

Welcome to NODPA Field Days and Annual Meeting  
Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

This year, for the first time since NODPA was formed, our Field Days and Annual meeting will not be in person. In the interest of our health and safety (and some laws) we have postponed an in-person meeting. I will miss the conversations so important to building friendship, trust and understanding. I will most especially miss the ability to talk directly with producers and to discuss issues so important to the future of organic dairy. These discussions set the future work-plan for NODPA.

Instead we have decided to hold the meeting on as many different levels as possible for as many producers and their families to participate.

- **We will have a Producer-Only call on Thursday October 29 at 7:00 pm Eastern time; call in number is 800-566-2245 and the participant # is 877845. We can monitor who is on the call.**
- This issue of the NODPA News carries an insert with educational articles, producer panels and a keynote address that we had planned for the in-person meeting.
- All of the material in the insert plus more interviews with presenters sharing more information can be found on our website ([www.nodpa.com](http://www.nodpa.com)) for those that have access to the web.

A big thank you to all of our sponsors and supporters for their donations that covered the extra cost that made this supplement section it possible, and to help cover the expenses NODPA has with managing ODairy, the NODPA News and our advocacy work in Washington DC.

As part of the annual meeting, we usually discuss the NODPA leadership and officers. This year, all the officers have agreed to serve another term. My sincere thanks to all of them and all the producers who actively participate in the organization.

NODPA survives on a lot of good will and sweat equity, plus member dues, sponsorship, and advertising income. The driving force behind all of this great work is Nora Owens whose title of Editor and Event coordinator/Webmaster totally understates all the great work she does, and for which I am always so grateful. (Pause here for a long round of applause!) We work with a great graphic artist, Angie Holcomb, who does excellent work and is very understanding about missed deadlines. Thank you, Angie. Thanks also to our local printer, Scott Gagnon at Locust Press and our local sorting, mailing and bundling person Pam Bell at Custom Mail, who always makes up for lost time in our schedule by giving the NODPA News priority.

This past year, NODPA's number one priority has been working on the Origin of Livestock (OOL). At last year's Producer-Only meeting, my recommendation was to join with other groups and work on a compromise in order to have a regulation finalized in 2020. In the light of facts,

this was not a good recommendation and we will end 2020 without a final regulation. The first comments that NODPA made on OOL were in 2005, and it has been a perpetual struggle against the reality that exceptionally large scale operations have made use of every loophole possible in order to avoid the intent of the one-time exemption. In 2020, there is an adequate supply of organic dairy replacements and those operations that want to preserve the genetics and the herd immunity built over the years have had eighteen years to transition. To let this exemption continue for either of those reasons undermines the financial and personal investment that organic dairy producers have made in their organic herds. While the exemption can be enforced on a small scale, it is increasingly difficult to do so with larger herds. NOP and many certifiers do not have the database of herd ownership and data on transitioned animals to fully enforce existing and proposed regulations. We all recognize the potential for consumer backlash if they realize the ease with which conventional animals are moved into the organic dairy herd. Our next steps will obviously be a topic for the upcoming Producer-Only meeting.

We continue with our membership with the National Organic Coalition and the Organic Farmers Association, both of which I serve on the Executive Committee. We are also members of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) and participate in some of their committees as time allows. These memberships allow us to participate at a more intense level on national policy and organic regulations. They provide the support necessary to represent producer interests on the National Organic Standard Board. We have signed on in support of many grants that provide valuable resources for producers and join other organizations in advocating for issues as diverse as ‘milk is bovine milk’ to “Economic Analysis Report for the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices (OLPP) Rule Withdrawal.” Recently we worked closely with our allies in DC to ensure that organic milk is within the same commodity category as conventional milk in order for producers to take advantage of grant money as part of the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP).

In keeping with NODPA’s educational mission we have published, printed and mailed six issues of the NODPA News to over 2,000 homes per issue, this year. Why do we continue to print a publication when so many have become electronic? Many producers do not subscribe to internet services, many rural areas are poorly served by the internet and many prefer to read the printed word so we stick with a publication that is the producer’s preference and reaches a lot of folks who value the information. We have not neglected the electronic tools that we can easily access. We have upgraded our website and are working with a local provider with software that allows us more control in posting information on the web. The NODPA website and Enewsletters keep the information flowing and they are used by the media plus a very diversified consumers base. ODairy continues to be used as an exchange of information, farming and herd health tips and more recently advertising organic cows for sale.

This last year has been difficult for everyone on many different levels. We encourage feedback on the services we provide and the issues we advocate for, plus welcome any new ideas. We usually come away from Field Days with many new ideas and issues that need advocating for. I hope this year's Field Days can be the same, so call, email or post on ODairy your thoughts and issues that are important to you. **Don't forget the Producers-Only Conference Call on October 29<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm.**