

# NODPA NEWS

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

## CONTENTS:

### Organic Industry News



NE Organic Milk Market	1
ME Producers Incorporate	1
NODPA Desk	3
Aurora Dairy in Colorado	4
Org. Cost of Production	5
Perchlorate Threat	6
Processor News	9

### Commentary



Letters	10
Organic Cheese Whiz	10

### Organic Production



Feature Farm:	13
Viewpoint Organic Acres	
Environmental Mastitis Part 2 of 3	16
Livestock Nutrition Class	23

### Net Update



ODAIRY & NODPA.com	20
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### Member Info



NODPA Representatives	18
Member Subscription Info	21
Calendar	22
Resources	23
Classifieds, hats, t-shirts	24

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## Organic Industry News

### Northeast Organic Milk Market Heats Up

By Kathie Arnold

With the impending arrival of a new player in the Northeast organic milk marketplace, farmgate organic milk prices are experiencing a welcome upward movement which started this spring of 2004. As farm profits have been squeezed by rising fuel, feed, tax and other bills, along with planting and harvesting woes created by challenging weather conditions, many producers feel the price increase is none too soon to help solidify their financial condition. Both Horizon Organic and Organic Valley, aware of the farmer's cost / price squeeze and spurred by new competition at the farmgate for organic milk supplies, have responded by increasing their farmer pay prices in the Northeast.

*Do large scale producers bring negatives to the marketplace or are they a boon to organics by transitioning more acreage to organic and bringing lower cost organic products to consumers? Should we be working together with large scale producers to advance the percentage of organic in the marketplace or should we be discouraging their entrance into the Northeast?*

Change is also happening in other

### Maine Organic Milk Producers Incorporate

By Henry Perkins and Mia Morrison

In the fall and winter of 2002-03, a group of Maine organic dairy farmers met to explore the idea of formalizing their existing network to deal with the issues, challenges and opportunities related to organic dairy farming in Maine.

All current and interested organic dairy farmers were invited to attend a meeting in March 2003 at Skowhegan to identify and explore the major issues and concerns. A professional moderator compiled these discussions into a final report. A committee of 8 volunteer producers met over the next 6 months and reviewed this report to develop a strategic plan with the help of Heart of Maine RC&D and the input of \$8500 from Maine State Department of Agriculture (DOA).

During these months, this interim Board of Directors also prepared a set of by-laws, applied for state incorporation and 501c3 status, and created a letterhead and logo for the now official Maine Organic Milk Producers (MOMP) organization. A formal communication network was established for the purpose of getting information out to all farmers.

The Board currently works together in an attempt to keep up with industry news. To this end, the MOMP Newsletter was created with its first issue distributed last April. Working relationships with Cooperative Extension, Maine DOA, UMaine, MOFGA, and NODPA have been created and strengthened. MOMP co-sponsored 2

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued on page 2)

*(Continued from Northeast Milk Market Heats Up, page 1)*

aspects of the organic dairy sector in the Northeast. Maine producers, who have often felt vulnerable because of being at the end of the line via their location, have more security now that Horizon begins processing at a plant in Bangor, Maine in this summer. Possible new organic producer supply groups / cooperatives are under consideration and development by Dairy Marketing Services, headquartered in Syracuse, NY, and United Ag Services, a federation of small cooperatives in Seneca Falls, NY. Personnel-shifting among entities dealing with organic producers in the Northeast is also occurring.

The question mark on this currently very positive scene for family organic dairy farms in the Northeast is what effect the growing number of mega organic dairies in the US will have on the supply of organic milk. Is the growth in organic milk sales enough to keep us all in a healthy market? Do large scale producers bring negatives to the marketplace or are they a boon to organics by transitioning more acreage to organic and bringing lower cost organic products to consumers? Should we be working together with large scale producers to advance the percentage of organic in the marketplace or should we be discouraging their entrance into the Northeast? What do you think? NODPA News is debuting a new "Commentary" section with this issue. We hope you will write to us and share your thoughts through this forum.

It is clear that more organic milk is needed in the Northeast at present. We should all think about neighboring farms who have the right mentality to be organic and we should encourage them to consider organic production. If organic milk continues to grow at the 20% annual rate that it has over the last several years, many, many more cows and farms transitioning to organic will be needed to meet the demand. The more family farms in the Northeast that transition to organic, the stronger we will be as a sector. It's a good time to be an organic dairy producer in the Northeast!

*Kathie Arnold and her husband Rick and his brother Bob have been producing organic milk on their farm in Truxton, NY—Twin Oaks Dairy LLC—since 1998.*

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*(Continued from Maine Organizes page 1)*

Dairy Forage conferences in the fall and spring.

The Maine organic voice is now represented on the Maine Dairy Industry Association (MDIA) Board as well as having representation on the Governor's Task Force on Sustainability for the Dairy Industry. MOMP is currently giving input to several projects at the University of Maine and USDA federal research station as well as participating in a federal grant in cooperation with UMaine and Cooperative Extension.

In addition to participating in national and state level organic industry issues, the MOMP Board is working on developing an organic grain industry in-state and continues to search for alternative sources of grain.

MOMP officers are: Henry Perkins, President; Doug Hartkopf, Vice-President; and Mia Morrison, Secretary/Treasurer. Other Board Members include Ralph Caldwell, Buddy Hawes, Erik Johnson, Thayden Farrington, and Steve Russell.

Henry and Mia serve on the NODPA Board and Steve Russell participates as a NODPA Representative, bringing Maine producer sentiment to the regional level and making regional and national industry news available to the state. While NODPA continues to reach out and connect producers working in all three regions, the northeast states would benefit from formalized chapters in all its states.

*If you have questions about how to start a regional or state organization in your area contact Henry Perkins or Mia Morrison (see NODPA Representatives page 18).*



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**\*\* From Northeast organic farmers to Northeast organic farmers \*\***

## From The NODPA Desk

By Sarah Flack, NODPA Coordinator

It's hard to believe I've only been working with NODPA for 5 months. We have accomplished a lot this year, thanks to the volunteer work of NODPA's farmer representatives, as well as Lisa McCrory, Elisa Clancy and Kathie Arnold, Mia Morrison, NODPA supporters and funders and NOFA-VT staff.

Recent discussion with NODPA Reps has included: organization of the Field Day and updates on activity in other parts of the country following the winter meetings with organic dairy producers in the West and Midwest; revisions to the NODPA bylaws; producer meetings; fundraising activity; and general discussion of trends in the organic dairy industry. Your NODPA Representatives and Board are volunteers, who donate their time to allow NODPA to be a successful farmer directed organization. This fall, NODPA representatives will have their second annual elections of board members and officers.

NODPA continues to have its main office at NOFA-VT, and Lisa and I spend much of our time working out of our home offices. As NODPA continues growing, and completes the process of becoming a legally

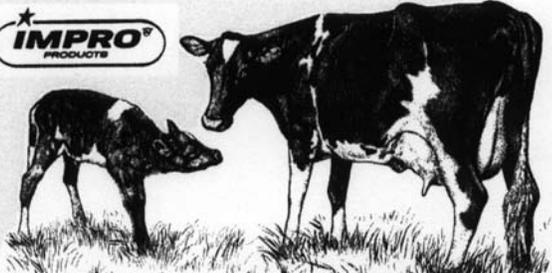
separate organization, it will be looking for a new location or host/collaborator organization and possibly some staff with knowledge of marketing issues. Until that transition occurs, NOFA-VT staff and office support will continue to be important for organizational work, administrative work, collaboration, sharing of resources and mailings.

As far as NODPA finances go, I am happy to report that fundraising efforts were successful in the past fiscal year. This spring, NODPA collaborated with individuals at NOFA -VT, Cornell University and Penn State University to give suggestions for future research projects related to organic dairy production issues, marketing and economics. We are now writing a grant application to Farm Aid which is due at the end of August.

In the coming fiscal year, NODPA is setting some higher fundraising goals. This is needed for several reasons including the fact that sources of funds NODPA has received in past years are decreasing. At the same time NODPA is continuing its current activities, expanding membership and increasing program activities. I also expect that once NODPA has its own offices and staff separate from NOFA-VT, that some costs will rise.

Fundraising work this year will include setting up a new producer check-off, as well as finding additional sponsors for the Field Days, advertisers for the newsletter, other donors and some grant proposals. In the future, hopefully the check-off and other sources of funds can increase the annual budget so NODPA can serve more organic farmers and expand its activities while also diversifying sources of funding. It is important to make sure a significant part of the funding comes directly from producers, rather than industry, to ensure that NODPA continues to be a farmer directed organization.

Feel free to contact me, or your NODPA Representatives if you have questions about NODPA or organic dairy issues. NODPA is your organization!



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## Aurora Dairy Goes Organic in CO

By Kathie Arnold

Mark Retzloff and Marc Peperzak, who co-founded Horizon Organic Holding Corporation, garnered funding in 2003 to transition 5000 cows at the existing Aurora Dairy in Platteville, Colorado to organic production along with building an organic processing plant. Clark Driftmier, Vice President of Marketing at Aurora Organic Dairy reports that the farm began conversion in July of 2003, was certified by the Colorado Department of Ag in December, and finished transitioning the herd in July of 2004. They are set to begin selling organic milk July 31<sup>st</sup> when their plant will process milk in half gallon paper-board containers for private store brands for national supermarket and natural foods chains.

Aurora Organic Dairy secured \$18.5 million in funding from such sources as Charlesbank Capital Partners LLC of Boston, which invests the endowment money from Harvard. They provided the biggest chunk of funding. Tom Lock in the 11/3/03 Denver Business Journal reported that *"The 'favorable tailwind behind organic foods' was one of the attractions of the Aurora investment for Charlesbank, said Charlesbank communications director Maura Turner. In addition, Charlesbank liked Aurora's advantageous position in low-cost production, achieved through the large scale of the farm."*

Mr. Driftmier reports that Aurora Organic is going to grocery stores to promote doing private label ventures for them. They do not plan to do any brand name production but at some point would like to get into institutional sales. Free lance writer Vicky Uhland wrote in the February issue of *Natural Foods Merchandiser* that Aurora Organic's "Target customers are the entire retail marketplace, Retzloff said, along with the institutional foodservice business, including restaurants, resorts and college cafeterias."

Mr. Driftmier stated that Aurora Organic's focus is not on organic bulk milk sales. He said that if they were to sell on the spot market in the Northeast, it would be at a much higher price than is being paid for NE milk currently, as it would cost in the neighborhood of \$6/ cwt to truck it from Colorado to the Northeast.

Mr. Driftmier states that by trying to reach the private brand niche, Aurora Organic will help grow the organic dairy system. He reports that a number of studies show that one of the biggest barriers to new consumers coming to organics is the price; 15 to 20% of all consumers would like to buy more organic but they are held back by the price. Aurora Organic's number one goal is to make organic milk more affordable to the consumer, their slogan being "We make organic goodness affordable". One way they can decrease the cost of their milk, Mr. Driftmier said, is by having their own plant, thus not having to

pay the co-packing fees that other processors pay. Their plant has the capability of both HTST and UHT pasteurization.

I asked Mr. Driftmier if their aim to produce lower cost milk would have a negative impact on the current shelf price of other organic milk brands. He replied that that he thought it would have little monetary effect on current brands; that private label brands at a more price competitive level compared to conventional milk will bring price-sensitive 'smart shoppers' into the organic fold who do not currently buy organic milk.

He states that current organic milk consumers are not price sensitive, that they are very brand loyal, and that there already are private label organic milks in the marketplace that they could choose from. In general, he stated, private label organic milk is about 10% cheaper or about 30 cents per half gallon less than brand name.

I expressed the concern felt by many organic dairy producers that large scale producers are a threat to their existence. Mr. Driftmier contends that the demand for organic milk will be greater than the supply over the next few years, that the current growth in organic dairy sales

***Aurora Organic's number one goal is to make organic milk more affordable to the consumer, their slogan being "We make organic goodness affordable"***

means that something like 12,000 more organic cows are needed each year to meet the growing demand, and that 50% of that growth is in the East. He sees now as a wonderful time for all of organic dairy producers—small and large. He went on to say that all producers, however, should be using all ways possible to reduce costs and increase efficiency—that producers will always be subject to price cost pressures.

I asked about the amount of pasture that Aurora Organic has for their cows. Mr. Driftmier answered that they have a total of 1200 acres of irrigated pasture and 5000 acres of dryland pasture. However, currently only 250 acres is available for their milking herd of 4000 cows.

Mr. Driftmier contends that the National Organic Program Rule was designed to accommodate a wide range of methods and that Western producers find different ways of upholding the Rule. He said Aurora Organic does what they call "Life Cycle Pasturing", where all their calves, heifers, dry cows, and late lactation cows are on pasture but that though the main milking herd does have access to pasture, the amount of pasture they have access to is limited. He said that the farm across the road from their dairy facility was purchased recently; it is the site of their processing plant. That farm has several hundred acres (but he didn't know exactly how many) that is being converted to irrigated pasture that he expects will be available for the milking herd next year. Mr. Driftmier also iterated the position that people in organic who practice different methods should refrain from criticizing others in organics.

*(Continued on page 19)*

## Grants Received to Study Cost of Organic Dairy Production

By Nat Bacon, NOFA-VT Dairy / Livestock Educator

What does it really cost to produce organic milk? What advice, and which numbers, can transitioning dairy farmers use to plan for the process of becoming organic? The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont and the University of Vermont (and the University of Maine and MOFGA, pending funding approval) have teamed up to try and answer these questions. With more and more interest in organic dairying in the Northeast, many farmers and others in the milk industry want to know if organic farming can really boost farm profitability, and what the process of transitioning really means. We often hear about transitioning to organic, "It gets worse before it gets better" – gathering data to support farmers going through this process would help them a great deal.

This project will 1) analyze the average cost of production of Northeastern organic dairy farms, 2) develop case-studies of organic farms that will help transitioning farmers 3) develop educational publications that can be used by organic dairy farmers, potential organic dairy farmers, lenders, state and federal officials, and the public. Who will benefit? Farmers can compare their farm's income and expenses to similar organic farms, and can use this information to fight for a sustainable pay price. Lenders will be more educated as to farm profitability, strengths and weaknesses, and better able to assist and extend credit to farmers considering organic production. Extension will have important data from which to develop educational tools.

Up until now, dairy farmers have relied on one report that is considered to be the only available financial information on the profitability and financial costs of organic dairy farms. A report in 2001 by Lisa McCrory compared economic data of 7 organic dairy farms to figures published in the Northeast Dairy Farm Summary. The report compared organic farms averaging 46 cows to conventional dairy farms averaging 65 cows. Despite 5400 pounds lower milk production per cow, the organic farms earned \$834 vs. \$556 per cow for the conventional dairy farms. The organic dairy farms also had less debt per cow, much lower total debt, and higher net worth. Since things

**Despite 5400 pounds lower milk production per cow, the organic farms earned \$834 vs. \$556 per cow for the conventional dairy farms. The organic dairy farms also had less debt per cow, much lower total debt, and higher net worth.**

change (look at fuel costs this last year!) we want to update these numbers over the next 2 years using a larger number of farms from which to create our updated averages.

Starting this fall, we will be contacting Vermont and Maine farmers to ask for your participation in the study. All information will remain strictly confidential; your name will remain anonymous. We will plan for a half-day farm visit to gather information and in return, each farm participating in the study will receive an up-to-date balance sheet and income statement for the production year that was collected plus \$150 for your time. Once the report comes out, you will be able to compare your farm's numbers to the averages, determining where changes might improve your profitability. Finally, knowing a true organic cost of production can help farmers negotiate sustainable pay prices over the long term. We need your participation to make this happen!

For more information, contact Nat Bacon, NOFA-VT Dairy and Livestock Educator : 802-434-4122

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## Perchlorate Threat Looms for Farmers

By Mike Lee

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When Merced County dairyman Tony T. Azevedo heard that a rocket fuel component was showing up in California milk, he immediately started working down a mental checklist of his herd's food and water sources. Could his organic dairy's drinking water contain traces of the pervasive pollutant perchlorate? How about alfalfa purchased from other farms? Azevedo assured himself that he was probably clean, but he didn't stop there. His co-op, Wisconsin-based Organic Valley, has commissioned a handful of tests nationwide to see whether its milk contains the compound linked to delayed mental development in children.

What's glaringly missing is definitive word from government authorities about the combined risk posed by the compound at levels at which it's being discovered nationwide in vegetables, water and milk. It will take several more months for a national picture

*Could his organic dairy's drinking water contain traces of the pervasive pollutant perchlorate? How about alfalfa purchased from other farms?*

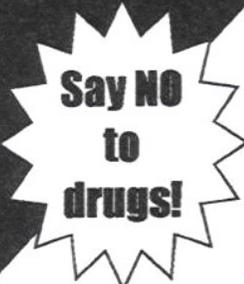
to emerge even though perchlorate has been suspected in foods since the late 1990s.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is launching a dragnet of "high-priority" perchlorate tests this summer to gauge the extent of perchlorate in the nation's food supply. The food industry, legislators and environmental groups are waiting impatiently for results that won't be complete until 2005.

"If you say rocket fuel in milk, people get pretty upset," said Rachel Kaldor, executive director of the Dairy Institute, a Sacramento-based group of milk processors. "We need more information."

California's multibillion-dollar dairy sector was unnerved in June by news that separate studies done by the California Department of Agriculture and an environmental group found low levels of perchlorate in 63 of 64 milk samples taken statewide. Federal and state experts were quick to say that the levels discovered - 1 to 11 parts per billion - were not an imminent threat.

*(Continued on page 7)*



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*(Continued from Perchlorate, page 6)*

Such assurances didn't entirely allay concern. "It's time for the federal government to ... protect our children from exposure to this harmful chemical," Sen. Diane Feinstein, D-Calif., said in a recent letter to health officials.

The issue already had some attention in Washington, D.C. - although the FDA's critics contend that the

agency has reacted slowly. The FDA's own tests on 20 milk samples confirm that perchlorate is present in milk across the country, but for now the agency is not recommending any dietary changes to avoid perchlorate. "Further studies are needed," said one agency statement.

In December, the FDA announced that it would do 500 "high-priority" perchlorate tests, including 150 on lettuce, 120 on milk, 55 on tomatoes, 45 on carrots, 45 on canteloupe and 35 on spinach. The lettuce tests are done, with results to be posted on the FDA's Web site in several weeks. Now, the agency is doing the rest of its "food basket" tests, which could continue into 2005.

The Environmental Working Group has investigated perchlorate pollution for years and authored the June study that found widespread contamination in milk. Vice President Bill Walker in Oakland hasn't been impressed with the FDA's timeliness or transparency.

*The FDA's own tests on 20 milk samples confirm that perchlorate is present in milk across the country...*

"We don't think their response has been adequate to match the potential severity of the problem," he said.

Terry Troxell, director of the FDA's Office of Plant and Dairy Foods, said the new round of tests will focus on areas such as the Colorado River Basin, where waters are known to contain perchlorate. The agency has not set a level at which it would bar foods from being marketed, nor have initial results in lettuce warranted agency alarm, Troxell said.

The FDA's food samples won't be a statistically rigorous assessment of the nation's food supply. "We are just trying to get a reasonable number (of samples) so we have a reasonable sense of the distribution of perchlorate," Troxell said. The agency aims to combine food test results with data about consumption patterns to better understand if sensitive consumers, such as young children, are overexposed to perchlorate.

Perchlorate has been around for decades but has been of increasing concern since the late 1990s as it's been detected in an array of foods by increasingly sophisticated tests. The National Academy of Sciences is currently assessing efforts by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to set safe levels for perchlorate in drinking water. That process, the cen-

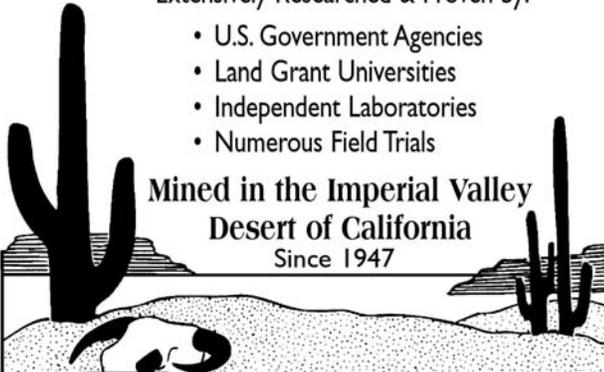
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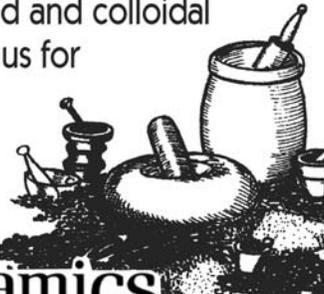


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*(Continued from Perchlorate page 7)*

terpiece in the federal response to perchlorate, is expected to take at least until the end of the year.

Perchlorate can hamper the thyroid gland's ability to take up the essential nutrient iodide and make thyroid hormones. In addition, long-term perchlorate exposure could be dangerous for infants and children because thyroid hormone disruption is known to retard development.

Perchlorate contaminates more than 350 water sources in California, along with waters in 22 states. In the Rancho Cordova area, perchlorate pollution

from rocket builder Aerojet has forced abandonment of several wells. A variety of methods are being deployed and explored in California to treat perchlorate-contaminated wells - for instance, removing unwanted particles - but they can be costly.

The Colorado River is among the most polluted water bodies, the result of a shuttered rocket fuel plant that has been leaking perchlorate into the river. The river provides drinking water for millions of people and irrigates some of the nation's most valuable croplands.

Many suspect California's milk is tainted by alfalfa grown with Colorado River water, then fed to dairy cows. If perchlorate levels in milk turn out to warrant action, dairies likely would have to identify areas where feed is grown with untainted water.

Azevedo, the Merced County dairyman, gets water from Yosemite and feed from north state farms that aren't near known sources of perchlorate contamination. However, he figures some dairies won't be so lucky. "This touches all our lives," he said. "If you eat at any time of the day, you are part of farming."

The dairy industry, larger in California than anywhere else in the country, pays close attention to anything that might turn off parents. "Any time that you have a compound that you didn't expect in any way to see in your product, you are concerned," said the Dairy Institute's Kaldor. She said sales numbers don't show consumers shying away from milk because of the attention to perchlorate in June.

The institute and others are pressing politicians to clean up tainted wells and other water supplies, find replacement water sources and stop the compound from entering waterways. "That is where it has to be fixed," Kaldor said. She also emphasized the need for a national perchlorate health standard, saying it would help address consumer concerns.

***Perchlorate can hamper the thyroid gland's ability to take up the essential nutrient iodide and make thyroid hormones.***

Almost immediately after the June report, dozens of consumers started calling the phone number on Organic Valley milk cartons. They asked questions about whether the co-op's milk had been tested and how perchlorate affects pregnant women.

Trader Joe's, the Monrovia-based grocery chain, wanted some of the same answers, prompting Organic Valley to take test milk in the regions of the country where it has member dairies, including California. "We need to respond to our consumers' fears - and we need to know," said Theresa Marquez, marketing director for Organic Valley in La Farge, Wis.

Even though there's a chance that perchlorate could scare consumers away from milk, Azevedo welcomes the attention. He said it's important for people to realize that pollution can cause problems for decades and eventually permeate the food chain. "You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure that out," he said.

*The Bee's Mike Lee can be reached at (916)321-1102 or mfllee@sacbee.com. Reprinted with permission from the 7/26/04 Sacramento Bee*



## Organic Valley Announces Major Partnership with Guida's

*By Sue McGovern, Organic Valley PR*

Two of the Northeast dairy industry's independents, Organic Valley Family of Farms, producers of organic milk along the Eastern seaboard, and Guida's Milk and Ice Cream, one of the largest dairies in New England, have formed a new co-processing partnership, it was announced by Louise Hemstead, Organic Valley Chief Operating Officer.

"The Organic Valley-Guida's partnership unites two dairy industry leaders who are both absolutely committed to independence, quality product and family values," said Hemstead. "Together we will bring New England consumers the delicious, fresh Organic Valley milk they want and have plenty of room for expansion and growth in the years to come."

Al Guida III, whose father and grandfather founded the family dairy 118 years ago, reiterated the benefits of the collaboration: "Guida's Milk and Ice Cream always wanted to enter the organic market, but it was only when we found Organic Valley that we found a partner who could share our devotion to service and the personal touch. Not only does Organic Valley

share our mission, it lives it! We're proud to make them a part of our family and help the growth of family farms and our business at its New Britain, CT location."

All four Organic Valley HTST white milks (whole, 1%, 2% and skim) are processed at Guida's Milk and Ice Cream. Both half gallons and gallons are produced. Guida's facilities, which were certified organic in 2004, include a state of the art, new pasteurization facility with plenty of growth capacity.

"Organic Valley is growing more than 20 percent a year in the Northeast. By co-processing with Guida's Milk and Ice Cream, we know we have picked the right partner to grow along with us," said Hemstead.

## Organic Valley Introduces Soymilk

Organic Valley Family of Farms, has introduced Organic Valley Soy, an organic soymilk with the unique ability to let customers trace their carton back to the exact farm where the soybeans were grown.

All of Organic Valley's soybeans are 100 percent organic, every bean is grown in America, nothing but organic flavorings are used, Organic Valley soybeans are a result of generations of soy farming wisdom and the careful selection of organic seed varieties.

## Horizon Organic Processing Milk in Bangor, Maine

*by Cindy Masterman,  
Producer Relation Manager for Horizon Organic*

At Horizon Organic's 2004 annual producer meeting in Maine, the eagerly awaited announcement was made that organic milk processing would begin in Maine this summer and the day has finally come. The plant has been certified for organic processing; the milk is available from the farms; and the final piece, distribution of the finished product, is in place. On August 9th, Horizon Organic and our producer partners celebrate the first load of organic milk being processed at Garelick Farms of Maine in Bangor. To coincide with this great event, The Organic Cow of Vermont® is introducing gallon packaging.

The new gallon containers will be distributed throughout New England. As the consumer demand increases for the product, the volume of milk that flows through the Maine plant and the opportunity for more farms to transition to organic will also increase. With forty-six family farms in New England currently shipping organic milk and another eight scheduled to come on board within the next year, this is a win-win

for all. Processing milk in Bangor and utilizing that milk locally will keep more dollars in the region.

## LOFCO Joins Forces with LANCO in PA

*By Lisa McCrory*

In July 2004, the Lancaster Organic Milk Producers Cooperative (LOFCO) joined forces with the Lancaster County Milk Producers (LANCO), a cooperative of conventional milk producers. LOFCO will continue to supply Natural by Nature, as this processor has been its main buyer of LOFCO milk since its inception in January, 2003.

LANCO, a 5 year old Cooperative with over 800 members, most of whom are Amish producers, share many of the same values with LOFCO: they are local and have similar approaches in marketing the milk and paying the farmers a good price. LANCO will be putting a lot of energy into marketing LOFCO's organic milk and sees tremendous growth potential. It is anticipated that LOFCO will be looking for more farms to supply the rising demand for organic milk in the near future.

*For more information, contact: Dave Martin, LOFCO President: 717-413-9152 or  
Levi Miller, LOFCO Secretary: 717-768-7582*

# Commentary



Dear NODPA Readers,  
We are happy to introduce a new section to our quarterly newsletter entitled 'Commentary' which will serve as an open forum for the sharing of thoughts, opinions, concerns, etc. Please send your submissions to any of the editors (contact info with NODPA representative info on page 14)

## Letters

Dear NODPA News Editors:

I thought that I'd send this article (Organic 'Cheez Whiz' Hard to Stomach) and ask you to respond with what you think and what you think we can do to prevent what some believe is inevitable...the subsuming of our organic dairy livelihood into mega-corporate enterprises. Don't we have in our hands that possibility?

I have gone down many avenues so far in the dairy business and am convinced that the big players only want to be bigger and so make the welfare of the smaller, family farmer a very distant issue compared to their primary concern which is profit and market power. That's why it concerned me that NODPA News printed the information about Dean Foods gaining full control over Horizon Organic with assurances from Dean Foods that "everything was going to continue to be the same" at Horizon. That sounded so unbelievable that I was surprised that there was no warning light somewhere else in NODPA News.

Please comment. I'm very worried and would like to do what I can to help prevent all of organic from going over to enterprises which have historically put profits first and which will surely put the principles of organic farming far down on their list of priorities. We have become organic farmers in order to have the chance to place many other principles ahead of profit. Please let's get this out in the open so that we, as organic producers, can keep hold of what we believe to be most precious to us in farming.

Greg Jackmauh  
Barnet, Vermont

Greg,

Thank you for writing and sharing your concerns. We have included the article that you are referring to and hope that your letter will be the start of discussions in future issues of the NODPA News. Readers, we want to hear from you. -The Editors

## Organic 'Cheese Whiz' Hard to Stomach

By Joel McNair

Reprinted with permission from June 2004 issue of  
*The Milkweed*

Back around 1988, a bunch of southwestern Wisconsin hill country folks, some of whom would probably fall under most definitions for "hippie," formed a cooperative to market organic vegetables, and called it Coulee Region Organic Produce Pool. Soon, seven of the region's dairy farmers banded together under CROPP in an effort to sell organic-certified milk.

I was never directly involved in those early efforts. But I had lived in the neighborhood, and knew a couple of the people who were putting in a lot of work and risk to make CROPP a go on the dairy side. And they've been successful: Last year CROPP reported \$156 million in sales, up 25% from the previous year.

(Continued on page 11)

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(Continued from Organic Cheese Whiz page 10)

### Warts were OK by me

Frankly, I've always been a bit skeptical of whether the arcane set of rules that define "organic" produce a product substantially better than conventional milk. As CROPP grew, more of its fluid milk was fried via ultra-high temperature (UHT) pasteurization, which probably negated a fair amount of any added nutritional value that might have come with organic production practices. (To my knowledge, no refereed research has conclusively shown that organic dairy products contain superior nutritional/health aspects.)

I figured there was plenty of organic rule-breaking going on, as I heard too many stories about it to believe otherwise. And as things evolved, too many "organic" farms were feeding their cows in confinement — in some cases a couple of thousand per farm — for yours truly to develop any great passion for the term "organic" as a guarantee of anything in particular. At least not the kind of passion that translated into frequent purchases at double the prices for conventional dairy products.

Then again, you could pretty much be assured that organic milk did not contain rbGH. Indeed, it was commercial approval of Monsanto's Posilac that "made" the organic milk market. One could also be pretty much assured that CROPP's "Organic Valley" milk, along with that sold by Horizon Organic, would have lower concentrations of pesticides than the norm. As a friend recently noted, organic sells on what it doesn't have, rather than what it has. In today's society, where dangers (real, or not) lurk behind every corner, there's some value in being able to state that you've taken steps toward avoiding those dangers.

### Back when organic was small

But mainly, and particularly in the early years, I had a soft spot for CROPP because it represented the best of what a cooperative could be. You had a small group of farmers with a vision beyond their bulk tanks who were willing to take some risks to turn the vision into reality.

Every single CROPP member could attend every meeting and have a vote on the important decisions. Staff was accountable, if not always perfectly professional. Veteran CROPPers often admitted their mistakes, and talked relatively openly of how they sometimes had to pay for them through lower milk returns. There were always plenty of intra-cooperative intrigues going on, as this was a bunch that did not let

things slide. Plenty of grumbling; plenty of splinter organic marketing groups.

In other words, pretty much the way things should be: Small, independent, a little disorganized, *very* passionate. These guys always livened up what was otherwise an increasingly humorless, concentrated dairy industry.

They pretty much matched the small-time nature of what organic marketing was at that time, in the days before organic had become trendy enough to attract the attention of the big boys. And of course, once the big boys get involved, all the fun ends.

### How to ruin a good thing

Lots has been written and said about the hippie business becoming big business. Right now I'm looking at a flow chart that shows some of the interconnections of the organic foods industry. Included are such decidedly non-hippie outfits as ConAgra, Tyson, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Philip Morris, Kraft, General Mills, Unilever, Heinz, Danone, Kellogg and Dean Foods.

Folks, once these kinds of companies get involved, everything gets bastardized. Everything becomes packaging, advertising, image, outsourcing, Wall

Street, scaled-up efficiency, industrial process. It all starts moving hundreds and thousands of miles. The production can be as corporate as anything else, and the labor can be as illegal and underpaid as any other.

And, once the federal government gets involved in setting the rules (USDA's edicts of what qualifies as organic came into effect a couple of years ago), then the big boys rule. If something has to change to make the square production peg fit in the round marketing hole demanded by big organic, it is going to happen. Earlier this year a market analysis organization, Data-Monitor, predicted that USDA's organic program "will change the U.S. organic market from a small business sector into one largely dominated by giant food and beverage processors."

Kevin Edberg, executive director of USDA's Cooperative Development Services, recently predicted that the involvement of the big boys will put intense pressure on organic to lower its costs (read: prices) and marketing efficiencies. Another problem Edberg sees: the 16-year olds who staff the big-box retail stores doing the consumer "education" work for organic foods. "By hitching its wagon to the mainstream grocery star, the organic industry has ceded the battle-

(Continued on page 12)

*...once these kinds of companies get involved, everything gets bastardized. Everything becomes packaging, advertising, image, outsourcing, Wall Street, scaled-up efficiency, industrial process.*

(Continued from *Organic Cheese Whiz*, page 11)

ground for effective consumer education,” Edberg said.

### What’s in it for the little guy?

So, for the little guy, what’s different about any of this? Yes, the old hippie grassroots can still force USDA to at least temporarily back off efforts to allow antibiotics and rbGH injections in organic-certified cows. (USDA tried to allow such as long as the milk wasn’t shipped to the organic market for the next 12 months, saying that some organic-certifying agencies are allowing such practices. Ag Secretary Ann Veneman backed off from the edict in late May.)

And yes, even though CROPP now claims more than 600 member farms, it still has soul: The *Wall Street Journal* reported that CROPP last year rejected a Kraft Foods overture to buy or license the Organic Valley brand. The farmers were “aghast” at the thought of their production ending up in organic “Lunchables.” However, the *Journal* also reported that CROPP is selling some milk to Kraft.

So, what do we have when organic “Cheez Whiz” looms as a distinct possibility? Or how about Horizon’s founders launching a 4,000-cow organic farm in Colorado, with processing on farm? Why should I get passionate about that? With Wal-Mart as the No. 1 organic retailer, why should one think organic is different from anything else?

What’s so great about a market profile in which Dean Foods, Horizon’s new full owner, controls up to 70% of the organic dairy market, and CROPP has the vast majority of the remainder? It’s not like there are great marketing efficiencies happening here, as the gap between organic farm milk and organic retail prices is astronomically greater than conventional. If there are any efficiencies being realized, only a small portion is being sent back to producers. Meanwhile, news reports say both the Irish and the New Zealanders are gearing up for greater organic milk production. Guess where some of it will be sold?

The same stuff that threatens to ruin conventional American dairy — consolidation, globalization, dilution of quality standards — is looking organic producers straight in the eye. Today’s \$20/cwt. milk check doesn’t look sustainable for the long term. We’ll be in the same boat as the British and Germans in the not-too-distant future, with surplus organic production, dropping prices, and farmers under the boot heels of those who buy their products.

It always happens in business. The brightest ideas tend to come from the little guy. But once the idea

becomes accepted by the mainstream, the little guy loses control to the big guy. Part of it has to do with natural business efficiencies. The other part has to do with the ability to pay off politicians.

What’s especially distressing about organic is that it started out as being something for people who cared more about their land and their families, and less about money. While the focus has yet to be entirely reversed, we’re most of the way there. Organic seems hell-bent on becoming an industrial process to the degree allowed by the rules that will continually get bent to satisfy the requirements of that industry.

Bottom line: I will be very surprised if organic dairy producers are not in the same leaky boat as conventional milk producers by around 2010.

### Solutions must be found

The primary solutions I’ve heard center around creating “better than organic” standards, and focusing primarily upon local marketing. To me, the first option faces a wall of confusion. For instance, organic dairy products succeeded where “rbGH-free” milk largely failed because the term “organic” was less confusing and more comforting to consumers. What sort of saleable brand name is going to evolve to take the place of big organic? And if a “better than organic” brand name catches the national fancy, then why wouldn’t that eventually get Wal-marted, too?

I view the local/regional option as offering more promise. Anything small obviously carries its own set of problems. Local dairy faces obstacles much greater than those confronting your average vegetable being sold at your average farmers market.

Yet quality control is easier to enforce locally and at smaller volumes. Unique products can be sold in small volumes to select customers. Business control can be maintained. What’s more, this fits with my overall vision of where U.S. agriculture is headed as energy, water and environmental realities change in coming years (see page 9, *The Milkweed*, May ‘04).

It won’t be easy. But if organic idealists want to return to their original ideals of care for land and local communities, they gotta do something different, because what organic has become is rapidly spinning out of their control.

*Joel McNair publishes Graze, a magazine for managed grazing and alternative livestock agriculture. For a free sample contact: 608-455-3311, [graze@mhtc.net](mailto:graze@mhtc.net), or P.O. Box 48, Belleville, WI 53508, [www.grazeonline.com](http://www.grazeonline.com). Joel also writes for The Milkweed, a milk marketing report; a source of dairy news and analysis. To subscribe, send a \$40 check for a 1-year subscription or \$75 for 2-years to The Milkweed, P.O. Box 10, Brooklyn, WI 53521.*

# Organic Production

## Feature Farm

### Viewpoint Organic Acres

**Dan & Darlene Coehoorn, Rosendale, WI**

*Interview conducted via email by Kathie Arnold*

#### Please tell us about your farm.

We farm 450 acres in Fond du lac County in East-Central Wisconsin near Rosendale. Our land is mostly clay loam soils and is for the most part very productive with little wasteland. Crops grown are hay, pasture with alfalfa/grass mixes, soybeans, corn, wheat, oats, peas/barley, BMR (brown mid rib sorghum sudan grass), canning peas, and rye for cover crops.

We have 55-60 cows and 50-60 heifers. We milk in a tie stall barn (comfort stalls, most with cow mattresses).

We also raise dairy steers. Presently we have about 30 head ranging from hut calves to almost finished fair steers. All of the steers are certified organic, but most of them are sold privately. We have no certified slaughter plant so they are sold as organically grown and the buyer knows that the slaughter is not organic. Usually our buyers select the slaughter plant. We have also sold some to CROPP.

Dan and Darlene are our main work force. We do take all the help our children can give. Our oldest daughter is a CPA. She is married to a schoolteacher; they live a half hour from us. She doesn't help with the physical farm work much any more as she is gearing up for a marathon she is running in to raise money for cancer research and patients. Our oldest son is a diesel mechanic and he is in the army reserves. He helps out driving tractor or whatever when he can on the weekends. Our third child is attending college and working so she is not available to help out much either but she does what she can. Our youngest will be a senior in high school this fall. He is doing a youth apprenticeship in engineering so he also works off the farm. He is our main assistant driving tractor and feeding when

he is not at school or work.

#### How did you get started in farming?

Dan grew up on a cash grain/steer farm. After we were married, we did relief milking for many farmers and we decided we would like to dairy. So we started milking on halves. In our case our landlord owned the land, one-half of the cattle, and paid half the expenses. We owned half the cattle, all the machinery, and provided all the labor. The income was also split in half. It was a great way to start without all the debt load. We did this for a number of years, building up

our equity and looking for a farm of our own. We purchased our present farm in 1989 and some additional acres in 2001.

#### Tell us about your transition to organic?

We were headed toward organics when we bought our farm, although we were thinking only sustainable farming. We never used insecticides and only lesser rates of herbicides when needed. We converted our acres gradually with our first certified crops about 10 years ago; we sold off our organic grains until we had enough acres converted

and until CROPP was ready for our milk in 2000.

Ours was a slow transition for the cattle, with elimination of most all drugs long before we became certified. We did a lot of experimentation--like using dry treat on X number of cows and not on X number of cows, all dried off at the same time. We discovered as many cows coming in with mastitis that were treated as were not treated. We decided then never to dry treat again. (We didn't tell our vet what we were doing until we were sure it was working.) Darlene's cancer increased our desire to do without chemicals and thus go organic. It has not always been easy; we have hit our share of speed bumps along the way.

#### What are your basic farm guiding philosophies and management strategies?

Quality sells its self. We aim for the best quality, working with improving our soil, crops, and cattle in



*Robert, Dan, Darlene, Ben, Danielle,  
Doralee Coehoorn*

*(Continued on page 14)*

*(Continued from Feature Farm, page 13)*

the attempt. We would like to leave our mark on our farm, making sure it is at least as good as when we got it but hoping to leave it much better for our attempts. We feel the better the quality at our end the better the quality of the finished product and the easier it is to sell for higher value.



every 50 to 60 days, air tubes are checked and changed at least every third inflation change. We pre and post dip with an iodine based teat dip. We fore strip enough milk to adequately evaluate each quarter. We use individual

paper towels for drying. Darlene wears milker's gloves for milking.

We try to eliminate as much stress as possible for the cows. We get heifers in at least two weeks prior to freshening--longer if possible to acclimate them to the barn, milking noise and being handled by people. Our cows are trained to use the same stall all the time. We feel the calmer the animal, the less stress and the better the milk out. We work hard on preventing problems; it is much easier than addressing them when things are out of control.

As a rule we never milk a dirty or wet teat, especially the tips. We dry off the teats before we strip them. Typically our highest cell count milk is fed to calves. We test owner-sampler with DHIA and are on

*(Continued on page 15)*

**Your farm has been the Organic Valley Midwest Milk Quality Award Winner for the past three years in a row, with a SCC average of 79,000 in 2003. What production and management techniques and procedures do you have in place to have achieved such a consistently low somatic cell count?**

Our cell count is something we are always working on. It has been a high priority for many years. No milk goes in the tank unless we are willing to put it in a glass and drink it as it comes from the cow. We have an NFO systems analyst go over the whole milking system at least annually. Inflatons are changed



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*(Continued from Feature Farm page 14)*

monthly somatic cell tests and have been for more than 20 years I think.

Over time it has become easier to keep a lower cell count, although every milking can have its new challenges. I think some of this is because we have culled some of the problem cows so we are constantly improving our genetic line in this area.

When we dry a cow off we quit milking her and leave her in the barn to somewhat restrict water and feed intake and keep her clean and dry for 5 days, then milk her out again. If all quarters are okay at that time she is put out in the dry lot. According to some of the other farmers who have tried this, it alone has lowered their cell count. If a quarter doesn't look okay, what we do depends on the cow, how the quarter is, and what the milk looks like. At times, we will keep her in and strip the quarter and treat with garlic and homeopathy; other times we will let her out and keep an eye on it. We usually treat with homeopathy. You need to know your cows well enough to know how aggressive to treat them.

I don't think we have all the answers by any means, we are just never afraid to question and try something new. I feel that you have to apply what works for your situation, you need to constantly evaluate how you are doing things and if something is working, research why it works and make doing things the right way your habit. If you do this it will be easier to achieve the results you are looking for. Sometimes, as it is with organics, the hardest part to change is your mind and if you make up your mind to do it, it can be achieved.

#### **Describe your nutrition / feeding program.**

Our cattle are on pasture, supplemented with a TMR consisting of haylage, corn silage, hi-moisture corn, oats and barley, balanced off with minerals supplied by KOW Consulting (Weaver Feeding & Management). We also feed some dry hay to keep a rumen mat. Rations are balanced and KOW tests feed. Minerals are used to balance feed and cow needs. Cows are on a high forage diet. Soils are tested by KOW and fertilizer is applied according to needs. We have been using Mid-Bio Ag program for many years.

#### **Describe your herd health strategies.**

We work to minimize stress on cattle at all levels, especially the cows. The barn has tunnel ventilation, long day lighting, and most of the comfort stalls have mattresses. The rear of the stalls are limed daily and

fresh straw is added over mattresses every day when the cows are in. We have tiled the manger to help keep it clean and improve feed intake. We are always working on improving our present facilities.

We don't very often have mastitis flare-ups but frequent stripping and homeopathy address them when we do.

#### **What challenges do you face?**

These days our greatest challenges come from the weather--rain, rain, and more rain--and our shrinking work force.

### **Consumers Turn To Organic Beef**

Consumers, increasingly wary of the horrors of industrial meat, bought \$10 million worth of organic beef last year, as well as several hundred million dollars of transition-to-organic or grass-fed beef. According to the Organic Trade Association, the industry is expected to grow even more rapidly over the next five years.

[www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/organic-beef.cfm](http://www.organicconsumers.org/madcow/organic-beef.cfm)



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*Jary Hirschberg*



## Environmental Mastitis

### Part 2 of 3

By Ruth Zadocks

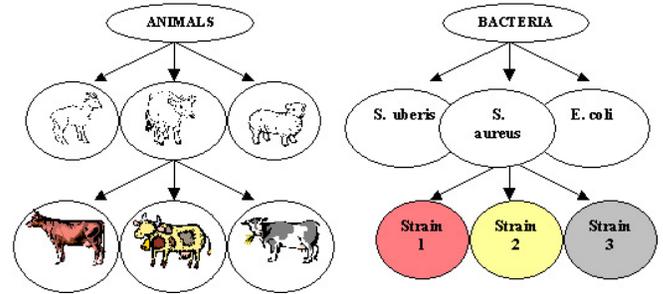
#### The Paradox of Environmental Mastitis

Many people are familiar with the terms *Streptococcus agalactiae*, Strep. species (also called “non-agalactiae streptococci” or “environmental streptococci”), *Staphylococcus aureus*, and Staph. species. Many people are also familiar with the terms “contagious mastitis” and “environmental mastitis”. And many people think they know how the bacterial names and the mastitis names go together: *S. agalactiae* and *S. aureus* are contagious, and Strep. species and Staph. species are environmental. For *S. agalactiae* and *S. aureus* it is all about the spread from cow to cow, and for Strep. species and Staph. species it is not at all about the spread from cow to cow. And that is where the “paradox of environmental mastitis” kicks in:

Not all “contagious mastitis” is spread from cow to cow, and not all “environmental mastitis” comes from the environment.

Some of the insight into this paradox is old and based on observations of the effect of management changes on the occurrence of mastitis. A lot of the insight into this paradox is fairly new and based on the ability to use DNA-fingerprinting or strain typing of bacteria. Among animals, we can identify animal species, such as goats, cattle and sheep. Similarly, we can identify species among bacteria,

e.g. *Streptococcus uberis*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, and *Escherichia coli* (see figure). Within animal species, we can identify breeds, e.g. Holsteins, Jerseys and Ayrshires among cows. Similarly, we subdivided bacterial species into strains.

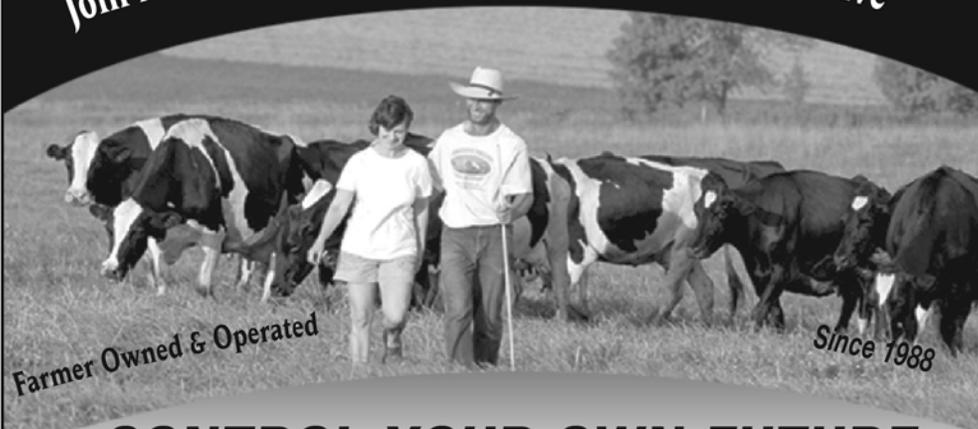


Just like animals and plant have genetic (DNA-based) and phenotypic (manifestation of the genetic information in a specific environment) traits, bacteria have genetic and phenotypic characteristics. Both types of traits can be used for identification of strains. Antibiotic resistance patterns are an example of phenotypic traits. They are very useful for farmers that want to select an appropriate antibiotic for treatment of a cow, but they have limited value for strain typing because it is a fairly coarse subdivision of the species. DNA-based fingerprinting is better suited to identify numerous different strains.

(Continued on page 17)

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(Continued from Mastitis, page 16)

There are many ways to fingerprint bacteria. Unfortunately, most methods are currently too expensive to be useful as routine typing methods (\$80 to \$120 per isolate). However, some methods are cheap enough to be of use as on-farm diagnostics at an estimated cost of approximately \$10 per isolate.

How does strain typing help solving environmental mastitis problems? In two ways: firstly, it may identify the source of mastitis. As mentioned before, in rare cases dogs, cats or people may be the source of bacteria in cows or in bulk tank milk. Imagine finding *Streptococcus agalactiae* in a bulk tank sample or a cow milk sample when you have maintained a closed and *S. agalactiae* free herd for years. Does that mean that you're on the brink of an *S. agalactiae* outbreak, and run the risk of losing a low cell count premium? Probably not. Humans may also carry *S. agalactiae* and they usually carry different strains than cows. The human strains are occasionally found in milk, and can sometimes infect a cow. But the human strains of *S. agalactiae* are not nearly as contagious for cows as the cow-specific strain. When a single *S. agalactiae* positive sample is found in a closed, *S. agalactiae* negative herd, strain typing can help determine whether there is a real problem looming due to some breach in biosecurity, or whether a human strain contaminated the milk sample, with little risk of mastitis outbreaks and financial losses.

Secondly, strain typing may help us determine whether a mastitis problem is contagious or environmental in nature. If a cow is infected with a certain strain of, say *S. aureus*, and she

transmits that *S. aureus* to the next cow, and on to the next cow, and so on and so forth, most cows in the herd would be infected with the same strain of *S. aureus*. But what if you have done everything in your power to control the transmission of *S. aureus*, by identifying the infected animals through bi-annual herd surveys, and segregation of infected animals from the rest of the herd, and new cases of *S. aureus* keep showing up every now and then, particularly in fresh heifers. Where do these infections come from if not from contagious transmission? Well, it could be that they originate from the environment. As said before, there are many sources outside of the cow's udder that may harbor *S. aureus*. And these sources may harbor many different strains. Thus, if multiple samples were submitted for strain typing, we would expect many different strains if the infections came from the environment. We know that *S. aureus* may be spread from cow to cow (most common) or from the environment to cows (much less common). Strain typing can help identify which type of transmission takes place on your farm.

And it works the other way around too: some bacteria are thought to be environmental, for example the so-called "environmental streptococci". The two most important bacterial species in this group are *Streptococcus uberis* and *Streptococcus dysgalactiae*. Although they are indeed mostly environmental in origin, outbreaks of mastitis due to these streptococci may occur. And such outbreaks may be the result of contagious transmission. Again, strain typing can help to determine what

(Continued on page 18)

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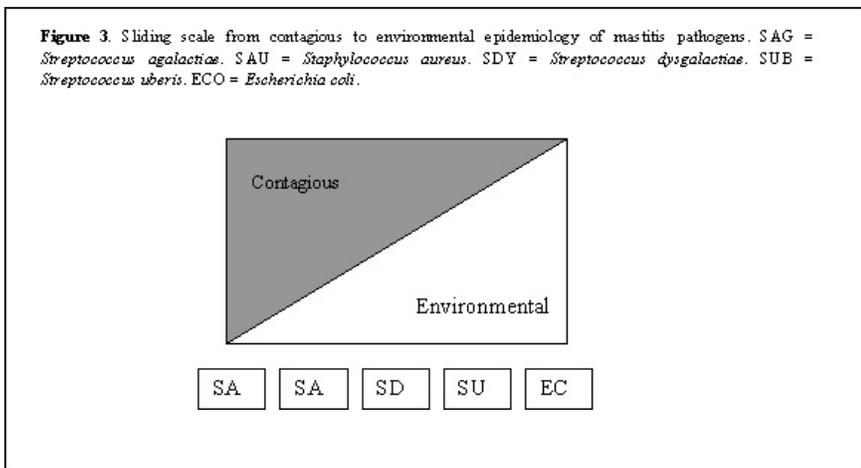
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(Continued from Mastitis, Part 1, page 17)

is going on in a specific herd: if multiple cows are infected with *S. uberis*, and they are all infected with a different strain, clearly they didn't get that infection from one-another. But if all cows are infected with the same strain, that strain may very well have spread from cow to cow, via the milking machine, or via contaminated bedding material. In that case, identification and segregation of infected animals, part of the control strategy for contagious mastitis, is the way to go.

In fact, all arguments that have been used to claim that *Staph. aureus* is a contagious pathogen also apply to *Strep. uberis*. Similarly, arguments that are used to claim that *Strep. uberis* is an environmental pathogen also apply to *Staph. aureus*. To which extent the arguments apply, differs between the species. In addition to differences between species, there are differences between strains within species. The concepts of "contagious mastitis" and "environmental mastitis" need to be interpreted at the level of the pathogen strain or the individual herd rather than at the level of the pathogen species and across all herds. Classifying all *Staph. aureus* as contagious and all *Strep. uberis* as environmental is an oversimplification of mastitis epidemiology. The

epidemiology of mastitis pathogens is better represented by a sliding scale where the balance of contagious and environmental transmission shifts gradually, than by a species-based dichotomy (Figure 3).



Part 1 of this article appeared in the May 2004 issue of NODPA News. The final installment will be printed in the November 2004 issue.

Ruth Zadoks is a veterinarian and a research associate in the Department of Food Science, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Cornell University. For questions or comments, contact Ruth at 607-254-4967 or rz26@cornell.edu.

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phone 207-568-4142

(Continued from *Aurora Dairy Goes Organic in Colorado* page 4)

Although some heifers were purchased last year by Aurora Organic, they were already certified organic at the time of purchase. Now, the herd is closed and all calves and heifers are being raised 100% organic from the last third of gestation.

Aurora Organic is working on a program to convert all their vehicles over to bio-diesel. They are working to build a new system with a company to grow oilseed crops, press the grains for oil for the bio-diesel, feed the remaining meal to the cows, and then use the cow manure to fertilize the oil seed crop. Mr. Driftmier stated that larger dairies are more able to participate in such projects and make them happen and that large farms can contribute their part to convert acres to organic. They also recently signed up for 100% renewable energy for both the farm and office through the purchase of wind energy credits.

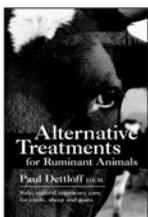
Mary-Howell Martens, of Lakeview Organic Grain, in Penn Yan, NY, received a call in June from John Berkley of Aurora Organic Dairy, checking out the price and availability of organic corn and soybeans in New York as part of a feasibility study of establishing a farm in New York. When Ms. Martens expressed serious concerns to Mr. Berkley about the impact that such a farm would have on

Northeast organic dairy family farms, both on their milk market and on the already limited Eastern feed grain supply, Mr. Berkley assured her that Aurora Organic Dairy does not want anyone in the Northeast to think they are against family farms. He did admit that Eastern organic grain prices are significantly higher than he had expected, primarily due to inadequate regional production and the high cost of freight from the Midwest.

***Aurora Organic does what they call "Life Cycle Pasturing", where all their calves, heifers, dry cows, and late lactation cows are on pasture but that though the main milking herd does have access to pasture, the amount of pasture they have access to is limited.***

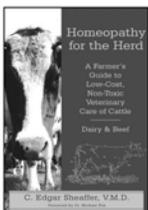
I questioned Mr. Driftmier about plans for a New York facility. He replied that John Berkley is a summer business intern for Aurora who is doing "what if" studies—what if the market grew by 50%, would Aurora buy, build, do nothing? Mr. Driftmier emphasized that there currently is no New York plan, although he said they have specifically looked at New York relative to cost, feed, pasture availability, etc. He said if they did decide to come to New York, it would likely be in the 1000 cow range, but they have not finished the cost studies yet. I left Mr. Driftmier with the challenge that should Aurora Organic come to the East, they should use the same certifier as the majority of organic dairies in that particular state. That way, producers could feel that everyone is then playing on a level field in terms of certification interpretations.

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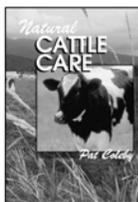
by C. Edgar Shaeffer, V.M.D. Learn how to get started in the use of homeopathic medicines with cows. Some of the topics covered: creating a holistic operation; organics and homeopathy; prescribing; mastitis and fertility-related problems; and the *Materia Medica*, keynotes and nosodes. Also includes a convenient section that lists specific conditions and remedies. *Softcover, 208 pages.* #6580 — \$24.00

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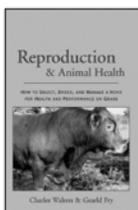


healthy balance. Topics include: correct housing and farming methods; choosing the right livestock; diagnosing health problems; nutritional requirements and feeding practices; vitamins and herbal, homeopathic and natural remedies; psychological needs of goats; breeds and breeding techniques. *Softcover, 374 pages.* #6491 — \$25.00



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# Net Update



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## ODAIRY

ODAIRY, the online discussion list created by NODPA continues to be an important source of information for organic dairy producers, agency service providers and industry representatives. There are now 219 subscribers to ODAIRY, and the level of monthly activity has increased to a high of over 81 messages per month, with the average per month this year at 53 messages. This is double the level of activity seen last year. The range of topics discussed include the organic standards, animal health, nutrition and discussion of the many events and activities related to organic dairying held in the Northeast. Most recently, there has been some very interesting discussion on the pay price of organic milk. Some regular contributors include several well known veterinarians as well as farmers and service providers, making the level of discussion extremely

*The amount of traffic to the NODPA web site has increased, with over 77 visitors per day*

## Our Web Site

The NODPA website (www.nodpa.com or www.organicmilk.org) continues to get a large number of visits from consumers, farmers and industry. Requests for information from visitors include consumers looking for products and information, farmers looking for production information, producers looking for milk buyers in their areas, agency personnel looking for information, and businesses looking to buy organic milk and other organic dairy products. The website contains educational information, articles, links to certifiers and other organizations, information and advertising about industry related businesses, NODPA survey results, calendar of events, classifieds and past issues of the NODPA news. The most popular pages are the events page and the classifieds page. The amount of traffic to the NODPA web site has increased, with over 77 visitors per day, and there are now 7 regular advertisers on the site.



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Horizon Organic continues to grow its producer partner network in the Northeast states of ME, MD, NH, NY, PA, VA & VT and also its Midwest base and is pursuing relationships in IN, IA, IL, KY, MI, MN, OH & WI. Horizon Organic offers competitive pay and long-term contracts. Producers in the east should contact Cindy Masterman at 888-648-8377. Producers in the Midwest should contact Neal Forsthoefel at 800-237-2711, x-159.

CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley is interested in growing its producer regions in the Northeast & New England now and into the future. Please contact Tim Griffin at 888- 444-6455, x285 for more information.

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*Any buyers looking for organic milk who would like to be listed for the November issue, please email the desired text to Kathie at [randkarnold1@juno.com](mailto:randkarnold1@juno.com) by October 25<sup>th</sup>.*

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Field trip, Annual Producers Meeting and Workshops on grazing and soil fertility.

Contact: NOFA-VT 802-434-4122, [www.nodpa.com](http://www.nodpa.com)

**September 1, 2004**

**Organic Fertilization & Irrigation of Pastures**

Alburg, VT

Contact: Bill Murphy, 802-878-2347 or [billita@starband.net](mailto:billita@starband.net)

**September 7, 2004**

**Maine Grass Farmers' Network Pasture Walk.**

Dave Spencer's farm, 850 Belfast Rd., Freedom, ME, 1 to 3 p.m.

Learn to measure your pasture's productivity, with Rick Kersbergen of UMCE. Contact: Diane Schivera, MOFGA, 207-568-4142

**September 17 & 18, 2004**

**Sally Fallon seminars on Healthy Traditional Diets**

Huntington, NY

For more info: 202-333-4325 or [www.westonaprice.org](http://www.westonaprice.org)

**September 18, 2004**

**Cover Crops and Soil Fertility**

Easthampton, MA, 1 - 4 PM

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**September 18-19, 2004**

**Cheeses of the Low Countries:** Live-water Farm, Westminster, VT

9am - 4 pm

Gouda, Edam, Havarti, and Trappist from Cow and Goat Milk.

**Sept. 21, 2004**

**Maine Grass Farmers' Network Pasture Walk.**

Meadowsweet Farm, with Paula and Sumner Roberts, 105 Stevens Rd., Swanville, ME. 1 to 3 p.m. Contact: Diane Schivera, MOFGA, 207-568-4142

**Sept. 24, 25, 26, 2004**

**Common Ground Country Fair** MOFGA, Unity, ME

Animals, fencing, talks on renovating worn out pastures. Contact: Diane Schivera, MOFGA, 207-568-4142

**September 24, October 7 and October 22 & 23**

**Livestock Nutrition & Healthcare** Clarion Hotel, Burlington, VT

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**October 3, 2004**

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Contact: Vern Grubinger, UVM Extension, 802-257-7967 ext 13, [www.uvm.edu/~nesare](http://www.uvm.edu/~nesare)

**Oct. 27, 2004**

**Maine Grass Farmers' Network First Annual Conference**

Pineland Ctr., New Gloucester, ME Sarah Flack and Gwentyth Harriss from Vermont Grassfarmers Association, at Contact: Diane Schivera, MOFGA, 207-568-4142

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Pre-registration is required by September 17.

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**Building a Sustainable Business: A Guide to Developing a Business Plan for Farms and Rural Businesses** maps out ways to take advantage of organic farming, on-farm processing, direct marketing, etc. and follows a dairy farm family through a major farm transition. 802-656-0484 or [sanpubs@uvm.edu](mailto:sanpubs@uvm.edu)

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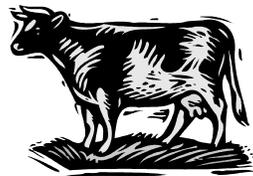
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A Cornell University student would love to find an organic or grass-based dairy in the Ithaca area to help out at. Some experience. Would be willing to volunteer my time, Heather, 973-769-7261 [hks22@cornell.edu](mailto:hks22@cornell.edu)



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