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NORTHEAST ORGANIC DAIRY PRODUCERS ALLIANCE

NODPA NEWS



FEBRUARY 2003 VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

Organic Industry News

Dairy Replacement Standard: Intent Clear Yet Issue Remains Confused

By Kathie Arnold

As has been detailed in past issues of NODPA News, the National Organic Rule as written, contains seemingly contradictory wording on origin of dairy replacement animals. However, when one reads the Preamble of the Rule, it is very clear that the intent was to have all dairy replacement stock under organic management from the last third of gestation (which means the last three months before birth) once a herd has transitioned. At their October 2002 meeting, the National Organic Standards Board recommended that *"On existing organic dairy farms all replacement or expansion dairy animals shall be under continuous organic management from the last third of gestation."*

The issue has been brought to the fore recently here in the Northeast by Richard Mathews, National

Organic Program Manager. Producers and certifiers are reporting that Richard has voiced his interpretation at Horizon producer meetings in ME, VT, NY, and PA saying that dairy farmers who transition(ed) their herd for 1 year at 100% organic feeding can buy in conventional replacements and put them on organic management for one year prior to milk production, whereas any producers who have or will transition their herd in less than one year of feeding 100% organic (i.e. the current 80:20

shipping milk.

Emily Brown Rosen, Policy Director of Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI), believes that this whole confusion on origin of dairy livestock is *"based on bad formatting of 205.236(2)(iii). This section should have been a new paragraph- 205.236(3) and not fall under the whole herd conversion exception....It's only a bad numbering scheme that gives us all this trouble."*

Congratulations

Henry Perkins & Henrietta Beaufait

Bull Ridge Farm
Albion ME

Top Horizon Milk
Quality Producer in
the Nation!

This farm will be the site of the 3rd Annual NODPA Field Days to be held this coming August. More details in the next issue of the News.

NORTHEAST ORGANIC
DAIRY PRODUCERS
ALLIANCE

MISSION STATEMENT

To enable organic family dairy farmers, situated across an extensive area, to have informed discussion about matters critical to the well being of the organic dairy industry as a whole.

The authors of the Rule wrote a descriptive Preamble to the Rule that detailed their reasoning behind the Rule. The following quotes from the Preamble (Federal Register page 80570) clearly show that the intent was that organic replacements are to be from the last third of gestation and that the reason that the one year from freshening wording was included was to allow a one time whole herd transition.

“After the dairy operation has been certified, animals brought on to the operation must be organically raised from the last third of gestation. We did not incorporate the NOSB’s recommendation to provide young stock with nonorganic feed up to 12 months prior to the production of certified milk. By creating an ongoing allowance for using nonorganic feed on a certified operation, this provision would have undermined the principle that a whole herd conversion is a distinct, one-time event.”

“The conversion provision also rewards producers for raising their own replacement animals while still allowing for the introduction of animals from off the farm that were organically raised from the last third of gestation. This should protect existing markets for organically raised heifers while not discriminating against closed herd operations. Finally, the conversion provision cannot be used routinely to bring nonorganically raised animals into an organic operation. It is a one-time opportunity for producers working with a certifying agent to implement a conversion strategy for an established, discrete dairy

herd in conjunction with the land resources that sustain it.”

The following position on the intent and interpretation on origin of dairy livestock came out of discussion that took place last fall during a breakfast meeting at the September NOSB meeting and was put to paper by Leslie Zuck of PCO.

The Livestock Committee and organic community have struggled with the language of the Origin of Livestock section of the rule for 18 months now. This recommendation is the result of a joint effort of many components of the organic community – producers, certification agencies, large and small operations, and regional representatives. In drafting this recommendation, the committee considered several premises:

Premise #1

Everyone concerned – the USDA, as well as producers, consumers and certification agents – would be best served by a simple, rational and unified interpretation of the rule.

Premise #2

It is in the best interests of everyone -- the producers that must abide by this rule and the USDA and certification agencies that are charged with the responsibility of enforcing it – that we adopt a fair, just and nondiscriminatory interpretation.

Premise #3

The interpretation should fit in with current organic practices. Organic dairy farmers must be able to meet the requirements, with some

changes, perhaps. It should not crush the industry, but should allow it to continue to grow.

Premise #4

In addition to being simple, fair and attainable, this interpretation should be legally justifiable without a rule change.

We believe that the drafters of the rule also considered these premises. That is, their goal was to write a regulation that would be:

- ⇒ rational;*
- ⇒ nondiscriminatory;*
- ⇒ consistent with industry practices; and*
- ⇒ legally justifiable, enforceable and defensible under the Act.*

The NOSB Livestock Committee interpretation of Section 205.236 as requiring that once a dairy herd is certified, regardless of the method of getting there, all animals shall be under organic management from the last third of gestation -- is consistent with the previously stated premises.

In the course of discussing this issue, many questions have been asked that I would like to address.

One question asked has been --- Why does the exception in 205.236(a)(2) state that milk or milk products must be from animals that have been under continuous organic management beginning no later than 1 year prior to production?

This language was included in the rule to comply with OFPA. It is a minimum requirement. Without this clause, all herds would have had to start by raising all

“Finally, the conversion provision cannot be used routinely to bring nonorganically raised animals into an organic operation. It is a one-time opportunity for producers”

The Preamble

their animals organically from last third of gestation. This would have been prohibitive and the Act recognized that. Also, without the "1 year" clause, there could never have been a herd conversion allowance.

It does not mean that replacement animals can be purchased from conventional sources and managed organically for 1 year before producing organic milk. The only part of the rule that deals with replacements is 205.236(a)(2)(iii), which requires organic management from last third of gestation. The Preamble supports this.

Another question we have been asked -- Does the requirement that replacement animals be under organic management from the last third of gestation only apply to dairy herds that go through conversion in compliance with 205.236(a)(2)(iii)? No.

The language in (iii) clarifies that the clause applies to all dairy herds, no matter what route they followed to become certified. The writers wanted to emphasize that the conversion could not go on indefinitely. This is supported by the Preamble.

The writers probably assumed that most new producers would opt to take advantage of the conversion exception. Industry practice supports this. It would have made no sense for the writers of the rule to have included (iii) unless they meant for it to apply to all dairy producers. There would have been no reason for them to have

intentionally created an unfair and discriminatory burden forever on producers who transitioned their herd and their land

The writers probably did not anticipate that the "1 year" language in (a)(2) would be construed to allow nonorganic replacements.... The absence of any specific reference to purchasing nonorganic heifers after certification, means that it not only wasn't the intent, the issue wasn't even anticipated.

in compliance with the conversion allowance.

The writers probably did not anticipate that the "1 year" language in (a)(2) would be construed

to allow nonorganic replacements. Otherwise, they would have crafted the language differently or at least dealt with it in the lengthy and detailed Preamble. The absence of any specific reference to purchasing nonorganic heifers after certification means, that it not only wasn't the intent, the issue wasn't even anticipated.

And finally, a very important question -- Will this interpretation create a hardship for some producers? Yes, initially.

There is no question that the requirement of last third of gestation for all replacement animals will create a hardship for many producers initially. The committee recognizes that it will take some time for producers to get there, especially considering it takes at least 24 months to create an organic dairy production animal. Due to the confusion over this issue, the committee anticipates that producers and certification agents will work within their organic systems plan to meet this requirement within a reasonable time, depending on the constraints of the individual certified operation.

Although it may seem unfair to some producers initially, it creates a level playing field for all producers over the long term.

NODPA will continue following this discussion and will be advocating for a fair, non-discriminatory, clear conclusion to this issue.

Horizon Organic Milk Quality Award Winners

Horizon Organic recognizes the top 10% of producers providing Horizon with exceptional quality milk each year at their annual producer meetings. Each producer receives a plaque. This years Northeast winners are:

Maine
Henry Perkins*, Albion
Joe & Paul Roseberry*, Richmond

Vermont
John & Sheri Pearl, Danville
Eugene & Nancy Bedard, Orange

Pennsylvania
B.S. Beiler*, Christiana
John & Malinda Lapp, Ephrata

New York
Scott & Traci Laing*, Hermon
David & Susan Hardy*, Mohawk
Siobhan Griffin*, Schenevus
Charles Deichman, Belmont
Michael Donovan, Bath
Chris Schwartz, Avoca
Les & Jim Miller, Richfield Springs

*repeat winners

Congratulations to All !!

Organic Farmers Working Together: OFARM
By John Bobbe

The Organic Farmers' Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFARM) began with organic farmers from a number of organizations discussing formation of a marketing-agency-in-common in 1998. In December, 2000 OFARM officially came into being and currently has seven member organizations. (Great Lakes Organic, Ontario; Midwest Organic Farmers Coop, Illinois; Buckwheat Growers Association of Minnesota, Organic Bean and Grain Marketing, Michigan; Organic Farmers of Michigan, Kansas Organic Producers Association and National Farmers Organization, Iowa.) Collectively, these organizations repre-

sent the largest single organized block of organic production in North America covering producers in 18 states and Ontario.

OFARM's mission is to coordinate the efforts of producer marketing groups to benefit and sustain organic producers.

The Capper-Volstead Act of 1922 authorizes farmers to come together in associations and cooperatives for the mutual benefit of pricing their products through marketing-agencies-in-common.

Collective Marketing Expertise

Organic producers face many of the same marketing challenges and pitfalls that conventional producers face. The Number 1 prob-

OFARM's mission is to coordinate the efforts of producer marketing groups to benefit and sustain organic producers.

lem is getting a fair price for what they market to cover not just their costs, but also a fair return for their labor, management and family living. The organic market place is no longer just local or regional. Global events impact local prices and markets.

Marketers from all OFARM member organizations meet on a regular schedule via conference call

to discuss crop and weather conditions, contract information, prices and market trends, inventory management and buyer information. These mar-

ketters work to gain the cooperative edge for their producers. Producers assist in establishing OFARM target prices for grain and other crops.

Under the OFARM umbrella the marketers develop and share reliable pricing and market information that is by and for organic producers. This is a complete reverse of the strategy developed by the industry. For too long, farmers have been at the mercy of buyers who share only the information they choose to share to complete the sale at the lowest possible price.

Benefits to organic grain producers

Maximizing the producer member take home return from each sale is the goal of networking and collectively sharing pricing and market information. Other benefits OFARM marketers have that in turn help producers include:

- ⇒ Developing reliable inventory information
- ⇒ Remaining current on markets and market trends
- ⇒ Strengthening your position in the market by eliminating one-on-one negotiations with buyers
- ⇒ Developing and monitoring producer-friendly contracts
- ⇒ Developing and monitoring a list of sound, credit-worthy buyers for OFARM member groups
- ⇒ Enhancing opportunities to add alternative crops and agronomic practices to farm rotations

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(Livestock Healthcare Practice Standard 205.238(a)(2)-USDA-NOP)

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OFARM works solely for the benefit of organic producers.

Benefits to dairy & livestock producers

OFARM member organizations work as a team to coordinate pricing, inventory and other crop information. Organic livestock, dairy and poultry producers who must purchase inputs have an interest in adequate and reliable supplies of grain from the nearest possible source to meet their needs. In some cases, alternative grains and protein sources can complement or substitute for parts of a feed ration and may be more economical and available. OFARM marketers can assist in meeting those needs.

Short-term price spikes due to factors like drought and price drops due to excess inventories are not in the long-term interest of grain producers who sell grain or livestock producers who buy grain. OFARM members stand ready to work towards a mutual goal of profitability of both the livestock and grain sectors of the organic industry by being a reliable, quality supplier of grains at prices that can accommodate profitability in both sectors.

OFARM and organic grain buyers

While the first and foremost emphasis of the OFARM marketing groups is fair equity for the producers, buyers also stand to benefit from business relationships with OFARM marketing groups. Marketing groups, networking with each other, become reliable suppliers of quality organic grains to meet users needs at the time and location required to fill their customers demands. They can serve to eliminate the buyers and end users need to maintain a cumbersome and costly procurement structure. As the geographic area of the OFARM influence continues to increase, the buyer's vulnerability to regional

variations in supply decreases. The price stability that OFARM brings to the organic industry is in the best interest of all parties because it serves to provide the needed sustainability base for the future OFARM growth and development.

OFARM representatives are currently making contacts with producers in a number of additional states and several Canadian provinces. The concept of local and regional marketing groups meeting the marketing needs of area organic producers and then networking under the OFARM umbrella is a concept producers are supporting.

Future directions for OFARM

Leaders and marketers in the OFARM network are receiving numerous inquiries about bringing this same network communication and marketing expertise to organic livestock, poultry and dairy producer groups. Discussions are under way with interested groups on how to best incorporate these sectors into the OFARM network. We are also exploring opportunities to increase farmer profits by developing identity-preserved products.

Visit our Web site at www.ofarm.org. You will find up to date information to assist you in keeping current about OFARM and markets including OFARM target prices for grain and other crops. You will also find a calendar of meetings and other events of interest to organic producers and links to other sites with relevant information to assist you in planning and decision-making. Our quarterly newsletter is also posted.

Please feel free to call us at 866-846-5511 for information on how OFARM members and marketers can assist you.

John Bobbe is OFARM executive director. He helped organize and facilitate the

first meetings that lead to formation of OFARM under the auspices of the Institute for Rural America, an Iowa based non-profit organization. Previously he helped develop and coordinate the Great Lakes Basin Managed Grazing Network for the Wisconsin Rural Development Center and has also worked as economist and consultant for the National Farmers Organization, Ames, Iowa. He grew up on a central Wisconsin farm which he and his wife own and manage.

More Organic Milk Sought in Northeast

Lancaster Organic Farmers Cooperative is seeking more milk in PA. If interested, contact Levi Miller by leaving a message at 717/768-7582.

Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative is planning significant producer expansion in the New York State and New England regions for 2003. Expansion of the Pennsylvania pool region is also being considered. Interested producers are advised to contact their regional certification agencies and to begin & maintain the 80% whole herd conversion and practice alternative herd management. Please contact Tim Griffin at (888) 444-6455, extension 285.

Horizon Organic is looking for new producer partners in New York & Vermont. They can contact Cindy Masterman @ 888-648-8377.

**Lancaster Organic
Farmers
Cooperative**

By Lisa McCrory



In April, 2002, a group of 21 organic dairy farmers in Pennsylvania decided to form their own cooperative and to call it the Lancaster Organic Farmers Cooperative (LOFCO). This decision came about after a few years of frustrating relations with Parmalat (who would then sell the organic milk to Natural by Nature). Knowing that the contract between Natural by Nature and Parmalat was going to be ending in December, 2002, the dairy farmers decided to form their own cooperative, which officially started in January, 2003, and sell their pool of milk to Natural by Nature and other interested parties.

Since creating their cooperative, Parmalat spent some time and energy trying to rekindle relationships with the producers and Natural by Nature. In the process, 5 of the 21 original producers have chosen to sell their milk to Parmalat (who is offering \$21/cwt).

Another farm from the original 21 was lost because they decided to quit milking and sold their herd.

Losing some of the producers broke the solidarity of this new cooperative to some degree, but the remaining 15 producers have continued on their intended course and are selling all of their milk to Natural by Nature. Consumers have been very supportive of this new endeavor and the Lancaster Organic Farmers Cooperative is very excited about its new relationship with Natural by Nature. In celebration of this new partnership, Natural by Nature has included the following on all of their

milk cartons:

We, at National Dairy Products Corp. are excited to announce the formation of the Lancaster Organic Farmers Cooperative (LOFCO). LOFCO is made up of the same family farms that have been supplying milk to us for the last 7 years. The formation of this new Cooperative has been a joint effort between our farmers and ourselves and marks the start of an exciting new chapter in our venture. With LOFCO, we will be able to have a smoother supply line of high quality organic milk for you and the LOFCO farmers will have a better price for their milk. It is the goals of both National Dairy Products Corp and LOFCO to become a model of farmer/processor cooperation. We salute LOFCO and thank you for supporting our efforts. Fresh to you, 'FROM THE MEADOW TO THE MARKET'."

LOFCO is paying its producers \$21.25 cwt base price. There are 4 more farms transitioning to organic production, so by the end of the year, the cooperative will have 19 producers. LOFCO is looking for more producers to meet the growing demand for their milk.

**LOFCO is paying its
producers \$21.25 cwt
base price**

There are no equity requirements to be a part of this cooperative, but a nonrefundable membership fee of \$500 is required at the beginning. There is also ten cent per hundredweight deduction taken off the \$21.25 base price which goes towards administrative costs, including the time and expenses for Board of Director meetings, and a \$10 stop charge for hauling.

The current members on the board (all organic producers) are: President: David Martin, Vice President: Roman Stoltzfoos, Secretary:

Levi Miller, Treasurer: Ben Glick, Other: David Fisher.

To learn more about LOFCO, you can contact Roman Stoltzfoos at 610-593-2415.

**Comment on Proposed
Grass-Fed Labeling**

Rick Hopkins, President
American Pasturage, Inc.

Comments on the proposed USDA grass fed labeling rules are needed. The claim for grass fed will read that 80% of the animal's diet will have come from pasture. According to the NCBA's argument, 85% of the diet of a conventional feed lot steer would come from pasture therefore satisfying the intent of the rule without making any industry changes. Beef in the super markets could have grass fed labels with absolutely no change in the method of production

If the beef industry is influencing this labeling change, then they are cognizant of the grass fed market and are seeking to suppress independent producers opportunities to market a differentiated product. Comments are open until 31 March 2003. It will be up to producers and consumers to respond with comments to prevent another labeling scam by the USDA and industry.

Comments may be submitted to Chief, Standardization Branch, AMS Livestock and Seed Program, USDA Stop 0254, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-0254; telephone (202) 720-4486; fax (202) 720-1112; or e-mail marketing-claim@usda.gov.

Comments must be submitted on or before March 31, 2003.

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Organic Production

magazines.

Are Grass-Fed Meats and Milk Good For My Health?

By Sarah Flack

Flack Family Farm, Fairfield VT

This season it seems that more people are specifically shopping for *grass-fed* meats, eggs and dairy products. Several articles published earlier this year in the New York Times, as well as in some magazines and local papers are raising awareness and demand for these foods. Well informed MD's, Naturopathic practitioners and other healers are now recommending that their patients seek out grass fed products including meats, eggs, raw milk and other raw grass-fed dairy products.

We've all been hearing that livestock, particularly ruminants, who are fed mostly or all pasture produce meat and milk (or more specifically the fats in the meat and milk), which

Research tells us that meat, milk and eggs from grass-fed animals tend to be high in nutrients including beta-carotene, vitamins A, E and D, omega-3 fatty acids and conjugated linoleic acid.

have different amounts and types of nutrients than grain fed livestock. In addition to information about the higher levels of certain nutrients, researchers are also showing that grass fed meats and milk have a lower chance of carrying many types of food born pathogens which are becoming more common in the "mainstream" food supply. Jo Robinson's book *Why Grass-Fed is Best* has been available for several years, her website provides updates on recent articles from researchers on the subject, and in the last few years additional information has been reported in the Stockman Grass Farmer, New York Times, and other

Much of this information isn't new, it is just being re-discovered. Weston A. Price (DDS) assembled powerful clinical and anthropological evidence for the healing and disease preventative power of such foods, which he summarized in *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration* in the 1930s. The work of Vilhjalmur Stefansson (researcher, anthropologist, explorer, Harvard graduate, Dartmouth professor and author of many books including *The Fat of the Land*) as well as research by Frances M Pottenger M.D. (Author of *Pottenger's Cats*) and numerous other clinicians in the

1930s through 1950s assembled more of this information.

Research tells us that meat, milk and eggs from grass-fed animals tend to be high in

nutrients including beta-carotene, vitamins A, E and D, omega-3 fatty acids and conjugated linoleic acid (CLA). There are also other important nutrients in these foods, but these are not well understood because grass-fed foods have not been a significant part of our diets during most of the past 50 years. Standard research has been oblivious of the

tered nature of the diets studied in the second half of the 20th century.

It is important to note that the amount of pasture relative to the

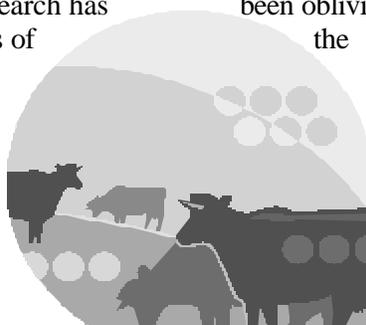
It is important to note that the amount of pasture relative to the amount of grain in the diet of grazing livestock has an effect on how much of these nutrients will be present in the meat, milk or eggs.

amount of grain in the diet of grazing livestock has an effect on how much of these nutrients will be present in the meat, milk or eggs. How beef cattle, dairy cows, poultry, sheep or goats are grazed, fed

supplemental grains and stored winter forages determines the nutrient content and nutrient density of the foods produced. Processing (cooking, pasteurization, fermentation, culturing, ripening...) further impacts the final nutrient content of the food. In fact, this processing is a subject that would need a whole separate article to discuss fully!

This article is an attempt to summarize some of the information on the nutritional quality of grass fed meats, eggs and dairy products. None of the information here is mine... this is just an attempt to put some of it in one place. I've included a large number of references in each section, as well as additional sources of information at the end.

In this article, each grass fed product is discussed separately, starting with the non-ruminants (poultry and pigs), which, while grazing some, will be getting a significant portion of their feed from grains and other food. The ruminants (cows, goats, sheep) have a very different digestive system, and can meet all of their nutrient needs from pasture. Included are some of the research results linking these "grass-fed" nutrients to our health, research on the



pay well for your efforts to raise them!

Poultry: Eggs from hens which have access to pasture (green growing plants... not just an outdoor area), lay eggs which contain higher amounts of omega 3 fatty acids (up to 20 times the amount found in regular supermarket eggs). Eggs from pastured poultry may also contain more folic acid and vitamin B12.² Anyone eating one of these eggs will notice that the yolk also is a bright yellow/orange (beta carotene) color instead of pale yellow. There are also differences in the meat of chicken, with pasture-raised chicken containing more vitamin A and omega 3 fatty acids.

Research links dietary intake of omega 3 fatty acid (an essential fatty acid), with reduced risk of cancer, heart attack and some mental disorders.^{3 4 5 6 7 8} Some research has shown that a diet high in omega 3 fatty acids (found in grass fed products) relative to the amount of omega 6 (found in vegetable oils) is linked to a lowered risk of breast cancer.⁹

Turkeys, which seem to be able to eat more pasture as a percentage of their total feed intake than chickens, appear to be able to store more CLA in their meat than other birds.¹⁰ Research on CLA suggests that it may be anti carcinogenic, anti diabetic, reduce the risk of heart disease and reduce body fat.^{11 12}

Pork: Much of the effect of pasturing pigs seems to be from how pigs convert sunlight into Vitamin D, which is stored in their fat (lard). Lard from outdoor pigs is very high in Vitamin D, second only to Cod

Liver Oil^{13 14}

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farmers!**

Milk: Dairy products from grass fed cows (cows fed NO grain) contain significantly more CLA as well as increased amounts of Vitamin A, vitamin D, omega 3 fatty acids, beta-carotene, vitamin E and other nutrients.¹⁵ Research by Dr. Tilak Dhiman shows that to produce milk with the highest possible content of CLA the cows must be fed NO grain. He found that feeding as little as 15 pounds of grain each day to a dairy cow lowers the CLA content so that it is the same as a confinement fed cow.^{16 17 18} Also, some research has shown that milk from cows that graze on intensively managed pasture contain fewer undesirable bacteria.¹⁹

Meat: Researchers say grass-fed meats contain higher amounts of omega-3s, CLA, beta-carotene, and vitamin E. Research by Dr. Tilak Dhiman showed that feeding even small amounts of grain to beef steers, even if they are later finished on grass signifi-

cantly decreased the amount of CLA in the meat.²⁰ His research showed that when producing beef, feeding any grain lowered the CLA content.

However Dr Dhiman's research showed that for dairy cows, the CLA content of the milk was maximized after only 5 days of no grain feeding. If you are focusing on producing meat or milk with maximum CLA content, there is some interesting research now available on how the different types of stored winter feed contribute to meat and milk quality.^{21 22}

Several research studies have suggested that grass fed meats have a lower risk of several types of food born illnesses.^{23 24} This information, combined with some of the recent recalls of meats processed at large centralized packers has encouraged many consumers to buy local grass fed meat.

Marketing: The way this information will effect how we each manage our farms, and how we market our foods will vary from farm to farm. For a dairy farmer there is no pricing incentive right now to produce 100% grass-fed milk, unless it is all direct marketed under a farm label. This may change in the future, as I've read recently about several ventures to produce grass fed ice cream, cheese and other products. Many consumers are already buying mail order butter from New Zealand and Ireland from dairy farms who have 100% grass fed cows. There is also demand for locally produced raw milk from 100% grass fed cows (it is legal in Vermont to sell a small amount of raw milk on the farm). How-



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ever, until there is some additional economic incentive to produce 100% grass fed dairy products, the number of dairy farms managed that way will be small.

Whether it is dairy cows, sheep, beef or goats, transitioning to no grain feeding is challenging and requires beginning by rearing grain free young stock. Selection of suitable breeds or bloodlines is also necessary, as is having high quality pastures and an excellent understanding of and skill with grazing management. For farmers producing eggs or meat and marketing them locally there is already economic incentive to feed more grass and decrease grain feeding. Meats and eggs labeled "pasture raised" or "pasture raised and finished" are already in demand and that demand is growing.

In addition to research supporting the higher nutritional value of these foods, and the lower risk of food born illness associated with them, consumers are also attracted to some of the other benefits of grass farming, including improved animal welfare and the many environmental benefits. Hopefully some of this new information can benefit more farmers in the future by helping them improve farm income while also taking good care of their animals and the land.

For more information: Jo Robinson's website www.eatwild.com contains abstracts of many articles on this subject. Her book *Why Grass-fed is Best* also contains some of this information. Unfortunately Jo Robinson's book (and the work of many of the contemporary researchers and reporters) contain some misunderstandings about fat and meat, encouraging lean-

ness and low-fat. Good grass-fed meats should not be lean (and grass-fed milk should be whole, not skimmed), as the nutrients discussed are carried in the fats. The brilliant studies of Price, and Stefansson's 1929 experiment and supporting anthropological work (now in the Dartmouth library), are sadly forgotten by most modern researchers and reporters. If you would like to read

some of this information, read *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration* by Weston A Price DDS, *The Fat of the Land* by Vilhjalmur Stefansson (1956, MacMillan), and *Pottenger's Cats* by Frances M Pottenger M.D.

For more information on the effects of many of these nutrients on human health, read *Cholesterol Myths – exposing the fallacy that saturated fat and cholesterol cause heart disease* by Uffe Ravnskov M.D. Ph.D., *Know Your Fats* by Mary Enig Ph.D., *The Milk Book* by William Campbell Douglass, MD, *Nutrition in Biblical Times* by Ruth F. Rosevear, *Nourishing Traditions* by Sally Fallon and Mary Enig Ph.D., *Wise Traditions Magazine*, and *Soil, Grass and Cancer* by Andre Voisin. Some interesting websites include www.price-pottenger.org, www.westonaprice.org and www.rawmilk.org.

Sarah Flack farms with her family in Fairfield Vermont, where they graze American Milking Devon Cows, Gloucester Old Spot Pigs, sheep, turkeys, chickens and horses. Sarah has a bachelors degree in environmental biology and agriculture and a Masters degree specializing in grazing from the University of Vermont. You can contact Sarah by phone: 802-933-6965 email: sarahf@globalnetisp.net web page: www.flackfamilyfarm.com

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Feature Farm



Caldwell Farms

Turner, Maine

By Lisa McCrory
& Mia Morrison

History of Caldwell Farms

The Caldwell Family Farm was established in 1944 by Lawrence and Hilda Caldwell and boys, Lawrence Jr. and Ralph as small children. The farm is now run by Ralph, wife Sandra, 3rd and 4th generation family, several longtime employees, as well as Lawrence Sr, who is still actively involved at age 85. Lawrence Sr and Hilda began with 5 Holsteins. By the mid-90's, through hard work and a strong work ethic, Caldwell Farms had grown into a 225 registered Holstein operation with one of the highest production averages in the state.

In 1998, Ralph began to seriously consider the idea of organic production. Their operation was practically organical, using manure as the only nutrient source, no hormone use, and low to moderate antibiotic use.

In March 1999, the Caldwells sold their 225 head milking herd, but kept all 250 of their heifers. At this time, Ralph purchased 100 head of feeders to consume the transitional forage that did not meet organic standards and sold the animals on the natural beef market. Within 5 months, the heifers began to freshen and on August 1st, Caldwell Farms shipped their first load of organic milk to Horizon Organic.

Management System Today

Caldwell Farms currently manages a herd of 300 registered Holsteins. The milking herd of 150 is housed in a free stall barn, with access to the out-

doors. They are given free access to grassland during pasture season as well as access to a TMR. The cows choose to graze at least half their total feed during the peak of the season, while during drier months, the milkers will turn to the TMR for a greater percentage of their intake. In addition to corn silage and haylage, the TMR includes roasted soy, corn meal, wheat, barley, custom blended minerals, and baking soda.

The dry cows are split into 2 groups. The far off group is fed a ration of 50-50 moderate quality hay and corn silage, while the close-ups are fed a ration with good quality wheat straw and corn.

Many calves are raised on nurse cows in pens, 3-5 calves per brood cow, until 8-9 weeks of age.



Milk is sometimes offered in a pail. Most of these calves will be eating silage and grain within 10 days, chewing their cud soon after. At 8 weeks they are weaned and moved to group pens of 8-10 animals. The Caldwells like to keep the young ones close by so that they can be seen frequently. They have little to no calf health problems. Young stock (6 months to milking age) are moved to their facility in Leeds, where the animals have free access to the outdoors all year round. These animals

are raised 100% as grazers during the pasture season.

Nutrition and Farm-wide Practices

The Caldwells believe in high quality feed, balancing a good ration, and keeping stress low. Ralph grows some of his own soy beans, buying in about 75%, but roasts it all himself. His mineral mix is custom blended. Ralph has seeded down 425 acres to a mix of alfalfa, medium red clover, fescue, and reed canary grass, 125 of which is permanent pasture, the rest being hayland.

Ralph composts the pack manure from his calves, heifers, and dry cows. He uses this compost in conjunction with hen dressing on his row crops and also sells bulk compost. Grassland is spread with liquid manure from the free stall.

Caldwell Farms does not use artificial breeding. Instead there is a bull that runs with the milkers and another that stays with heifers greater than 850-900#. Ralph's strategy is to provide the highest quality product when the processors need it the most. The cows and heifers are bred to calve in the fall when the demand for fluid milk is high. High volume and excellent quality at a time when it is needed makes Caldwell Farms a good producer for Horizon. In addition, Ralph is dedicated to and well respected by the organic milk community as a whole.

Preventative Health Practices

The Caldwells have little to no major health issues on the farm. They maintain an excellent standard of quality, with somatic cell counts consistently below 200,000. They do their own pregnancy checks and call on their veterinarian for twisted stomachs or calf bloat once in a great while. Ralph's daughter, Deed is learning about homeopathy and is open to all naturopathic treatments.

Calves are given E. coli shots and heifers are given their calf-hood vaccinations and a Staph aureous vaccination at 1 year of age. The milkers receive the triangle 9 vaccination 2x a year.

Organic Beef and Other Markets

Caldwell Farm’s milk is shipped to Horizon Organic. The Caldwells also sell raw milk, which is still legal in Maine. Ralph’s daughter Deed, who is very involved in the business started selling milk and butter (about 20 gallons a week) at the Camden Farmer’s Market (May to November) last year, which they enjoy because there is a more personal relationship with the customer. In addition to these dairy products, she also sells natural and organic meat at the Camden Farmer’s Market and health food stores.

Conclusion

Ralph maintains that the success of Caldwell Farms is due to the hard work and dedication of the extended family. From grandchildren to his 85 year old father, the family shares a great working relationship. He feels that they work together well and that his father and mother have been a great model of integrity and outstanding work ethic. Both Lawrence and Hilda are still involved. Ralph also feels very lucky to be involved in Maine state agriculture; he has been an influential figure in town politics as well as being involved in state legislation.

Some Thoughts on Holistic or Alternative Veterinary Medicine

By Richard J. Holliday, DVM

This is the second installment of a two part article by Dr. Holliday that NODPA News will be printing.

SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT STRESS

- Stress is known to lower immune function and may be the primary factor that sets the stage for animal disease.

- There are three categories of stress.

1. Environmental or physical stress, such as faulty nutrition, bad water, lack of sanitation, poorly designed and maintained equipment, unsuitable habitat, etc. Good management has some influence on most of

these but can not control all of them. For example, weather cannot be controlled but the effects can be mitigated with proper housing.

2. Physiological stress usually associated with reproduction and lactation. We can minimize some of the effects of this type, but we can not totally eliminate it.

3. Psychological stress may occurs when weaning, changing groups, establishing a new “pecking order”, etc.. This type can be held to an acceptable level with good management.

- All animals vary in their ability to accommodate stress. Some differences are due to inheritance ... species, breed and sex. Others are associated with the individual’s life history of health and disease. Older animals do not accommodate stress as well as younger ones do. A kid that suffers an episode of severe scours/pneumonia may survive, grow and appear thrifty even though some irreversible damage to heart, lungs and intestinal lining may forever impair it’s ability to pump blood and absorb oxygen and nutrients. Under stress this animal will probably show earlier and more severe symptoms than others in the same group that did not go through the sickness

- Stresses are cumulative. A small stress has a greater effect in an animal already carrying a big stress load, than it has in another relatively stress free animal .

THE VITALITY CHART

Over many years, I have developed a graph or



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**** From New York organic farmers to New York organic farmers ****

map that allows me focus my thinking and helps me keep the various aspects of health and disease in their proper perspective. Any animal's relative health status can be plotted on this graph. Since this Vitality Chart also seems useful to illustrate certain principles of holistic thought. I would like to share it with you and will use it as the basis for this article and for almost all future discussions of health and disease.

On the chart, note that the "vitality" line on the left side (looks like a thermometer) runs from PERFECT HEALTH to DEAD. I purposefully do not assign any numbers because the positions are variable and I'd rather think in terms of relationships and not absolutes. I doubt we ever attain perfect health but "DEAD" is common.

The "profitability line" indicates a relative loss of production, profitability or performance. The "clinical line" by definition separates healthy animals from sick animals. Based solely on the presence or absence of symptoms. These lines are actually wide, gray areas and their position arbitrary and quite variable. It depends a great deal on how well the herdsman relates to and observes his animals.

Physiological and psychological stresses are represented on the chart as a wavy gray line. These stresses usually occur at predetermined times, such as parturi-

tion, weaning, and other routine changes or events.

If an animal progressively declines from good health to sickness or even death (going straight down the left side of the chart), it will first cross the 'profitability line' as it becomes less productive and then the "clinical line" when it begins to show symptoms of disease. These symptoms may be mild at first, ... "a little off," ... gradually increasing in severity until "DEAD". (See Vitality Chart) We know and accept that there are differing levels of illness but our management decisions frequently seem to be based on the premise that animal "B" is just as healthy as animal "A". We all know that different levels of health do exist but in practice we tend to overlook this because "A" and "B" both look equally healthy even though there is great difference in their respective vitality. Production records and breeding records are a great aid to identify those animals that have lost

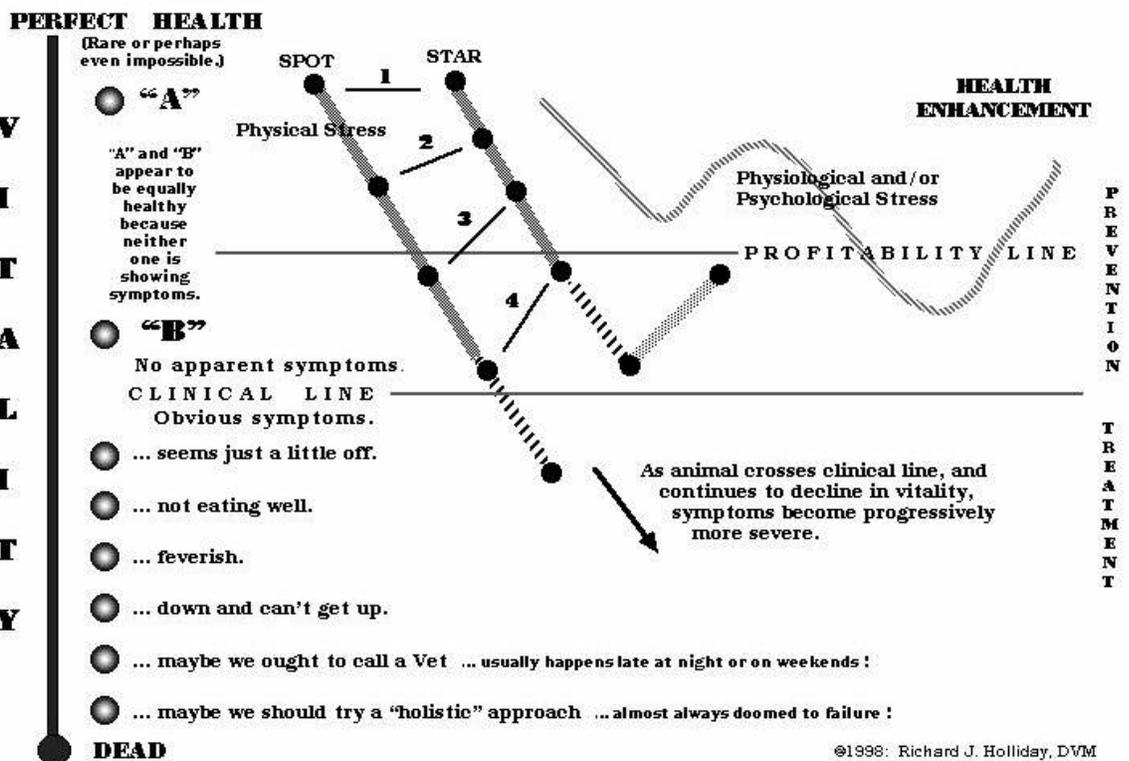
productivity but are not yet showing symptoms.

Let's compare the reactions of "Spot" and "Star", both living a relatively stress free life and having a high level of vitality. (position 1 on the chart) If something happens to their ration and they are subjected to nutritional stress, they will probably both decline in vitality to position 2. Notice that Spot was affected more severely, possibly because she suffered a grave illness when young (as discussed earlier). Both still appear to be healthy and productive but some of their "reserve" is used up.

Adding another stress causes both to slip down to position 3. Star is still doing well but now Spot has dropped under the profitability line. She shows no clinical symptoms but performance or production testing may indicate problems. In a dairy animal this could be evidenced by lowered production, a change in SCC or an

VITALITY CHART

(or Life Force, Chi, Wellness, ... whatever you want to call it !)



impairment of breeding efficiency.

Add one more stress and Spot and Star fall to position 4, both below the profitability line. Spot is dangerously close to the clinical line but still shows no obvious symptoms although a really close observer might see mild symptoms developing.

As one last insult, let's expose them both to pathogenic bacteria capable of causing disease. Both suffer the same loss of vitality from this exposure (striped line). Star dips in vitality but does not go "clinical". She is able to overcome the infection because she had some resistance left. Spot drops over the line and begins to show symptoms. Conventional medicine would diagnose the bacteria as the "cause" of her disease.

This example is obviously oversimplified to illustrate a principle, but does beg the question: "In this example, did the germs cause the disease? Or would it be more accurate to ask: "Did the bacteria trigger a disease in an animal that was already suffering from stress-induced, low vitality?" I go with the trigger theory. The deciding factor was not the presence or absence of a disease organism, but the presence of induced, low vitality?" I go with the trigger theory. The deciding factor was not the presence or absence of a disease organism, but the presence of absence of a strong immune system. Obviously, microorganisms do vary in their ability to cause disease and a highly pathogenic organism may be able to cause disease in relatively stress

free animals. These epidemics however are probably not as costly in the long run as the day-to-day losses incurred by common infections.

I think we give germs way too much weight as the cause of problems. My guess is that a germ can't tell if an animal is dead or alive ... but if an animal is so "stressed out" that it "tastes" dead to the bacteria, they immediately begin the recycling process. In a dead animal we call it decomposition ... in a live animal we call it disease. In the grand scheme of things, the "bugs " are probably only doing the job assigned to them.

SOME OBSERVATIONS BASED ON THE CHART

- Let's go back to poor old

Spot's predicament. We could give her some antibiotics and hopefully kill enough germs to get her back up over the clinical line. Or, we could treat her with herbs, or homeopathy or whatever and probably help her enough to shut off the symptoms. BUT, unless we eliminate the stresses that put her at the susceptible level in the first place, we have really only installed a big Band-Aid!

- Timing is critically important. If you start treatment early, a mild treatment has a greater chance of getting results. If this is not successful, you still have time to escalate to a more heroic treatment. Some conventional dairymen overlook the importance of timing when their hope for a spontaneous recovery leads them to withhold treatment of sick animals until the last possible moment in order to minimize the economic loss of discarded milk or meat. A holistic treatment does not have this disadvantage and can be used anytime.

- Generally speaking, the closer to the top of the chart we recognize a problem and begin to correct it, the lower the cost.

- If healing and/or health occurs at all, it is a function of the natural inclination of the animal to be healthy. Drugs, from whatever source derived, only aid this natural process.

- Just because an animal shows no symptoms does not mean it's healthy.

- The final stress that triggers symptoms is usually not the primary cause of the illness. For example, bacteria may "trigger" mastitis but the real "cause" may be nutritional defi-

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2003 NE Organic Dairy Producers

Approximate number of certified farms [# transitioning in brackets]

- ? **Maine: 50 (12% of total dairies in state)**
- ? **Vermont: 65 [10 Tr.] (4%)**
- ? **Connecticut: 4**
- ? **New York: 120 [13 Tr.]**
- ? **Pennsylvania: 84**
- ? **New Jersey: 1**
- ? **Massachusetts: 1**

iciencies or other stresses.

A QUIZ!

If you are already following holistic principles or aspire to do so, you should be able to answer these questions. If you can't answer them, you have some homework to do.

1. Is the ration adequate with no excesses, deficiencies or toxins? Were the feeds grown on fertile soil with little or no chemical contamination? Are the feed ingredients appropriate to the species, type and age of the animals?
2. Is the water pure? Has it been checked for nitrates and other harmful chemicals? What is the actual nitrate level in the water? Do you drink from the same water supply as the animals? Does the water taste good to you?
3. Are there any harmful electrical or electromagnetic influences on the premise? Do you ever receive mild electrical shocks when working in the area where the animals are kept?
4. If used, is milking equip-

ment properly maintained and adjusted?

5. Are all procedures involving the animals such as milking, vaccinating, and routine surgery carried out in a timely and sanitary manner?
6. Do your animals have a clean, dry, well-ventilated environment when confined? Can you kneel down in the pens without getting wet knees? Is breathing uncomfortable or unpleasant to you when breathing at the same distance above the ground as the animal breathes in air?
7. Is there any evidence of mold, mycotoxins or aflatoxins in the feed? Some are not apparent until symptoms occur, ... have you checked?

Please feel free to contact me with any questions, comments or criticisms at rjhdvm@rconnect.com or rjhdvm@aol.com

Dr. Richard Holliday has worked for IMPRO for the past 18 years as the Technical Services Veterinarian. Prior to that, he had a private mixed practice in northwest Missouri for 25 years. He became certified as a Veterinary Acupuncture in 1988 and has been actively promoting organic agriculture and holistic veterinary medicine for over 30 years.

**

Disclaimer: NODPA does not endorse companies or businesses, but wants to provide education and resource information for organic dairy producers. We urge organic producers to check with their certifier before trying a new product or practice.

Curtailing

Antibiotic Use In Animal Agriculture

By Margaret Mellon
Union of Concerned Scientists

On behalf of Keep Antibiotics Working (KAW), a coalition of concerned health, consumer, agricultural, environmental, humane and other advocacy groups all working to reduce the growing public health threat of antibiotic resistance, I hope you will consider endorsing legislation to curtail antibiotic use in animal agriculture.

The growing incidence of antibiotic-resistant disease is a serious problem in human medicine. One approach to curbing the massive use of antibiotics in animal agriculture is passage of federal legislation. Bills introduced during the last Congress would have phased out routine, nontherapeutic feeding of eight specific classes of medically important antibiotics to food animals in two years, unless the FDA first concluded that such use did not contribute to antibiotic resistance affecting humans. The bills would not have limit legitimate therapeutic uses of the named antibiotics.

Over 180 agricultural, health, consumer, and environmental organizations have lent their support to this legislation to date. To add your organization's name, please contact Terri Stiffler at Environmental Defense tstiffler@environmentaldefense.org or tstiffler@environmentaldefense.org

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Organic Dairy Panel at Empire State Pasture Day

By Lisa McCrory

The Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance held its second Annual Field Days Event August, 17th, 2002, in Truxton, NY and the following day participated in Graze New York's first Empire State Pasture Day at the Burgett Farm in Tully. This event focused on the numerous aspects associated with rotational grazing and pasture/hayland management. Speakers were scheduled though out the day including a panel discussion on organic dairy farming organized by NODPA. Producers from Maine, Vermont, Pennsylvania and New York shared their experience relative to four specific areas on their farm. Below is a write-up of this fantastic panel discussion. Thanks again to all the producers on this panel and to the NODPA volunteers that helped organize this event.

Dave Johnson, Liberty PA

Dave has a 50 cow seasonal organic dairy herd in Liberty, PA. He started from scratch 4 years ago. He came into farming with no previous experience and carefully looked into the best and most cost effective way to dairy farm. He started his seasonal grass-based dairy with the intention of being certified organic from the start. Dave does not push his cows for production, but instead strives for a healthy, low stress environment for his animals (producing 12,000 lbs per cow per year). Another way of keeping costs low for this farm means that the whole farm is in grass and the animals do most of the harvesting; there is minimal use and

need for machinery.

Transition:

David started the certification process in the fall of 2000. At that time, certification requirements mandated that the land be free of synthetic fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides for 3 years and the herd needed to be managed with 100% certifiable feed and health practices for 90 days before the milk would be considered organic. Since the Johnsons were grass based (intensive rotational grazing), and had started dairy farming with the intent of being organic, transitioning for them was not that difficult or expensive. Being seasonal, there is at least a 6 week period of time when their herd is not producing milk and the cost of feeding the cows is at its lowest. The transition period was timed to take place during the dry period.

Market:

David emphasized the impor-

tance of having two critical things in line before taking on any costly changes: 1) get a market lined up (contact the different processors buying milk in your area) and let them know that you are interested in producing organic milk, 2) get a commitment from a buyer; it is highly recommended to get that commitment in writing. David contacted CROPP and Horizon when he started looking for a market. At that time Horizon was not interested in seasonal herds, but CROPP was interested in his milk, and he started shipping to them in March of 2001.

Calves:

The calves are born from March to late May on the Johnson's farm. Three groups of calves are eventually created; they are raised on pasture in movable sheds. The young animals are trained to electric fence as soon as possible. By the time they are 6-8 months, the calves are moved to an open sided barn and wood lot for shelter. Round bales are placed strategically in the pasture where the calves will winter.

Paul & Maureen Knapp, Preble, NY

Paul and Maureen milk about 70 cows and are located in Preble, NY. They have been rotationally grazing their animals for the past 5 years and shipping their milk to an organic buyer for the last year and a half.

Transition:

Prior to getting certified, the Knapps had worked a lot on cow health using homeopathic remedies and other approaches that would be allowed under organic certification. Once they were comfortable with their animal health practices the decision

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to transition seemed like the next logical step. Other parts of their transition have not been as easy. Not all of their land is certified yet; some of it is still in transition and as a result they have to buy a lot of feed. It has been painful for them, but they will make it through it.

Market:

Finding a milk market was easy for Paul and Maureen. They had three processors to choose from at the time that they were interested. Not knowing when there would be another recruitment for organic milk, they decided to get certified before all their land was done transitioning. This would require selling their transitioning feed and buying certified feed to make up for what they were unable to grow.

Calves:

The Knapps put up a Cover-All greenhouse style building to house all ages of animals in pens on a bedded pack, calves included. The

calves are raised in groups of 6-8 in a pen using a 10-teat mob feeder. The calves benefit from the natural light and abundant ventilation of this building as well as having access to a waterer at all times. Homeopathic remedies are administered at birth as preventatives and to help start calves on the right track. No vaccines are used. The calves seem to respond well to this system and the Knapp's plan to get a pasture suitably fenced so the calves can have some outdoor time.

Mark & Sarah Russell, Sudbury VT

Mark and Sarah have a seasonal organic dairy in Sudbury, VT. They milk about 42 cows and have been rotationally grazing their animals for over 8 years and certified organic for 5 years. A unique feature about their farm is that they out-winter their animals.

Transition:

Their transition to organic production was smooth because they had been working on sustainable farming practices years before getting certified. They moved from a confinement dairy, bringing the feed to the cows, to a grass based dairy, and finally to seasonal/grass based dairy production. Through this process of change, they also realized that antibiotic use was not an effective way to treat their cows and focused

on preventative management strategies instead. Shortly after, they joined the growing number of certified dairies in Vermont.

Market:

“With a little forethought, transitioning can be easy,” says Mark, “thinking sustainably first, and securing the market next”. One day, when someone asked him why he wasn’t organic, Mark couldn’t answer the question. That got him curious and he started looking into the organic market. He secured a contract with one of the processors and planned his transition. The required transition time in 1996 was 90 days 100% organic feed and 90 days health management practices that complied with the organic standards. Being a seasonal grass based dairy farm, the Russells planned their transition time to take place during the dry period so the added grain costs (from purchasing organic grain) was very little.

Calves:

The Russells keep their calves with their mothers until weaning (75-80 days). They want them really robust for the weaning process because when they separate them from their mothers (the weakest part of their management, Mark feels), it takes one week before the blatting stops. The calves are kept on grass from birth until they leave the farm (at weaning) and are raised outside all of the time until they get milked. Nurse cows have worked well in the past; they would graft a calf onto a cow with a high somatic cell count which would feed the calf and sometimes bring the count down to a reasonable level and enable them to bring the cow back into the production string.

Ralph Caldwell, from Turner, Maine, was the fourth member on this panel. Caldwell Farms is the NODPA News Feature Farm in this issue. Their history, management systems, and practices are discussed in detail on pages 10 and 11.

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Dear Jim

Answering your alternative healthcare questions

Hello Everyone,

My name is Jim Gardiner. My wife, Nancy, and I operate an organic dairy farm in central New York along with our four children. Over the last thirteen years, my wife and I have worked at finding alternatives to medications through the use of vitamins, minerals, and herbal foods to help our livestock recover from dis-ease. In this column, I hope to relay some of the information we have compiled over the years to help other farmers and their animals with their struggle against dis-ease.

What can be done when cattle and calves have respiratory type dis-eases?

Of course, the first area of question would be management. Making sure animals are well bedded, ventilated, and fed a balanced diet are the foundation for healthy dis-ease resistant animals. Being observant of what signs of abnormality the animal is showing us will lead you to what body systems are in need of nutritional intervention. Some of the typical signs that can be observed are a runny nose, hair that is rough looking or standing up, coughing, labored breathing, an appetitive that is starting to or has disappeared, and the condition of the animals bowel movements. The most important system of the body needing address in an ill animal is the bowels. If you are naturally observant, you may have already noticed the changes that occur in the formation of the manure prior to any other outward signs of illness. The following suggestions are for cattle whose dis-ease process

has been detected early on:

For loose bowels in calves, we have had success using slippery elm bark powder. We use 2 table-spoons (T) in milk along with a natural type of vitamins A, D, and E powder that is accepted by your certifier, along with a suitable lactobacillus bacteria supplement twice daily (vitamin supplements differ, use as directed on label.) Be sure to use the mixture quickly as it will gel once milk is mixed with slippery elm powder.

For cattle and large heifers, we use 4 T slippery elm bark powder twice daily plus the recommended amounts of vitamins A, D, and E and lactobacillus bacteria that are stated on the labels of the products you have chosen.

For calves with hard or non-existent movements, we use 1 teaspoon (t) Cascara Sagrada herb powder along with the vitamin and bacteria supplements mentioned above. For cows, we use 2 to 4 T Cascara Sagrada (depending on the size of the cow) along with vitamin and lactobacillus supplementation. The Cascara Sagrada should be put in water and used in a drench tube as the Cascara Sagrada is very bitter.

Once we have addressed the bowels, we move to the respiratory system. We have found a combination of Lobelia and Comfrey to work very well at relieving labored breathing. The great thing about using Comfrey is that it grows quite well here in the Northeast. Farmers in Europe have also discovered its benefits as they actually use it as a forage. It is very nutritious and produces good tonnage per acre.

The amount used for calves with respiratory distress is 1 t each

of Comfrey powder and Lobelia powder mixed in milk twice daily until normal breathing returns.

A good preventative for respiratory illnesses in calves is one t Black Walnut hulls powder twice daily in their milk. It supplies a great deal of B complex vitamins and bioflavonoids useful in reducing weather stresses.

For adult cattle, we use 2 T of Lobelia in the evenings for two days, then skip two days, then give for two more days as to not stress the calf she may be carrying. If the cow is not pregnant, then it may be used daily. The Comfrey (root or leaf powder), along with the Lobelia, is used at the rate of 4 T twice daily. We add in 1 T Cayenne Pepper until symptoms are relieved.

Remember these two areas, watch and listen to what your animals are trying to tell you about their health, and using good sound management practices are the keys to avoiding many health problems in the first place. It is also important to check with your certifier on the certification status of products that you may use before beginning the use of these products.

Deadline to submit questions to Jim for the next issue: April 15

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Disclaimer: NODPA does not endorse companies or businesses, but wants to provide education and resource information for organic dairy producers. We urge organic producers to check with their certifier before trying a new product or practice.

Being observant of what signs of abnormality the animal is showing us will lead you to what body systems are in need of nutritional intervention.

On-Farm Composting - Keeping It Simple

By Steven Wisbaum

While the practice of organic or sustainable farming has grown almost exponentially over the past twenty years, many of the farms using these methods have still not substantially incorporated composting into their soil fertility and manure management strategies. This despite the fact that composting has long been considered one of the cornerstones of these low-input agricultural systems. There are a few key reasons for this "compost gap".

First of all, the issue is not so much the lack of information but rather, the quality of that information. In some cases, available information is too technical, too general, or simply inaccurate. In other cases,

the information promotes expensive and time consuming "high-input" compost methods characterized by the use of excessive turning, unproven compost inoculants, and costly process monitoring devices. And in far too many cases, the information presented simply lacks the practical perspective farmers need to develop affordable composting strategies.

As with so much of farming, composting is both an art and a science. And while making large quantities of compost can be intimidating to one person, the prospect can be a welcome challenge to another. In either case, having the opportunity to be guided by a more experienced composter substantially reduces the intimidation factor and shortens the learning curve.

Fortunately, more and more farmers are discovering that good quality, weed and pathogen-free compost can be made cost-effectively by simply using high-quality ingredients, maintaining proper moisture levels with specialized compost covers, and turning piles thoroughly two to four times to mix and chop ingredients, restore pile "porosity", and ensure all the ingredients are exposed to the hottest and most biologically active areas within the pile. Farms that don't generate their own

manure are also minimizing production costs by using surplus manure and waste feed from neighboring farms and/or recycling residential or municipal organic waste (i.e. food, leaves, grass clippings etc.).

In some areas of the country, on-farm composting can be even further simplified by utilizing "custom" or itinerate composting services. Using specially designed compost turners with turning capacities between 300 and 600 cu yd/hr and sharing travel costs with other growers, the cost of these services can be as little as a dollar or two per cu yd of finished compost. An added benefit is that a portion of this compost can then be sold to offset turning costs or even generate a profit. Besides avoiding the substantial capital investment in a turner or the time required to turn piles using much slower methods such as a bucket loader and manure spreader, these custom composting businesses will typically provide technical support and advice at no extra charge.

Steven Wisbaum has been making compost for over twenty-five years. In 1996, he founded Champlain Valley Compost Co. and now provides custom composting services to farms and businesses throughout Vermont. He has written numerous on-farm composting articles and guides including the recently published sells his own compost products in Vermont. He can be reached at (802) 425-5556 or through his web site at www.cvcompost.com where many of his articles and publications can also be found. A more detailed analysis of these costs is outlined in "The Cost-effectiveness of Custom Composting - Five Case Studies" written by the author. This document can be obtained on-line (click on ARTICLES) or contact Steven directly

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NODPA REPS
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NEWSLETTER

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We welcome submissions and letters.
Please send to: NOFA-VT, attn: Dairy
Tech, P.O. Box 697, Bridge Street,
Richmond VT 05477; info@nofavt.org.
If you wish to speak with someone about
concerns or questions, please contact one
of the NODPA representatives listed.

**NORTHEAST ORGANIC
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To enable organic family dairy farmers, situated across an extensive area, to have informed discussion about matters critical to the well being of the organic dairy industry as a whole with particular emphasis on:

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Classified Ads: Free to Northeast organic farmers
 All others \$5 for the first 30 words; \$.05 per word over 30
Deadline for the next issue is April 15, 2003
 Please send your ad and check (made payable to NOFA-VT) to: Lisa McCrory, NODPA Newsletter, 848 N. Randolph Rd., Randolph, VT 05061 For more

• **Note:** Ads requiring typesetting, xeroxing, statting, size changes or design work will be charged additional fees, according to the service (minimum charge \$10.00). Please

Calendar

March 3

Northern Tier PA Grazing Conference, East Troy Fire Hall, Troy PA, Grass dairying in Ireland & New Zealand with Tom & John Roche, Irish dairy graziers. Contact: J. Craig Williams: 570-724-9120; jcw17@psu.edu

March 5-6

PA Grazing and Forage Conference, Holiday Inn, Grantsville PA. Grazing in Ireland and other countries, grazing animals genetics, and more. John & Tom Roche, Irish dairy graziers; Ed Rayburn, NY grazing specialist; Steve Washburn, U of NC. Contact: Marvin Hall 814/863-1019

March 15, 2003 & April 12

Farming, Nutrition and Traditional Diets: A Seminar & Food Tasting, Flack Family Farm, Enosburg Falls, Vermont 1:30 to 4:30 Topics covered include historical information on traditional diets, nutrition and health; farming practices and how they determine food quality; locating farms that produce good food in your area and how to support those farms or create new ones; food preparation discussed including grain and vegetable fermentation and cooking, good food sources of vitamins and minerals, as well as finding and preparing good quality dairy and meats. Suggested donation \$25. Registration required: send your check and include your name and address, the number of people attending, and which date you would like to attend to: Flack Family Farm, 5455 Duffy

Hill Road, Enosburg Falls, Vermont 05450. To check on space availability at these events, email sflack@globalnetisp.net or call 802-933-6965.

March 16

2:00PM Following the Food Chain: The Politics & Ecology of Eating, Michael Pollan, Science Journalist & Best-Selling Author, St. James Church, 352 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA, Tickets \$10 at the door. Michael Pollan will talk about his lessons learned following a steer, an organic TV dinner, and a genetically modified potato through the food chain. He'll share his experience of the tension between the laws of ecology and economics, his insights into saving land and the way we eat, and alternatives to the industrial food chain. Contact Billie Best at 413-644-8971 or billie@billiebest.com

March 18

Maine Farm-Link Meeting, Benton Grange, ME, Linking young farmer to those who don't have family members to take over the farm. Steve Morrison, NODPA president, will be a presenter. Contact Susie O'Keefe at MOFGA 207/568-4142

March 22

Introduction to Holistic Management: Meeting Hall, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia County, Hudson, NY. Holistic Management provides farmers with a framework for intelligent decision making that encompasses realistic goal setting, financial planning, and wise stewardship of re

sources. The morning session will provide a basic orientation and include the experience of other farmers who have successfully worked with this approach. All participants will develop a holistic goal and learn how to go about realizing it. Instructor/facilitators: John Gerber (UMASS, Amherst), Karl North (Northland Farm, Marathon, NY), Phil Metzger (USDA-NRCS, Norwich, NY). Pre-registration is required. Info: 518-427-6537, farmfood@capital.net.

March 29

Maine Grazing Conference, Contact Waldo County Cooperative Extension, 1-800/287-1426

AUGUST 2003

NODPA 3RD ANNUAL FIELD DAY

TO BE HELD AT HENRY PERKINS AND HENRIETTA BEAUFAIT'S BULL RIDGE FARM IN ALBION MAINE.

More information will be provided in the next issue of NODPA News.



NOFA-Vermont
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
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Resources

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3 Jersey cows for sale or trade, Livewater Farm, Westminster, Vt, 802 387 4412, bill acquaviva, live-watr@sover.net,

Wanted: organic Brown Swiss dairy cattle. Brian and Liz Bawden, Hammond, New York 315-324-6926
bawden@cit-tele.com

5 Holstein heifers, about 16 months old, 1 bred, the others open & cycling. All AI sired by ABS bulls. \$1000 each, take one or all. Brian and Liz Bawden, Hammond, NY 315-324-6926

OPPORTUNITIES:

Wanted: Experienced Cheesemaker on grass based dairy. Salary \$24,000 & benefits. Contact: Allison Larkin, Sprout Creek Farm 34 Lauer Rd., Poughkeepsie, NY 12603
sprcrmt@netstep.net
Fax: 845-454-6158

Seeking employment on a grass-based dairy or meat farm. Have previous experience with beef and large-scale pastured poultry production. Leith MacKenzie, 6114 Italy Valley Rd., Naples, NY 14512; 585-374-6162,
mimackenzie@aol.com

The Organic Decision: Transitioning to Organic Dairy Production Workbook

Download a free copy as a pdf file: www.organic.cornell.edu. To receive a copy via mail, please call Faye Butts at 607-254-7412 or email fsb1@cornell.edu. \$12 cost to cover printing and postage.

Organic Agriculture at Cornell:

www.organic.cornell.edu
New Farm Online Magazine: www.newfarm.org
Tails and Tassels Newsletter

Contact Mary-Howell Martens, 315-536-9879 or kandmhfarm@sprintmail.com

Web-Based Map of Local Farms

<http://www.foodroutes.org/index.jsp>

The Milkweed website:
www.TheMilkWeed.com.

OFARM's website:
www.ofarm.org

NODPA's website
www.nodpa.com
www.organicmilk.org

Send your ads, articles, announcements, resource suggestions, etc. to:

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