

3rd Annual NODPA Field Days A Huge Success

By Lisa McCrory and Nat Bacon

The weather was beautiful, hot, and it was probably the first opportunity in weeks that farmers had to get their hay crops in. But this did not keep people from travelling from as far away as Michigan to partake in the Third Annual NODPA Field Days in Albion, Maine. Henry Perkins and Henrietta Beaufait, owners and operators of Bull Ridge Farm and the hosts for this year's event, put countless hours into setting their farm up for this gathering. They even turned their heifer barn into a 'Lobster Feeding Trough' for the Producer dinner and meeting the evening before and donated one of their heifer calves which was raffled off midway through the day. Money raised from the raffle was donated to NODPA – thank you Henry and Henrietta!!

Over 80 people attended the lobster dinner on Friday evening and 100 attended the Field days the following day. Tradeshow tents were set up filled with displays ranging from animal health products and services to resource agencies, books for sale, machinery & parasitic wasp demonstrations and more. Food was abundant, conversations were lively and I think everyone went home feeling like they learned something that they could take home and apply on their farm. One producer even credited this gathering for helping him find the organic dairy cows that he had needed to buy. Attendees traveled from Pennsylvania, Vermont, Connecticut, Colorado, Michigan, New York and Maine.

Producer Meeting Report, Friday, August 22nd

Welcoming remarks plus a history of NODPA and its accomplishments were summarized by Lisa McCrory, NODPA Coordinator. Steve Morrison, NODPA President, then spoke to the group reviewing the Mission Statement and commending NODPA for strengthening the bond between producers and allowing them to respond as a unit to important issues. Some important things that NODPA needs to do for 2003 and beyond are to build and maintain a database tracking milk flow, continue developing outreach to producers, and work on fundraising opportunities to support NODPA's efforts.

Discussions:

1) There was a question about farmer membership and how to get producers more involved. Com-

ments were to visit people 'on the ground'. Who are those farmer leaders who are connected with lots of other producers and how do we invite them in?

2) NODPA could coordinate a flier that lists livestock for sale in the Northeast. Suggested that this resource go out monthly. It was also noted that Horizon Organic and Organic Valley already provide this resource and maybe NODPA should work with them and help promote resources that already exist.

3) Organic Dairy Replacement Standards : Organic Dairy Replacement Standards are currently being interpreted in two different ways. The current NOP standards allows for some producers to source organic dairy replacements from ANY source provided they are managed organically for one full year while other producers are REQUIRED to find replacements that are organically managed 3 months prior to birth (last third of gestation). This is clearly an unlevel playing field.

At the NODPA Producer Meeting, producers agreed unanimously that once a farm has been certified organic and has gone through its one time whole herd transition, ALL replacement dairy stock must be organic from the last third of gestation. This rule must be the same for all.

On page 2 of this newsletter is a copy of the letter that was sent to the NOP and the NOSB.

Organic Dairy Health Care Panel at the NODPA Field Days

*By Nat Bacon, NOFA-VT
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Materials from Ann Wells
contributed to this article*

How do I keep my organic livestock healthy?
How do I dry off my cows without antibiotics?
What do you do about foot rot?

As I talk to organic and transitioning dairy farmers, these are the types of questions I hear on a daily basis. Animal health care is the single biggest concern to most organic livestock farmers. Managing your herd without relying on most conventional medicines can be quite challenging, especially for farmers new to organic certification. At the NODPA field days on August 23rd, attendees heard from 3 women who have extensive experience with alternative livestock health care: Dr. Ann Wells, Dr. Henrietta Beaufait,

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