with the remainder of land in grass, clover and alfalfa haylage. They grow all of their own forages for their 650 cow herd which includes 375 milking and dry cows, and 275 youngstock. The herd grew slowly over the years, as did the acreage to support this ever-evolving dairy.

In the years before and right after Jeremy returned to the farm, there was land nearby for sale that they were already renting. As they purchased the land that was necessary to support the herd, their debt load increased. In order to effectively be able to service the debt, along with continuing to run a viable farm business, it quickly become necessary to increase milk production, therefore increasing net farm income from milk sales.

However, when they kicked up the grain in the ration, many cows didn't respond well. Jeremy reasoned that improving their milk production by focusing on better genetics would be one tool they could use to continue to remain competitive and profitable.

"We had a portion of our herd that more closely resembled beef cows than dairy cows," Jeremy said.

The breeding program had always been based on using herd bulls, and year-round calving, with an uptick in October and again in March. Through the years, Peter had opted to mix in Ayrshire, Milking Shorthorn and plenty of other grazing genetics, pretty much "experimenting with everything" to breed the best grazing cow for their farm.

The goal of the breeding program today is to keep the components high and increase milk production. Jeremy's focus on genetics began with a switch to artificial insemination for the months the

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Working the fields at Pastureland Dairy

cows were in the barn. He started breeding with sexed Holstein semen and eventually added some beef semen. He wanted better Holstein genetics, and to increase milk production, but he needed good grazing ability, too. They already had good component levels.

The Mapstones practice mob grazing, with one big group of cows grazing together in the summer months. They graze day and night, on pastures that are permanently fenced.

Because the farm has been on the forefront of grazing the milking herd even prior to their 2007 grazing transition, they have a very good handle on how much grass is needed for the herd, based on the time of day and the time of year. They do have one 70 acre portion of the pasture system that they take hay off of and then open up for grazing later in the summer as needed. There is just one large perimeter fence around this block, so it can be broken down into smaller appropriately sized pieces based on the conditions.

New pasture is provided to the herd after every milking. They graze a smaller area during the daylight, and move into a larger area in the evening and overnight. The herd's grazing increases between 6pm and 3am, so they maximize their ability to consume pasture by milking at 3am and 2pm daily. Milking takes about three hours to complete, and the cows are then afforded an hour to consume a fed ration in the barn. Cows receive a fed ration of haylage mixed with corn silage and a small amount of dry corn in the barn after each milking.

"We add haylage as the grass slows. The goal is to keep their stomachs full," Jeremy said. "We try to maximize our production in the barn during the months the cows aren't grazing, and we also try to maximize production and get the most from pasture May through October."

During the non-grazing season, they divide the herd into four groups. The high-producing cows; the lower producing late lactation or already pregnant cows; a mix of 2 year olds and smaller cows; and a hospital group for any sick or fresh cows.

"We have the ability now to groups cows based on their needs," Jeremy said of the winter groupings. The amount of grain in the ration will vary based on the needs of each group.

The farm boasts "well-established pasture for thirty-plus years," with a healthy mix of Kentucky blue grass, orchard grass and white clover. Proper fertility keeps the pastures productive, and they do very little reseeding or pasture renovation.

The triticale "fits in really well with our organic crop rotation," Jeremy said. It is a cover crop after corn, coming up in the fall, and it feeds similar to cornmeal, helping to stretch out purchased

grain. It is a grain source that doesn't need to be cultivated, unlike corn or soy beans, and it is harvested on the farm for both grain and straw for bedding.

Water is available in each pasture, but it isn't from the four wells on the farm. The wells run at an extremely slow flow rate and are barely able to keep up with farm's utility needs. On pasture, the water comes from a large pond - built by Peter - which is gravity feed down to the cow pastures. Pastures that are above the elevation of the pond are fed from another pond via a solar pump, which is a relatively new system, and one which seems to work very well.

When Peter took over the herd, they milked in one stanchion barn and had a small freestall. He added a straight 8 flat barn parlor in 1995, which the farm has since expanded to a double 10. The lactating herd is housed in an insulated freestall barn, which was built in 2011 and added onto in 2021. The original freestall on the farm is used to house dry cows and also has some maternity pens. The free stalls are all sand bedded, which enhances cow comfort, and contributes to a lower somatic cell count, but makes for more difficult manure management due to difficulties with sand/manure separation.

The farm was daily manure spreading up until two years ago. The soils on the farm are very shallow to shale soils, and it was quite challenging to engineer a manure pit, and very expensive. With grant money, they were able to construct a pit, which has much improved their quality of life. Before the pit, they had to spread 24/7, 365 days of the year, rain or shine.

In 2023, a 2.2 million gallon concrete manure lagoon was built, and the liquid manure can be stored and spread "when required, and at rates according to our CAFO plan," Jeremy said. They scrape the lactating herd manure directly into the pit, and the manure from the older freestall is pumped with a hydraulic piston pump. They use a pump and crawler to agitate the mixture before it is time to spread, insuring that the sand remains in suspension with the liquid manure.

The herd SCC averages below 100,000 in the winter and increases slightly when on pasture. Year-round, the SCC averages 100,000. The milk protein is 3.1 percent year-round, with 4.6 percent butterfat in the winter and 4.0 during the grazing season. Milk production is currently at a rolling yearly herd average of 18,500 pounds of milk. The average per cow production in winter is 70 pounds per day, with less production as the pasture season heads into the middle and end of summer.

Compared to 2015, when the rolling herd average was 12,500 pounds, Jeremy's focus on genetics and changes in overall management has led to enhanced per cow production, decreased cull rate, and overall enhanced profitability on the farm.

Calf Focus

When Peter was managing the farm on his own, he tended to raise all the heifer calves. He would sell the surplus as springers. It worked during years that the market for organic heifers was strong and helped to diversify the farm's income stream. After engaging with farm consultants and business planners in 2015, it became clear that this practice was now actually costing the farm money, and was no longer profitable.

"It is so expensive to raise an organic heifer to calving age, that unless we were getting top dollar for her to be sold as a springer, the math just didn't add up," Jeremy said.

At this same time, Organic Valley implemented a quota system, based on prior years' production, just before Jeremy came home. This quota made it extremely unprofitable to raise any animals except the ones needed to maintain herd size.

Raising too many heifers is a "labor draw," and feeding additional calves also requires a sacrifice of milk. They divert milk from the bulk tank, pasteurize it using a milk taxi for the calves They try to calve heavy in the early spring and the fall, to "capitalize on winter pay price premiums and also on spring grass," Jeremy said.

They calve heavily in September, October and November, then start again in March. At six months of age, the calves go out onto pasture. The calves are raised in a calf barn and a few overflow hutches. The calf barn has side-by-side individual mesh cages. The calves are fed milk for 12 weeks, and are also fed starter grain. Near weaning, baleage is added.

Calves are moved into group housing upon weaning. This housing is a "pitfall" of their system, and something they will address with a heifer barn project underway for this summer. The group pens are spread across the farm, adding to labor needs. Calf pens are bedded with the farm's own triticale straw, which is also used to bed a free stall barn for heifers at breeding age.

"We don't want to tax our facilities," by raising more calves than they need. The goal is to raise between 15-20 calves per month on average, and "sell anything beyond that number as wet calves," Jeremy said.

Calf health is overall very good, and they don't lose many calves. The biggest calf health issue is with infrequent scours or respiratory issues. This winter was cold and harsh, and they did have an increase in these issues. At birth calves receive Inforce®, and also Bovalis Once PMH® for pneumonia protection at one week of age. They also use MULTIMIN® at weaning.

Healthy Herd

Prior to Jeremy's return, Peter was only vaccinating the calves. "This allowed me to take a close look at the role vaccines could play

FEATURED FARM

in our lactating cows,'" Jeremy said. Because a vaccine protocol can be expensive, the goal was to only add necessary ones to promote wellness and make economic sense. Their focus is on prevention.

They now vaccinate heifers for pink eye when they are on pasture, as there is no effective organic treatment, and they vaccinate cows at dry-off with Triangle 10®. A booster of Inforce® or NasalGen to protect against Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR) virus, Bovine Respiratory Syncytial Virus (BRSV), Parainfluenza 3 virus (PI3), Mannheimia haemolytica is also used at barn up in the fall.

When it comes to mastitis treatments, they have tried "almost every one out there," but today use a select few that Jeremy feels do the job. These include Dr. Paul's supplements, particularly CEG Tincture, OLS-M Tincture for respiratory concerns, and a calcium supplement.

Mastitis is the most prevalent issue in the cows. As there aren't many affordable or effective organic treatments, Jeremy relies on a strict milking protocol to keep any issues in check. They are meticulous about teat cleanliness. If mastitis persists in a quarter, they will shut it down for that lactation.

The farm's veterinarian from Midstate Veterinary Services is a valued asset. For many years, they didn't use a vet regularly. Peter's long-term veterinarian retired about the time the herd transitioned to organic. Once they went organic, they saw improved health, and Peter provided organic therapies as needed. When Jeremy became a partner in 2015, he began to implement veterinary pregnancy checks and physical exams once or twice per month or as needed.

The Mapstones use Farm Credit business planners and financial advisors, and meet twice per year to review the state of their farm, and their budgets. They also participate in the Dairy Farm Business Summary with Cornell Universities Pro-Dairy and are a part of an Organic Dairy Discussion Group, with nine other New York farms. This type of benchmarking and discussion has enabled them to make better financial decisions, and is an invaluable resource.

Heading to the Future

The farm is limited by its pasture acreage, as they aim for 75 to 80 percent dry matter intake from grazing during the high season, typically ending the summer around 40 percent DMI. Grazing is "really important to us," Jeremy emphasized, and the goal is to maximize the herd size based on the acreage they have, while maintaining DMI well above the required 30 percent.

"We would max out this location at 400 cows due to acreage and DMI," Jeremy said. "That is the limit to what our pasture acres could handle."

In 2023, they began milking high production cows three times per day. Along with nutritional support - they value their nutritionist from Rapp Dairy Nutrition - the additional milking per day has

Heading to the barn

FEATURED FARM

led to an increase in per cow milk production of about 10 pounds in that group.

"Our nutritionist is really important to us," Jeremy said. The nutritionist samples their forages, and decides how to optimize the fed ration to maximize health and production based on forage analysis. The nutritionist also provides a mineral package designed for the herd.

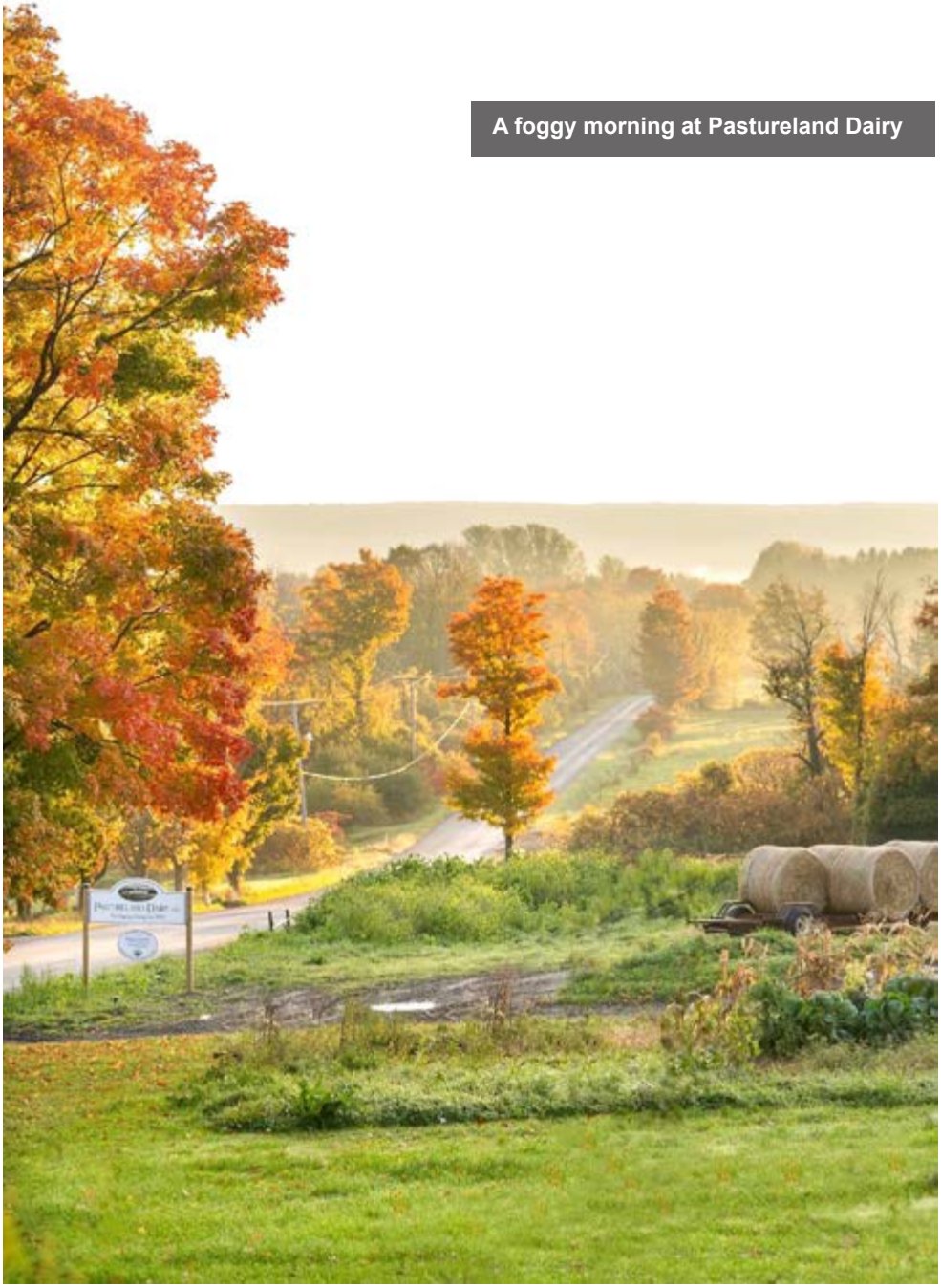
Organic and Diversified

Peter and Jeremy have been challenged over the years by people on farm tours asking about differences between conventional and organic milk.

"Milk as a whole is obviously nutritionally fantastic," Jeremy said, and "nothing should take away from that." However, we have also learned over the years that milk from grazing herds tends to be even higher in Omega 3 fatty acids, CLA and ALA, which to us is just an added bonus. "The bottom line is, if consumers want it, we are happy to produce it."

Jeremy would like to see the organic dairy industry safeguard organic farming practices and improve oversight.

"I feel strongly that it is important to maintain the integrity of the organic movement, you've got to have some teeth behind it," he said of organic standards.



A foggy morning at Pastureland Dairy

Pastureland Dairy recently began shipping to Upstate Niagara Cooperative. Upstate Niagara Cooperative supplies milk for Wegmans grocery stores and is focused on supporting family dairy farms in the region. Upstate Niagara was offering more money for the milk at the time, so it made financial sense. Along with their neighbor, Tre-G Farms, they were able to switch as Upstate Niagara was able to justify the extra trailer load of milk they'd get from adding the two farms, which are less than five miles apart.

"Our business model felt more closely aligned with Upstate Niagara," and after 17 years with Organic Valley, they started shipping to their new cooperative in the fall of 2023.

The farm also recently diversified its income stream, adding a wedding and event venue. It is a means of insuring that the farm can remain for future generations. Jeremy's father and stepmother purchased a piece of land just prior to the 2020 pandemic. They remodeled a mid-1800s era farmhouse into an Airbnb that sleeps 14, and a barn into a venue hall. Jeremy's sister had the first

FEATURED FARM

The Mapstone Family

Peter Mapstone with his son and daughter

wedding there, and his was the second. So truly it is a family affair, and now a moneymaking venture.

"Dairy can be volatile and cyclical," Jeremy said. Ensuring that dairy, alone, isn't the only source of income for the family's farm is prudent. Watervale Ridge - the event venue - is a part of the family farm's future.

Jeremy's wife, Stephanie, and newborn son; his father and stepmother and their three young children; his sister and brother-in-law, along with other assorted relatives are all important to the farm, pitching in whenever needed and making the farm "a full family effort," he said.

While the farm is evolving, Pastureland Dairy's goal of producing nutritious milk from healthy, grazing cows remains the backbone of all that they do. Ten years after his return to the farm to continue the family's legacy of dairy farming, Jeremy is certain that it was the right thing for him to do. He values the grazing dairy philosophy which his father implemented, and which is the basis of their farming philosophy.

"We believe in farming the way we do and that is the bottom line."

◆

Jeremy Mapstone can be reached at Pastureland Dairy, 8062 #2 Rd W, Manlius (village), New York, 13104, 315-350-8081.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices May 2025

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has published estimated national organic retail product sales for January 2025, compiled with data from the Federal Milk Marketing Order. In January 2025, the data shows a continued increase in the sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged fluid products of 10.3% over January 2024, and the February 2025 data shows sales at 6.9% over February 2025. There was a 2.6% increase in Organic Fat Reduced Milk in January 2025 over January 2024, and a 1.1 % decrease in February 2025 over February 2024. Year to date, February 2025, organic fluid milk sales are 4.8% higher than the same period in 2024.

Total US sales of organic fluid milk products were 276 million pounds in January 2025, with organic Whole Milk sales at 149 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduced Milk at 125 million pounds. In February 2025, total sales of organic packaged milk were 241 million pounds, with sales of organic packaged Whole Milk at 128 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduce Milk at 112 million pounds.

The average retail price for organic milk as recorded by Federal Milk Order market in the first quarter of 2025 rose to over $5 per half gallon for the first time. In January 2025, the national average price was $4.87, February, $4.96, March, $4.97, and April, $5.05. The range was a low of $3.99 in PA and a high of $6.69 in MO. With the higher prices, we will have to see how they affect demand, and what caused the surprising increase from the 2024 average of $4.81/half gallon. The $0.24 increase in retail price translates into $5.00 increase in Pay Price if the resulting increase comes purely from the producers' pay price, which is not reflected in reports from producers of an increase in their Pay Price. But if it's to cover the spot market $50 price for fluid milk diverted to manufacturing or other increased cost to the brand/handler or just opportunism by retailers, that would need a longer-term analysis of available data.

The data over the last 16 years shows that consumer demand has not decreased with increased retail prices. The cost of organic milk to the milk buyer averages only 30% of the retail price, therefore any increase in Pay Price has only a marginal effect on buyers' profit margins and no effect on the growth and stability of the organic retail market. The profit margins of the milk buyers and brands depend on many variables including their negotiating skills and leverage with retailers, ability to meet retailers' supply needs, and their ability to control overhead and packaging costs.

Producers are reporting that organic milk is short in the Northeast and across the country, with serious competition between buyers, with spot milk as high as $>50/cwt. Pay prices ranging from an annualized average of $33/cwt to $45/cwt for grain and pasture fed dairies. Grass Fed certified dairies range from $36/cwt up to $50/cwt, depending on how much the buyer is

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Estimated Fluid Milk Products Sales Reports

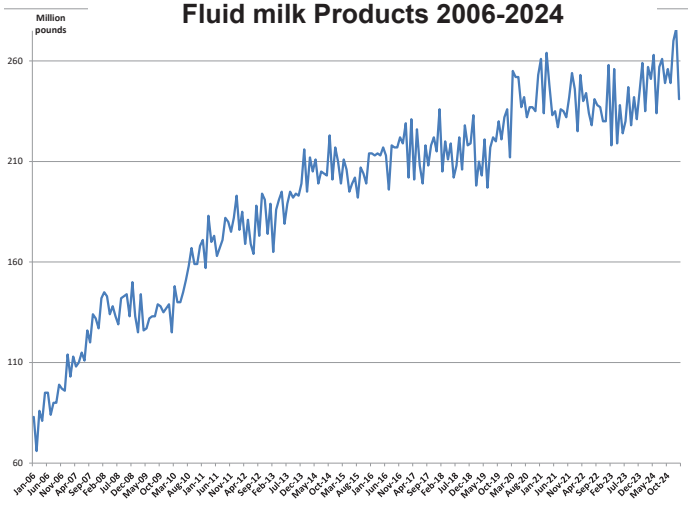
Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	January 2025	2025 Year to date	Jan-2024	Year to date
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	149	149	10.3%	10.3%
Flavored Whole milk	1	1	-10.5%	-10.5%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	88	88	8.1%	8.1%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	20	20	-17.9%	-17.9%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	11	11	-4.5%	-4.5%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	6	6	30.5%	30.5%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	0	-17.6%	-17.6%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	125	125	2.6%	2.6%
Total Organic Milk Products	276	276	6.5%	6.5%

Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	Feb-25	2025 Year to date	Feb-2024	Year to date
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	128	278	6.9%	8.7%
Flavored Whole milk	0	1	-26.3%	-17.5%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	80	168	5.5%	6.9%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	17	37	-19%	-18.4%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	10	21	-9.5%	-6.9%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	5	11	-6.7%	10.9%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	1	-37.5%	-28.8%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	112	237	-1.1%	0.8%
Total Organic Milk Products	**241**	**517**	**2.8%**	**4.8%**

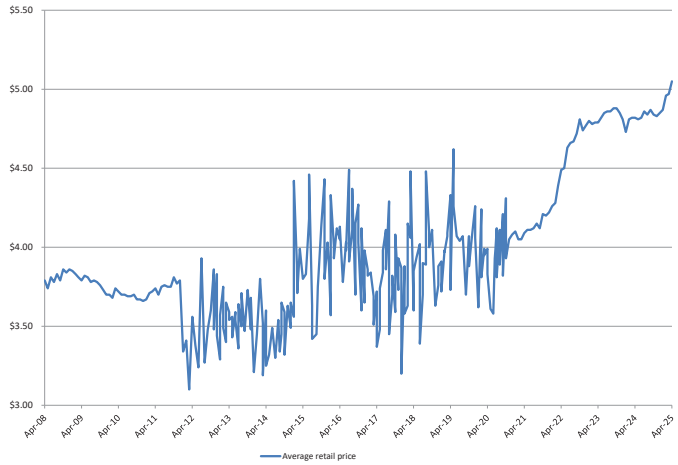
Data may not add due to rounding to the nearest million pounds

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

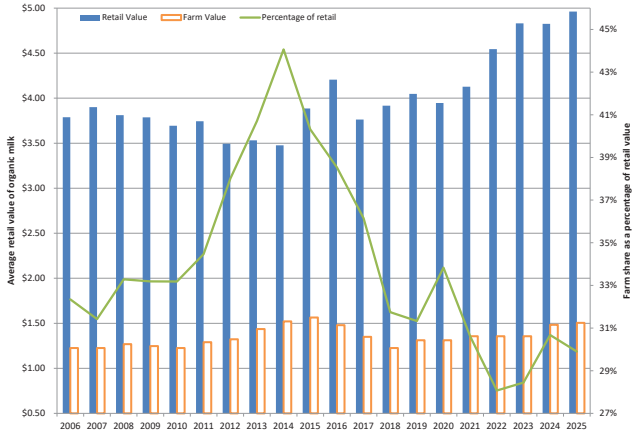
Estimated Total U.S. Sales of Organic Fluid milk Products 2006-2024



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

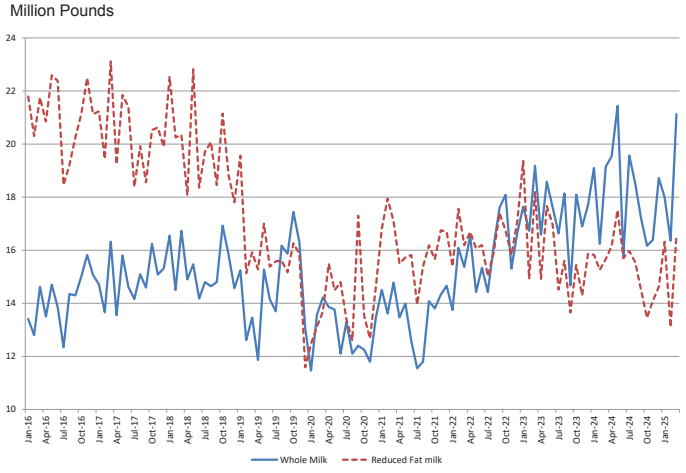


Average retail price, average farm share and percentage for half gallon of organic milk

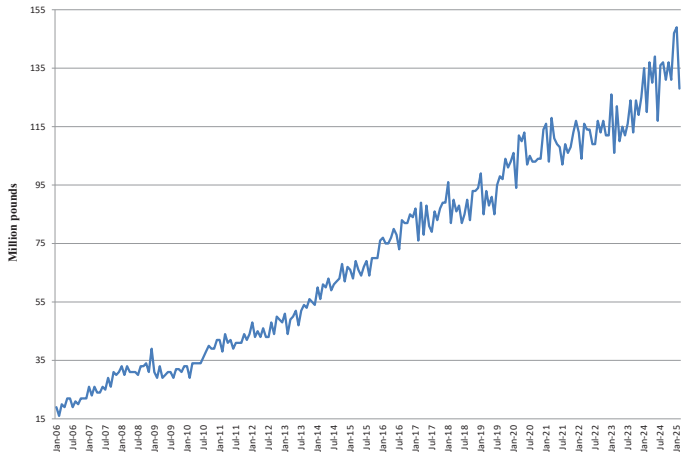


Utilization of Organic Fluid milk in FMMO 1 2016-2024

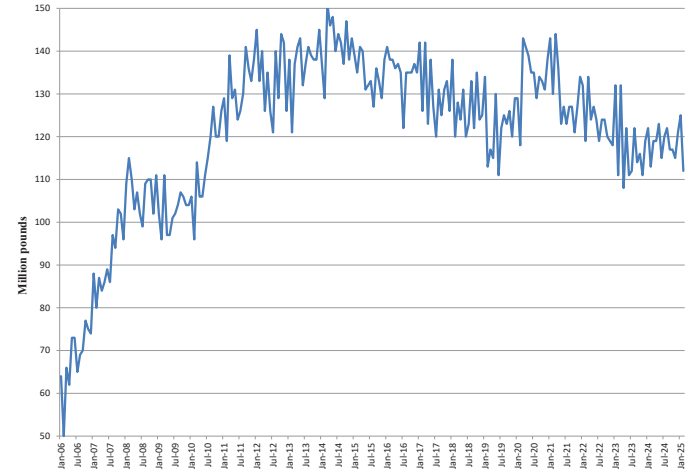
(not including fluid packaged milk processed out of order)



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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paying, to reflect the increased costs and lower production of Grass Fed production. The western states are still recovering from the widespread H5N1 virus and from the decision of Darigold NW to release all its organic dairy producers. Reports are that all producers have found new buyers with the three main buyers (Horizon Organic LLC, CROPP Cooperative and Organic West Milk Inc.), taking approximately equal numbers of producers.

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 2025	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	34.31	34.93	37.00	29.14	31.32	23.93
FEBRUARY	29.46	31.50	31.65	33.65	31.56	26.69
MARCH	37.70	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		31.51	34.59	31.53	28.41	26.90
JULY		35.54	31.15	29.44	25.50	26.70
AUGUST		34.07	33.75	32.12	27.18	24.70
SEPTEMBER		31.72	28.32	35.00	30.26	29.70
OCTOBER		29.62	33.54	34.83	29.47	25.78
NOVEMBER		30.48	31.19	31.13	31.07	24.47
DECEMBER		33.34	33.56	33.78	31.36	28.13
ANNUAL		**402.16**	**399.87**	**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
January	56.23	6.41	49.82	55.21	6.51	48.70
February	51.88	5.77	46.12	49.11	5.49	43.63
March	53.96	5.93	46.29	52.73	5.59	45.44
April	54.13	6.04	48.09	49.18	5.64	43.53
May	51.32	5.81	45.51	48.21	5.40	42.78
June	52.56	5.51	47.04	45.20	5.57	39.63
July	52.68	5.63	47.04	48.45	5.70	42.75
August	55.63	6.26	49.37	48.47	5.63	42.85
September	50.68	5.41	45.27	48.76	5.58	43.18
October	50.36	5.89	44.47	49.73	5.65	42.48
November	48.04	5.99	42.04	49.60	5.48	44.12
December	53.98	6.73	47.21	54.17	6.08	48.10
Total	631.45	71.39	558.25	598.82	68.31	527.18

Federal Milk Marketing Order 1 (Order) reported that in February 2025, fluid Organic Whole Milk packaged and utilized within the Order totaled 29.46 million pounds; lower than the previous year of 31.50 million pounds (distorted slightly as 2024 was a leap year with 29 days in February). In February 2025, Organic Whole Milk packaged in the Order was 16.36 million pounds, a slight increase from 16.24 million pounds in February 2024. In February 2025, Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged and utilized in the Order was 13.10 million pounds, down from 15.26 million pounds in February 2024. All milk packaged outside the Order, but sold within the Order, decreased by 3.27 million pounds, or approximately 2.5% in February 2025 over February 2024. This does include organic fluid milk packaged outside the Order but sold within the Order. Organic milk averages approximately 19% of the fluid milk packaged in the Order. Organic milk sold to Stonyfield/US Lactalis plant in New Hampshire is not included in this data.

In March 2025, Organic Whole Milk packaged in the Order was 21.13 million pounds, higher than the 19.15 million pounds packaged in March 2024. In March 2025, Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged and utilized in the Order was 16.57 million pounds, up from 15.67 million pounds in March 2024. Total organic milk packaged in the Order in March 2025, of 37.70 million pounds, was 3 million pounds or approximately 8% higher than the 34.82 million pounds packaged in March 2024. All milk packaged outside the Order, but sold within the Order, increased by 2.7 million pounds, or approximately 2% in March 2025 over March 2024.

Year to date as of March 2025, total organic milk packaged in the Order was the same as 2024.

There are 3 other FMMO's that publish reports on the volume of Class 1 organic packaged milk in their Order, two of which report how much is 'exported' to other Orders. In February 2025, of the 241 million pounds packaged and sold as Class 1 organic milk in the US, 51.88 million pounds was in Order 32 (Central). Order 51 (California) packaged 37.65 million pound of organic milk in February 2025 and Order 33 (Mideast) packages less than Order 1, with 27.59 million pounds.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Vermont Monthly Organic Dairy Report and Pennsylvania Monthly Organic Reports

This initiative is part of a new pilot program in partnership with the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Market News to collect organic market data.

The Vermont Report has published data since November 2023. While the sample size is relatively small and the sample includes Grass Fed dairies, the weighted average Pay Price is $35.82/cwt for 2024, with a range from $33.00/cwt to $47.38/cwt (does not include any deductions for hauling). The average daily production per cow averages 46 lbs./cow. The milk buyers in Vermont are CROPP Cooperative, US Lactalis direct supply, and Upstate Niagara.

Month	Volume(lbs.)	Ave. daily production per cow (lbs.)	Min Price	Max Price	Weighted Av Price	Ave. Butterfat	Ave. Protein	Avg Monthly Production/cow (lbs.)
Nov-23	1,155,583	39.6	$ 27.92	$ 43.60	$ 37.01			
Dec-23	1,227,212	39.3	$ 27.92	$ 47.13	$ 39.70			
Jan-24	1,224,497	40.2	$ 35.00	$ 47.38	$ 39.97	4.21%	3.03%	1,246
Feb-24	1,073,895	41.9	$ 36.04	$ 46.74	$ 39.99	4.82%	3.43%	1,299
Mar-24	1,088,144	46.4	$ 33.68	$ 42.87	$ 36.59	4.64%	3.38%	1,139
Apr-24	958,104	44.5	$ 33.08	$ 41.85	$ 36.10	4.59%	3.34%	1,239
May-24	1,105,985	51	$ 32.10	$ 39.11	$ 34.77	4.38%	3.32%	1,580
Jun-24	860,631	50.7	$ 31.65	$ 39.10	$ 34.00	4.20%	3.22%	1,541
Jul-24	1,013,388	48.4	$ 30.70	$ 37.06	$ 33.00	3.99%	3.13%	1,500
Aug-24	1,169,419	47.8	$ 31.49	$ 38.79	$ 33.00	4.03%	3.21%	1,482
Sep-24	1,066,596	48.3	$ 29.50	$ 38.75	$ 34.39	4.09%	3.29%	1,449
Oct-24	1,066,596	46.5	$ 29.50	$ 38.75	$ 34.08	4.39%	3.37%	1,443
Nov-24	1,411,221	42.69	$ 29.50	$ 41.06	$ 35.90	4.45%	3.34%	1,281
Dec-24	1,746,250	48.6	$ 29.50	$ 45.29	$ 37.99	4.46%	3.34%	1,489
Jan-25	1,620,357	48	$ 29.50	$ 46.42	$ 40.16	4.47%	3.35%	1,489

Month	Volume(lbs.)	Ave. daily production per cow (lbs.)	Min Price	Max Price	Weighted Av Price	Ave. Butterfat	Ave. Protein
Jun-24	1,331,605	31.23	$ 25.05	$ 41.74	$ 33.57	3.98%	3.07%
Jul-24	1,170,262	27.9	$ 25.50	$ 41.43	$ 33.55	3.88%	2.99%
Aug-24	1,167,928	27.93	$ 28.45	$ 42.32	$ 34.60	3.99%	3.11%
Sep-24	1,268,946	30.76	$ 28.70	$ 43.22	$ 35.61	4.17%	3.30%
Oct-24	1,299,953	28.8	$ 25.85	$ 45.95	$ 35.01	4.41%	3.39%
Nov-24	1,243,522	33.75	$ 28.80	$ 44.05	$ 35.88	4.49%	3.40%
Dec-24	988,840	32.8	$ 32.58	$ 45.35	$ 38.43	4.60%	3.41%
Jan-25	1,064,485	35.62	$ 35.83	$ 46.12	$ 40.37	4.52%	3.34%

Pennsylvania Report

The data from PA has not been collected for as long as the VT data. It does show a very wide

range of Pay Price from a low of $25.05/cwt to a high of $46.12/cwt. The average over the 8-month period is $35.88, equal to the Pay Price shown for VT. The average daily production per cow for the 8-month period is 31.1 pounds, 15 pounds lower than the VT average.

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, milk and cream, not concentrated nor sweetened, of a fat content, by weight, exceeding 1% but not exceeding 6% certified organic. Recently released data from USDA FAS for January and February 2025 show organic milk exports were 12,229 cwt. and 8,677 cwt. respectively. The same months in 2024 were dramatically lower at 2,643 cwt. in January 2024 and 5,352 cwt. in February 2024. None of this milk is subject to tariffs under the USMCA and any increase will still fall below the level where current agreements mandate tariffs being added.

Auction News

Demand for organic cows and heifers is very high and reflects the real cost of rearing organic livestock to their first calving. The NOP enforcement of regulations on identification of organic livestock at auction, the implementation and consistent enforcement of the Origin of Livestock rule is creating a level playing field for all producers and a financial return on investment in breeding organic replacements. At these prices, there is an added incentive to breed for and rear heifers as replacements rather than cash in on high calf prices.

On March 30th, 2025, around 100 Organic cows and heifers were offered for sale at the Premier Livestock and Auctions in Wisconsin, with extraordinary demand and record high prices. The Organic certified herd averaged $4,000 a head, including all young stock, down to baby calves, and 15 Organic springers averaged $5430 each! A breakdown of prices paid:

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Dairy Herd Dispersal

- Top Quality Holstein & Crossbred Dairy Cows – $4,000-$5,900 each, compared to conventional cows at $2,750-$3750 each.
- Good Quality Holstein & Crossbred Dairy Cows – $2,500-$3,725 each, compared to conventional cows at $2,000-$2,725 each.
- Lower Quality Holstein & Crossbred Dairy Cows – $2,400 and Down compared to conventional cows at $1,975 and Down.
- Top Quality Holstein & Crossbred Springing Heifers – $3,500-$5,750 compared to conventional heifers at $2,800-$3,975.
- Common Springing Heifers – $2,775 and Down compared to Conventional heifers at $2775 and Down.
- Holstein & Crossbred Short Bred Heifers – $3,250-$5,250.
- Holstein & Crossbred Open Heifers 300-500# – Up to $2,100.
- Holstein & Crossbred Open Heifers 500-700# – Up to $2,500.
- Holstein & Crossbred Open Heifers 700-850# – Up to $4,000.

For more information, the auction is located at N13438 State Hwy 73 Withee, WI 54498 and their mailing address is P.O. BOX 306 Owen, WI 54460. Useful phone numbers are:

- FRONT OFFICE: 715-229-2500
- KEN STAUFFER: 715-559-8232
- ROCKY OLSEN: 715-721-0079

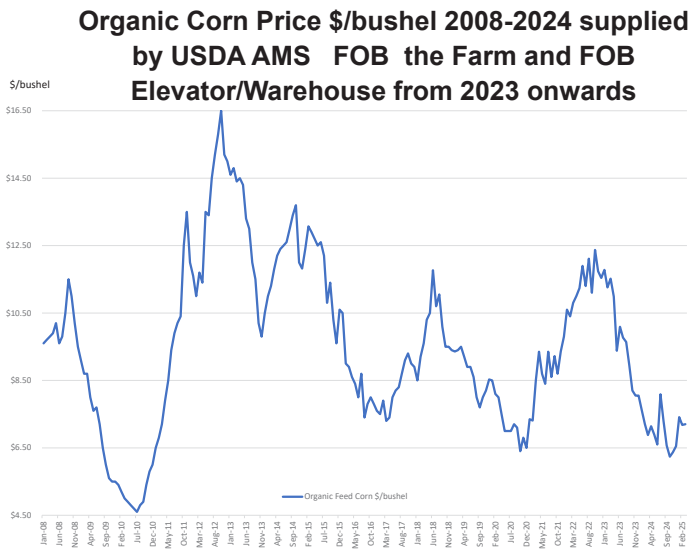
Hoskins Livestock Auction, a NOFA-NY-certified livestock auction in New Berlin, New York, reports that organic cull cows consistently sold above conventional cows in March and April 2025. The average price for conventional cull cows ranged from a low of $110/cwt to a high of $119 /cwt in March and April 2025. Organic certified cull cow prices ranged from $112/cwt to $132/cwt. Calf prices are still strong but there is no premium for organic. Organic milking cows were selling well, at an average of $2,500-$3,900 each in March and April 2025. This auction does give separate reports for Grass-fed organic certified livestock, with cull prices slightly lower but milking cows and heifers sold at the same price as grain fed organic. Calf prices are still high especially the heavier ones. I can't imagine the headache that buyers have in showing any margin at all!

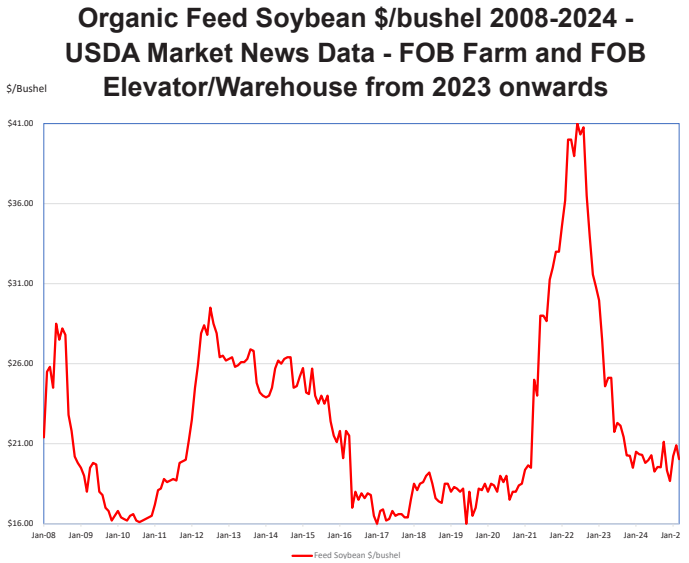
In a recent report from a Pacific Northwest livestock auction, USDA reports that the top 10 organic cull cows and the overall average for organic cull cows traded lower than conventional cull cows. The average price for the top 10 organic cows auctioned was $132.00 per cwt, compared to an average price of $148.56 per cwt for the top 10 conventional cows auctioned. The average weight for the top 10 conventional cows was 1500.0 pounds compared to 1459.0 pounds for the top 10 organic cows. The overall price for organic cows auctioned was $103.75 per cwt with an average weight of 1160.29 pounds, while the overall price for conventional cows auctioned was $109.68 per cwt with an average weight of 1155.76 pounds.

A reminder: organic livestock do not need to be shipped separately from non-organic when they are trucked to auction or direct to slaughter. They do need to be identified clearly as organic with all the correct paperwork.

Feed

National data from USDA has organic feed corn delivered to the elevator averaging $7.20 per bushel in March 2025 and $7.85 per bushel in April 2025. Organic feed soybean delivered to the





ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

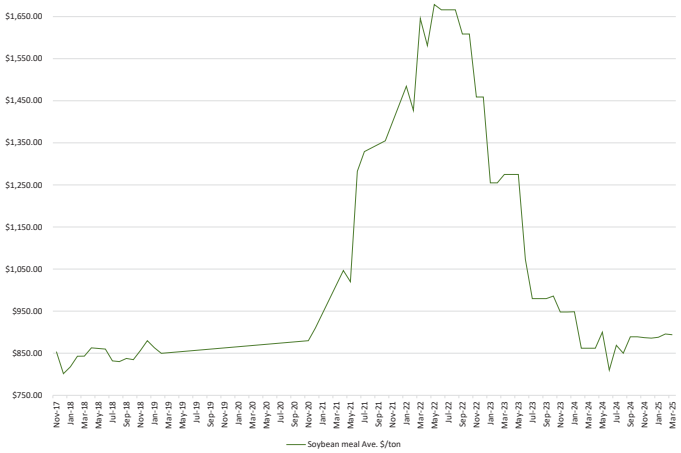
elevator averaged $20.04/bu. in March 2025 and $22.77 in April 2025. Organic feed wheat averaged $7.79/bushel in April 2025. Soybean meal was trading at $894/ton in March 2025 and $942/ton in April 2025. Costs for organic Premium Alfalfa are about the same as conventional, at $260 -$275 per ton.

Argus has published a new report, 2024 acreages for organic crops.

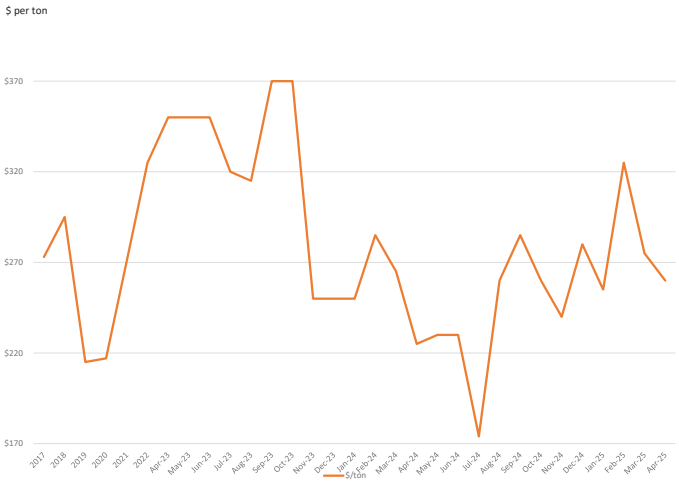
You can access this exclusive data by requesting a complimentary trial to the Argus AgriMarkets Organic and non-GMO service here. Below is the summary they published for free:

- Organic harvested acreage in 2024 totaled 7.9 million acres, up 3.2pc from the prior year. Production came from 17,730 farms, down 4.3pc from the prior year.
- Organic harvested field crop acreage reached 3.9mn acres, up 10pc from the prior year.
- Organic soybean acreage reached 320,328 acres, up 1.1pc from the prior year but down 7.7pc from the 2022 peak as organic soybean prices begin to stabilize.
- Organic wheat acreage increased 5.2pc to 787,867 acres. The increase was driven by a 32,553 acre (7.7pc) increase in organic winter wheat acres.
- Total harvested corn acreage in the Corn Belt fell 1pc to 253,257 acres despite an overall increase in organic corn acreage.. ◆

2017-2024 Soybean meal Ave. $/ton delivered FOB dealer/warehouse - USDA AMS Data



Organic Hay Dollars per ton (Average/year) - USDA AMS Data

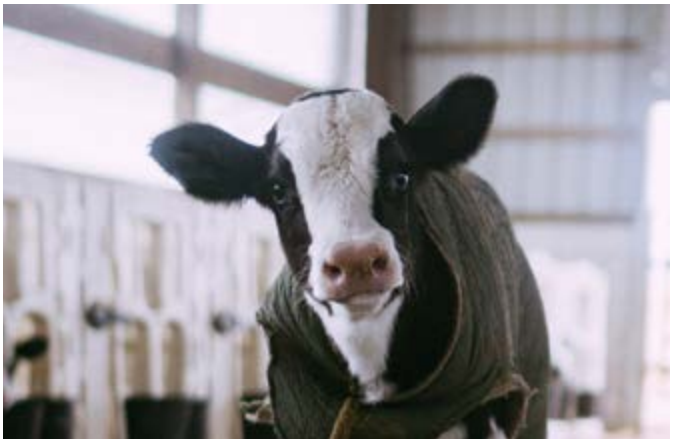


ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Organic Milk Buyers

Below we have a list of contacts for milk buyers who responded to our request to have their information made public or suggested contacts for those that didn't respond:

- **Byrne Dairy:** Leslie Ball, Director of Dairy Programs, cell phone (315)382-2782, lball@byrne1933.com
- **CROPP Cooperative -Organic Valley brand:** Farmer Hotline at 888-809-9297. No response but try: John Cleary: john.cleary@organicvalley.coop and Michael Brown: michael.brown@organicvalley.coop.
- **Family Farmstead Dairy, NY:** Thomas McGrath, tom@familyfarmsteaddairy.com, 607-397-4044; www.familyfarmmsteaddairy.com ;
- **Horizon Organic LLC**: no reply to our inquiry but try Carriel Schmitt, Producer Relations Manager, NY: carriel.schmitt@horizon.com and Jacquelyn Oliver, Quality Control, Jacquelyn.oliver@horizon.com
- **Maple Hill: Farm Service Number:** 518.516.6090 ext. 1, or Mitch Clark, SVP Supply Chain: mitch.clark@maplehillcreamery.com, 515-441-3574.
- **Origin Milk:** David Campaniello; Business Development & Product Innovation, david@originmilk.com, 718-404-6924
- **Stonyfield/Lactalis USA:** The contact information for their team is:
  Jason Johnson, jason.johnson@us.lactalis.com, (802) 356-0908;
  Erin Marlowe: erin.marlowe@us.lactalis.com, (603) 496-9499;
  Jeremy Russo: jeremy.russo@us.lactalis.com or (802) 236-1920
- **Upstate Niagara:** Mike Davis: General Manager, Membership Division and Bulk Sales; Office: (585) 815-6820 ext. 6441, Cell: (585) 409-1544 and mdavis@uncdairy.com



Calendar

Thursday, May 22, 1:00 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.

WEBINAR

Modernizing Organic Dairy Record-Keeping: Save Time & Focus on What Matters

Discover how modern record-keeping solutions can streamline your workflow, reduce paperwork, and create more time for the things that matter most to you. Join us for an informative and interactive session where we'll discuss how modern record-keeping solutions can simplify your organic dairy operations. Learn how digital tools can streamline your workflow, reduce paperwork, and free up time for the things that matter most to you—whether it's focusing on farm management, increasing productivity, or improving overall business efficiency. In this 45-minute webinar, you'll: Discover practical ways to integrate digital record-keeping into your daily operations. See a live demo of UNIFORM-Agri's herd management software and how it can simplify your processes. Learn how to save time, reduce errors, and make your record-keeping more accurate and efficient. Get answers to your specific questions during the live Q&A session. Whether you're new to digital record-keeping or looking to optimize your existing systems, this session will provide valuable insights to improve your farm's operations. Sign up now to reserve your spot and get ready to modernize your record-keeping! It's free of charge but registration is required. https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/8216984711540038 08

Wednesday, May 28, 11:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.

WEBINAR

Maine Farmcast Crossover Event: Hay Crop Silage Production & Management

Join the team of Dairy Extension Professionals from UMaine, UNH and UVM and guests for live monthly webinars held on the last Wednesday of each month from 11:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m. Sessions will focus on current dairy research and programs happening in the tri-state region, including interviews, presentations and roundtable discussions. Tune in live to stay up-to-date and join the conversation. All sessions will be recorded and posted to the UVM Extension Northwest Crops & Soils Program YouTube channel at http://www.youtube.com/user/cropsoilsvteam. To learn more about the series and to register, https://uvm-edu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZArc--oqT0iGtNlOHOyM08JQRcAYiwco2j3#/registration.

Or, contact: Maine, Glenda Pereira, glenda.pereira@maine.edu or 207-581-3240; NH, Sarah Allen, sarah.allen@unh.edu or 603-825-5509 VT, Amber Machia, amber.machia@uvm.edu or 802-656-7615 or Whitney Hull, whitney.hull@uvm.edu or 802-656-7563.

Calendar (continued)

June 5, 2025, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Pasture Walks with Extension: Grazing Dairy

Frescura Farm, 204 Kemerer Rd.,

Latrobe, Pennsylvania 15650

Explore grazing strategies and pasture management during this on-farm walk with Penn State Extension, featuring rotational grazing, soil health, and conservation practices. Join the Penn State Extension Dairy, Livestock, Equine, and Agronomy Teams for a pasture walk focused on improving forage quality and grazing practices. Participants will tour Todd Frescura's certified organic dairy, where 60 Ayrshire and Milking Shorthorn cattle rotationally graze across 53 paddocks. Along the way, Extension educators will cover soil testing, pasture evaluation, species selection, rotational grazing, and management strategies—valuable insights for all grazing species. The walk will also highlight conservation efforts, including pollinator plantings, pasture reseeding, and NRCS-supported infrastructure projects.

Lunch will be provided by Southwest Project Grass, followed by a presentation from Pennsylvania Certified Organic and an optional quarterly meeting. A $10 donation is suggested for those staying for lunch.

This event is being offered at no charge to participants. Registering before the event is encouraged and appreciated! Registration deadline: June 2, 2025, 11:45pm. Register here: https://extension.psu.edu/pasture-walks-with-extension-dairy

June 25, 2025, 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Livestock Handling and Animal Health

Misty Brook Farm, 156 Bog Rd., Albion, ME 04910

Knowing proper handling and first-aid techniques can save lots of money and grief when raising livestock on your farm. Jacki Martinez Perkins, a long-time homesteader and MOFGA's dairy and livestock specialist, will demonstrate livestock handling with an interactive Q&A at Misty Brook Farm. In addition to covering livestock handling and health we will discuss programs to support livestock farmers and implement more organic practices.

Please wear footwear that can be bleached for biosecurity purposes. Register here: https://uvm-edu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZArc--oqT0iGtNlOHOyM08JQRcAYiwco2j3#/registration

NODPA News is Published Bi-Monthly
January, March, May, July, September & November

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.

2025 Ad rates and sizes listed below.

Deadline for advertising in the July 2025 issue is June 15, 2025.

Full Page Ad (7.5" W x 9.75" H) = $660
1/2 Page Ad (7.5" W x 4.75" H) = $340
1/4 Page Ad (3.625" W x 4.75" H) = $190
1/8 Page Ad/Business Card: (3.625" W x 2.25" H) = $100

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

Classified Ads:
Free to organic dairy farmers and business members.
All others pay a flat rate of $30.

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

Please send a check with your ad (made payable to NODPA).
30 Keets Rd., Deerfield, MA 01342 or pay online by credit card at www.nodpa.com

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

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
SPRINGFIELD, MA
PERMIT NO. 1094

Classified Ads

EQUIPMENT

EQUIPMENT FOR SALE: Model 5000 Hiniker 6-row, no-till cultivator, like new condition; each row unit has a cutting disc with a single shank, ideal for high residue situation. Asking $4700. Contact Paul David Weaver, 717-530-5607, e-mail: polandsheryl@ibyfax.com

Location: Shippensburg, PA

EQUIPMENT FOR SALE: Hay/Grain ELEVATORS: New Idea 36' - $1150, and a John Deere 30' - $995. Both come with motor and are in good working condition. Contact Jeff @ 607-566-8477 or Mitchellorganics@hotmail.com

Location: Avoca NY (Steuben County)

FEED, GRAIN, HAY

HAY FOR SALE: I'm posting this for Fred Griffin in Cincinnatus, NY. He has sold his herd of organic Angus beefers and has 75 4x4 bales of 2024 baleage for sale at $35/bale. Call him at 607-345-3207 if you are interested.

Location: Cincinnatus, NY

HAY FOR SALE: Certified organic grass mix hay. 3x3x8 dry bales. $65 bale; quantity discounts; delivery available. call John, 270 331 3112.

Location: Hopkinsville, Kentucky 42240

HAY FOR SALE: NOFA-NY Organic BALEAGE, BEDDING, and DRY HAY. All large round bales priced to sell. Contact Jeff @ 607-566-8477 or Mitchellorganics@hotmail.com

Location: Avoca NY (Steuben County)