

NODPA NEWS

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

CONTENTS:

Organic Industry News

Organic Dairy Profitability	1
Pay Price Update	1
Pasture Symposium	5
LOFCO Co-op	4
From the NODPA Desk	7
Organic Rule Change	8
VT Dairy Task Force	9
Organic Valley PR	11
DMS PR	12
More Organic Milk Sought	13
Seeding Spring Pastures	

Organic Production

Feature Farm:	17
Organic Soil Fertility	19
Alternative Dairy Breeds	21

Research/Education

UNH Dairy Farm	17
Alfred Proposes Herd	19
NOFA-NY Gets Grant	21

Net Update

ODAIRY	27
--------	----

Member Info

NODPA Representatives	15
Member Subscription Info	25
Calendar	26
Classifieds, hats, t-shirts	28

FEBRUARY 2006 VOLUME 6, ISSUE 1

WWW.NODPA.COM

Organic Industry News

Organic dairy farming . . . Do higher pay prices equal more profit?

*by Rick Kersbergen, Tim Dalton
and Lisa Bragg*

Organic dairy farming has become the fastest growing agricultural sector in New England. Maine has the highest percentage of organic dairy farms compared to conventional in the nation. This growth has occurred within the last 10 years and largely comes from farms switching from conventional to organic practices. A contributing factor was the expansion of "Vermont Organic Cow" into a major purchaser and processor of organic milk in the mid to late 90s.

Despite the growth, there has been little information on the cost of producing organic milk. In 2004, the University of Vermont, NOFA-VT and the University of Maine received funding from the USDA Integrated Organic program to conduct the research project, "Profitability and Transitional Analysis of Northeast Organic Dairy Farms."

Defining an average farm . . .

In the winter and spring of 2005, researchers collected production and financial information from 30 farms in Maine and Vermont. The pooled preliminary data allowed us to describe an "average" 2004 farm. Table 1 shows that this farm milked 48 cows, sold 6,890 hundredweights of milk, and was paid an average of \$22.97 per

(Continued on page 2)

Update on Pay Price

By Ed Maltby

Most organic producers have seen at least two increases in their pay price since August 2005 in response to the widening gap between income and rapidly increasing costs. This has been in response to farmers, NODPA and the processors working together to educate each other about the changing economics of the organic dairy industry, especially in the Northeast. Historically the pay price from 2001 to early 2005 was very stable, hovering between \$20 and \$22 per cwt depending on the purchaser of the milk and the location of the farm. During 2005 all three of the major purchasers of organic milk have recognized the significant increase in the costs of goods and services over the last few years, and specifically the recent dramatic increases in fuel and feed. The processors have also provided more incentives for transitioning farms in recognition of their economic and practical challenges, which has been compounded by the upcoming change in daily herd transition rule.

(Continued on page 4)

SAVE THE DATE!!

NODPA FIELD DAYS

August 18 & 19, 2006

**Organic Dairy Research Farm
University of New Hampshire
Durham, New Hampshire**

(Continued from Organic Dairy Profitability, page 1)

hundredweight, including all premiums. By contrast, similar sized nonorganic farms in Maine producing for the conventional markets received an average milk price of \$18.07 during 2004, \$4.90 per hundredweight less than organic producers.

The average amount of milk sold per cow for this size farm was similar between organic and nonorganic producers (14,060 pounds for the organic sample versus 14,857 pounds for nonorganic). The requirement to feed calves organic whole milk for 60 days may account for a portion of this difference. Organic farms earned on average \$158,075 from milk sales.

Purchased feed and hired labor are the two major expenses in organic milk production. Organic feeding practices were significantly more expensive than nonorganic practices. Overall, our 48-cow organic farm spent \$49,416 for purchased feed during 2004 which is about \$1,000 per cow or \$7.24 per hundredweight.

This was \$298 per cow and \$2.66 per hundredweight more than nonorganic producers in Maine and \$133 per cow and \$2.62 per hundredweight more than Northeast Farm Credit averages for similarly sized herds.

The additional expense of feeding organic dairy cows wipes out 54 percent of the higher price premium received for organic milk.

Most organic dairy farms rely on family labor. On average, 5,042 hours of family labor were used on organic farms which is not significantly different from similar nonorganic farms. However, organic producers spent more money on hired labor. Fifty seven percent hired some form of a part-time employee, working approximately 23 hours per week. This employee was paid an average rate of \$14.51 an hour including all taxes and benefits. Hired labor expense cost organic producers \$320 per cow or \$2.10 per hundredweight.

Income — expenses . . .

When we looked at farm profitability and returns to farm family resources, we found that the total cost (cash operating expenses plus depreciation) of producing organic milk is estimated at \$22.58 per hundredweight. And remember, farms earned \$22.97 per hundredweight of milk produced on average. Simply put, organic milk production on the average for 2004 in Maine and Vermont did not generate

any return to unpaid labor or management nor did it generate sufficient net income to produce a positive return to farm assets or equity.

As a result, many organic dairy farms are largely supported by nondairy farming activities and withdrawals from farm equity. Forty- three percent of organic dairy farms generate some kind of off-farm income.

A Survey of Maine’s organic industry on 2003 found that more than 90 percent of farms transitioned for economic reasons, including a higher and more stable milk price with hopes of larger profits. Many farmers feel that they did achieve good returns in the late 90s and early on in this century. However, when we compare the rate of return on assets for conventional producers in 2004 (4.1

percent) to that of the organic dairy farms in the study (-2.9 percent), we find that most organic producers did not achieve the level of financial success they had hoped for. The average price of organic milk would have had to have been 19 percent higher or \$27.37 per hundredweight to match the conventional 4.1 percent rate of return. To generate a 5 percent rate of return would have required an average price of \$28.05 per hundredweight. It is important to

Table 1. What organic dairy farms looked like in 2004 (30 herds in Maine and Vermont)

	Average	Low	High
Cows	48	20	80
Milk Produced (cwt)	6,890	2,100	13,000
Rolling Herd Average	14,060	6,940	21,316
Milk Price (\$/cwt)	22.97	19.88	27.04
Milk Revenue	158,075	49,013	339,117

note that 1/3 of the farms in the study were profitable. We are working with our data to try and characterize these farms so we can try and correlate management practices with profitability.

What about 2005?

Finding that organic dairy farming in Maine and Vermont was not profitable, on average, in 2004, we decided to project farm profitability for 2005 given that prices for feed and fuel have risen over the past year.

Organic feed concentrate costs have increased between 5 to 10 percent since 2004 levels. Concentrate feed costs make up 92 percent of the purchased feed bill and amount to \$45,462 for our average organic farm. Second, fuel prices have risen to levels higher than 2004 despite declining in the late fall. Diesel prices are 27 percent higher in 2005 than in 2004, while gasoline is 17 percent higher.

That means if we assume even conservative estimates of a 10 percent increase in fuel price and a 7.5 percent rise in concentrated feed cost, the return to farm assets

(Continued from Organic Dairy Profitability, page 2)

drops to -3.7 percent. The average milk price would need to be \$25.59 per hundredweight for farmers to break even and to prevent farm equity withdrawals just to remain in business. To generate a positive return on assets of 4.1 percent, milk prices would need to increase by nearly 24.1 percent to \$28.50 per hundredweight. The milk price would need to be \$29.11 per hundredweight for a rate of return on assets of 5percent.

The good news....Opportunities do exist !

So what are the incentives to switch to organic production? For one thing, data from this survey is being used by producers to request higher milk prices from their processors. All three major organic milk markets have recently responded with significant jumps in contract prices in New England. Using 2004 figures, the new base pricing being offered to farmers will make most of them profitable and provide a positive return on assets.

Secondly, the market for organic milk is growing despite the higher cost to consumers. In an effort to grow supply, processors are offering significant price and quality incentives as well as subsidization during the transition period if farmers commit to their market. Organic dairy farming may also provide opportunities for new young producers, something that our industry with its aging farm population needs.

For organic farmers to achieve higher profits, it takes good use of available pasture systems and high-quality forages to help reduce the amount of grain that needs to be purchased. Demand for the product is here to stay, but processors must continue to help their producers remain profitable. That's good business for everyone.

The authors are extension professor, associate professor, and research assistant, University of Maine, Orono. They wish to acknowledge the work of Robert Parsons, Glenn Rogers, Dennis Kauppila, and Qingbin Wang at the University of Vermont and Nat Bacon and Lisa McCrory of NOFA-VT. This preliminary research is based upon work supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Agreement No. 2004-51300-02250, Profitability and Transitional Analysis of Northeast Organic Dairy Farms' an Organic Initiative project. This research also received financial support from the Vermont Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Vermont Extension, and the John Merck Fund. ♦



Table 2. Total Farm, Per cow and Per Cwt Costs and Returns to Organic Dairy Farming in 2004 (average values)

Revenue	Per Farm	Per cow	Per Cwt
Milk	158,075	3,219.96	22.97
Dairy cattle	2,754	58.71	0.43
Cull cows	3,554	68.22	0.50
Veal	881	19.00	0.15
Crop	750	16.18	0.11
MILC and other govt	5,513	122.37	1.00
Dividend	890	18.20	0.13
Custom work	30	0.40	0.00
Syrup	3	0.07	0.00
Timber	263	7.27	0.08
Other	3,382	59.09	0.45
Total Farm Revenue	176,095	3,589.47	25.82
Operating Costs and Expenses:			
Auto	2,479	54.33	0.41
Bedding	2,756	60.00	0.43
Breeding	2,339	51.68	0.37
Chemicals	252	3.83	0.02
Custom hire	3,242	67.92	0.53
DHIA	648	13.94	0.09
Fertilizers	540	11.51	0.07
Purchased feed	49,416	1,003.46	7.24
Fuel and oil	4,520	92.95	0.68
Insurance	3,946	84.10	0.64
Interest	6,216	132.24	1.04
Hired labor	17,088	320.18	2.10
Marketing	4,237	90.27	0.62
Taxes	3,314	68.93	0.52
Rent	656	12.86	0.10
Repairs	9,359	185.34	1.31
Seeds	351	5.57	0.04
Supplies	12,061	221.76	1.73
Utilities	5,412	114.38	0.90
Veterinary	1,945	42.40	0.30
Medicinal supplies	299	5.64	0.04
Miscellaneous	3,662	79.72	0.58
Total Cash Expense	134,740	2,723.02	19.77
Depreciation	19,457	391.91	2.81
Total Expenses	154,197	3,114.92	22.58
Net Farm Income from Dairy	3,878	105.04	0.39
Net Farm Income from Operations	21,898	474.55	3.24
Owner Withdrawals for Unpaid Labor and Man-	37,178	854.84	6.68
Net Farm Income	-15,280	-380.3	-3.44
Off-Farm Income	15,174	379.44	3.32
Net Farm Earnings	-106.37	-0.86	-0.12

Note: Per cow and per cwt columns are average farm numbers and are not created by dividing the first column by the average herd size and production.

N=30

(Continued from Pay Price Update, page 1)

Table 1 The different incentives offered for transitioning farms:

Table 1	Hood	CROPP	Horizon
Signing Bonus once milk is sold as organic	\$1.00/cwt for all milk in 1 st 6 months	\$1.00/cwt for all milk in 1 st 3 months	\$1.00/cwt for all milk in 1 st 6 months
Transitional Bonus for the last year before certification	\$1.00/cwt for 1 st 9 months-\$2 for last 3 months	\$1.00/cwt for 1 st 9 months-\$2 for last 3 months	\$1.00/cwt for 1 st 9 months-\$2 for last 3 months
Hauling	No charge	\$75 stop charge/month	No charge

Table 2 is a general summary of base pay price. Horizon has three plans to choose from for components, no membership or capital payments and annual or 2 year contracts. Hood has one program, no membership or capital programs and annual or 2 year contracts. CROPP Cooperative has regional adjustments on a national pay plan plus a capital base pay plan. Space doesn't permit listing the three quality premium programs which are all slightly different and the dollar amount received will vary with each individual farm.

Table 2	Hood	CROPP New England	Horizon
Base Price standards	3.5 BF; 2.99 P; 5.69 solids	3.5 BF; 3.05 P; 5.65 solids	3.5 BF; 2.99 P; 5.65 solids
Base Price	\$24/cwt	\$26/cwt	\$24/cwt
Feed supplement/MAP adjustment	\$2/cwt on all milk		\$2/cwt on all milk
Seasonal program	\$2 for all milk in Jan, Feb and Dec 2006.	Deduct: \$0.50 for May, June, July. Increase: \$0.50 for Oct, Nov and Dec.	Either: \$1.50/cwt for Jan, Oct, Nov, Dec, or \$0.75/cwt for Jan, Feb, March, April, Sept, Oct, Nov, Dec.

There is increasing choice for different farming systems within these plans and any transitioning farm should carefully examine its current milk quality and production curve before choosing a plan. Across the region there are agencies and organizations that can offer advice plus many experienced farmers who have been through this process who can give an insight into how they work with individual companies. There are any number of different relationships and benefits that farmers have access to which include: no contract to 2 year contracts; staggered equity payments; subsidized grain; loans for equipment; loans for cows.

The above is an informed snapshot on current pay price, as of January 2006 for organic milk but in no way represents any individual company's offering. ♦



**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.



LAKEVIEW ORGANIC GRAIN



High Quality NOFA-NY Certified Organic Feed and Seed

We specialize in Custom Feed Mixes for all YOUR feed needs

Certified Organic Feed - dairy, calf feed, chicken layer, broiler & chick starter, turkey, pig, sheep, goat, whole grains, bulk or bagged.

Certified Organic Seed - wheat, barley, rye, triticale, red clover, buckwheat, alfalfa, assorted pasture grasses & legumes, hybrid & OP corn, oats, soybeans, field peas,
** We now carry NC+ organic corn and soybean seed! **

Crystal Creek Animal Health Care Products

Conscientious Attention to YOUR Certified Organic Requirements

Lakeview Organic Grain LLC

Box 361, 119 Hamilton Place
Penn Yan, NY 14527
315-531-1038
kandmhfarm@sprintmail.com

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

Put April 18th on Your Calendar For NOSB / NOP Pasture Symposium

*By David Bruce
Pools Communications Manager
Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative*

We have received some word that the USDA has clarified its format, date and location for its upcoming symposium in regards to pasture and the National Organic Program. After hearing significant public comment at the previous three National Organic Standards Board meetings, and as part of an "Advance Notice of Public Rulemaking" (ANPR), the USDA is planning to supplement the comments with several expert panels who will give testimony and answer questions. This will be in conjunction with the NOSB meeting on April 19 and 20.

The Symposium is anticipated to take place at Penn State, State College, PA, on April 18th. The panelists will be chosen by NOP staff and NOSB members. After the panels, it will be up to the NOSB to recommend a course of action for incorporation and implementation into the NOP. It is important to note that any other comments received during the ANPR will receive equal consideration to testimony given at the panel.

It appears that there is general agreement within the industry for mandated pasture, with 120 days being an acceptable minimum period. The goal of 30% dry matter intake is still being debated. Check www.nodpa.com for more.

Lancaster Organic Farmers Cooperative (LOFCO)

Mission: To pay their members the most competitive price for their milk and to look out for the best long term interests of their farmer members.

About ten years ago, David Martin, Roman Stoltzfoos and Ned MacArthur began talking about starting a local dairy cooperative so that Pennsylvania organic dairy farmers could have more control over the price they received for their milk. Eight years later, in April 2002, their thinking, talking and planning produced a new Pennsylvania cooperative, Lancaster Organic Farmers Cooperative (LOFCO).

LOFCO started as a group of 15 Pennsylvanian organic dairy farmers who had had a few years of frustrating relations with Parmalat, who sold their milk to Natural Dairy Products Corporation (NDP). The formation of LOFCO anticipated the ending of the contract between Parmalat and NDP, who markets Natural by Nature Organic Milk, and LOFCO immediately began to sell their pool of milk directly to NDP in January, 2003. While not an easy process, especially as Parmalat initially worked hard to rekindle relationships with both the producers and NDP, the original group has since grown to 35 members. Their milk now goes primarily into Natural by Nature dairy products, but also to Seven Stars Farm, pro-

(Continued on page 6)

HOMEOPATHY

Treat:

Mastitis	Iritis
Foot Rot	Bloat
Indigestion	Worms
Hoof Fistulas	& much more

SAFE, GENTLE, EFFECTIVE MEDICINE

"I am convinced that homeopathy is the way to healthier farms, healthier farm families, healthier farm animals and, finally a healthier planet."
-C. Edgar Sheaffer, VMD

Call for a free catalog. We offer farm discounts & bulk sizes.

 **Washington Homeopathic Products, Inc.**
33 Fairfax St. Berkeley Springs, WV 25411
800-336-1695 www.homeopathyworks.com



Total Herd Management

NATURAL SOLUTIONS

for the

ORGANIC PRODUCER

.....

IMPRO Products, Inc.

3 Allamakce St.
Waukon, Iowa 52172

800 626 5536

rjhdvm@oneota.net

(Continued from LOFCO Co-op page 5)

ducers of organic yogurt, and Amish Country Farm Milk. Today, organic dairy farms in Pennsylvania and Maryland are members of LOFCO, with a few New York farms expressing an interest in joining.

“LOFCO’s claim to fame is that it is a local cooperative, with member farms being near to the markets they serve,” says Roman Stoltzfoos, board vice president, “and we have no designs to becoming a national cooperative.” Unlike other companies, where the pay price for milk is based on the best interests of the cooperative, LOFCO decisions are based on the best interests of their farmer members. LOFCO, as a cooperative, is in a unique position because it does not have its own brand in the market. Cooperatives that have their own brand on the store shelves have to account for different criteria when setting pay price, and corporations have to answer to shareholders. LOFCO is able to focus solely on the best pay price for their farmers.

LOFCO is always interested in recruiting new producers, and has doubled its membership since September, 2004. There are no equity requirements to be part of this cooperative, and no membership fee to join. Unlike other cooperatives, LOFCO doesn’t guarantee a base pay price and makes farmers fully aware of the expenses involved in selling the milk. Members of LOFCO pay a monthly service fee of \$150 that covers inspections, check writing

and the field staff costs; a 15¢ per cwt. fee for marketing; a 10¢ per cwt. fee for cooperative expenses, and a \$20.00 stop charge, plus 85¢ per cwt related to hauling. Base price in December was \$26.27 for 3.5 % BF milk, and one LOFCO farmer reported that he made over \$30.41 with premiums but before deductions.

LOFCO contracts with Lanco Dairy Cooperative and Florida based Milk Marketing Services to handle field services, inspections, marketing, dispatch and check writing. As milk volume rises, the associated administrative and hauling costs decrease. LOFCO’s president, David Martin, is excited about the cooperative’s operating model, saying, “It actively engages dairy farmers in problem-solving to decrease the costs related to shipping milk, especially in how to decrease our trucking costs.” He went on to say that a number of dairy groups have been exploring the model and have considered setting up a similar cooperative in their regions. “While the temptation is to grow into other regions, we firmly believe in the importance of staying local, but perhaps assisting various regions to set up cooperatives based on our model,” David added.

The LOFCO Board of Directors is made up of 5 organic dairy farmers: David Martin, president, Roman Stoltzfoos, vice president, Levi Miller, secretary, David Fisher, treasurer, and Levi Fisher. If you are interested in learning more about LOFCO, or joining this cooperative, call Jerry McCleary at 717-577-8809 or 888-877-6800. ♦



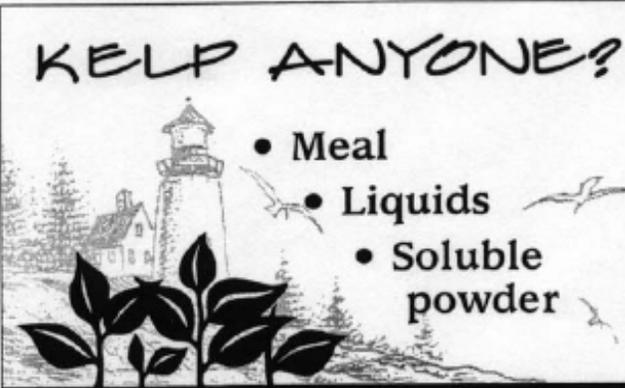
Crystal Creek™

*The Natural Choice
For Agriculture*

A full line of livestock nutritional supplements and health aids for organic, grazing, sustainable and/or conventional operations in dairy, beef, calves, swine, goat, sheep, poultry and horse production.

Experienced Staff & Excellent Service:
 Livestock Nutritionist
 Ration Balancing
 Calf Specialist
 Large Animal Veterinarian
 Cow Tales Newsletter
 Crystal Creek Catalog

Crystal Creek
 A Division of Leiterman & Associates, Inc.
 N9466 Lakeside Road, Trego, WI 54888
 Call Toll Free: 1-888-376-6777
 www.crystalcreeknatural.com



KELP ANYONE?

- Meal
- Liquids
- Soluble powder

Products for Animals, Plants, Soils

Buy Direct from a
USA Harvester & Processor



NORTH AMERICAN KELP

41 Cross Street • Waldoboro, Maine 04572
 888-662-5357 • 207-832-7506
 www.noamkelp.com

From The NODPA Desk

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

2006 has proven to be one of the warmest January's on record and has also ushered in an increase in the pay price; does one naturally follow the other? If it does then global warming will keep us all profitable!

Consumers are buying more organic dairy products, and all the processors and purchasers of raw milk are actively encouraging conventional dairy farmers to transition and existing producers to expand or increase production. In 2005 national sales of organic milk jumped 24 percent in volume and 27 percent in value, to \$499 million, according to figures released by Schaumburg, Ill.-based ACNielsen North America; however, organic milk still has a small market share, accounting for just 5 percent of the \$10 billion dairy industry. The Organic Trade Association predicts that it will take at least 5 years for supply to match the demand for fluid organic dairy products, although this will rely on the importation of organically certified feed.

In Washington, Colorado, California, and other states there are 1,000 cow, and larger, herds transitioning to organic production which will dramatically affect the supply of milk and ultimately the pay price to organic dairy farmers. Do these large farms meet the requirement for pasture that is required for certification by USDA and, more importantly, expected by the consumer? How many will take advantage of the apparent ambiguity of the rule change that, after June 1st, allows farmers to buy non organic replacements due to their interpretation of the "whole herd" conversion on 100% organic feed? How do we obtain a universal interpretation from certifiers on these rule changes, and who enforces that interpretation? Who does it benefit to increase the supply of fluid organic milk by relaxing the rules and importing organic feed?

NODPA has long taken the position that dairy replacement animals must be organic from the last third of gestation of their parent cow, and has a strong position on practical but appropriate pasture standards. We will continue to work with all groups to maintain the high standards that are necessary to maintain the confidence of the consumer and therefore the future of the industry.

With all the talk of expansion, are organic dairy farmers making money? No two farms are the same, which is why we farm, but we should take notice of

studies that show general trends or industry averages, especially when they support anecdotal information provided during the networking (gossiping!) that occurs during farmer meetings. The study from NOFA-VT, the Universities of Maine and Vermont shows that organic dairies made less money than conventional ones in 2004, averaging only \$4 per hour for work done by the farm family with no return on capital; thus a decrease in the farm's net worth. The prediction is that 2005 will show no better.

In part due to the work of NODPA, the processors have raised their price twice in the last 6 months by at least \$4 per cwt so 2006 may be better but as the prices of inputs continue to increase, there is no guarantee. NODPA has a duty to keep its members informed on the viability of organic dairying in the Northeast and on the range of potential profitability that can be expected from an efficiently managed operation. Organic dairying is not the "silver bullet" that solves the problems of farming in the Northeast, but it can be one of the tools that farmers can use to improve their profitability and long term sustainability

The next NODPA Field Days will be at the new organic dairy farm at the University of New Hampshire on August 18 and 19th and will feature a workshop by Hue Karreman plus many other presentations –

SAVE the DATE.

NODPA representatives continue to call members to ask their views on critical issues. This informs me and the Board about what you think. We hope to be able to regularly check in with you as often as possible in this way and by regular mailed surveys.

A reminder about using our webpage and list-serve on a regular basis to keep up with all the happenings in the organic dairy world. Your subscriptions and donations maintain both of them.

If you have any questions or need information don't hesitate to call me at 413-772-0444 or email: emaltby@comcast.net. ♦

Two models with 28" or 50" wands, use LP gas for low heat removal of udder hair. One minute per cow. Less accumulation of dirt and manure. Increases sanitation. Helps control environmental and sub-clinical mastitis, bacteria and somatic cell counts. Vet recommended.

Healthy cows with clean udders produce QUALITY MILK.



The Original **UDDER SINGE**



1-800-749-6550 Fax 904-284-0964



www.uddersinge.com Email: sales@uddersinge.com

Organic Dairy Replacements—A Big Issue

By Kathy Arnold

What do you think? Should all organic dairy replacement animals be organic from the last third of gestation, or should conventional animals be allowed to be brought onto organic farms as long as they are under organic management for at least one year prior to milk production, or should it be something in between? NODPA will be surveying our farmer members in the near future on this topic.

Two recent happenings bring this issue to the front burner:

1) With the Harvey lawsuit throwing out the allowance for the 80/20 new dairy herd transition, a rewrite of portions of the National Organic Rule dealing with origin of dairy livestock was mandated to happen by early June of this year.

2) When the Organic Foods and Production Act (OFPA, the law authorizing the National Organic Program) was amended last fall by the action of the Organic Trade Association, it spelled out the new dairy herd transition scenario and continued to set a **minimum** of one year of organic management prior to organic milk sale but it does not limit how strict the regulations on origin of dairy stock can be written in the updated regulations,

How the regulations will be re-written by the National Organic Program (NOP) is currently unknown.

Some variations on the dairy replacement clause have been proposed from various sectors:

1. All dairy replacements must be organic from the last third of gestation. This has been NODPA's position, first stated in 2002, and the interpretation of the current regulation that has been followed by most of the major dairy certifiers. It is also the position of the NOSB, who voted in October 2002 and May 2003 to support a rule change to this effect.
2. NODPA's compromise position of 2002--that non-organic replacements two weeks of age or less may be purchased, with the permission of the certifying agency when organic replacements are not commercially available, so long as the calves are managed organically from that time forward. This allowance should be temporary and phase out within 3 years, at which point all replacement animals must be organic from the last third of gestation.
3. Dairy replacement animals 1) must be raised from the last third of gestation as organic, except that 2) they may be treated with medications including antibiotics in the first year of life, but 3) their milk cannot be labeled as organic until one year after treatment with antibiotics.

4. Same as #3 except only a limited list of antibiotics / medications approved by the NOSB would be allowed for use on organic dairy youngstock.

5. All dairy replacements must be organic from the last third of gestation except that if the form, quality, or quantity of needed replacement / expansion animals are not commercially available, a farm may purchase conventional animals and convert them to organic production as long as they are under organic management for not less than 12-months prior to milk production.

6. Same as #5 except the commercially available clause would sunset (be dropped) after 3 years.

The source of organic dairy replacements has been an issue ever since the USDA National Organic Rule came into force in October of 2002. From reading the Preamble to the Rule, it is clear that the intent of the Rule was that all organic dairy replacements be organic from the last third of gestation and the Rule contains language stating that "*once an entire, distinct herd has been converted to organic production, all dairy animals shall be under organic management from the last third of gestation*".

However, because the Rule (using the same language as found in OFPA) also states that "Milk...must be from animals that have been under continuous organic management beginning no later than 1 year prior to the production of the milk...", some have taken that to mean that there can be a continual state of transitioning conventional dairy animals into organic production. Many in the organic community believe that phrase was in the Rule to enable a one time transition of conventional dairy farms into organic production but was not meant to allow continual transition of conventional animals onto existing organic farms. (For more detail, see my article on this issue in the February 2003 issue of NODPA News at <http://www.nodpa.com/nodpafeb03.pdf>.)

NODPA has long held the position that all organic dairy replacements must be organic from the last third of gestation and the NODPA Board reaffirmed that position in a public statement last October, along with reaffirming the "commitment that any animals with life threatening conditions must be treated with antibiotics or other prohibited medications but then be removed from organic production". NODPA wants to see the organic circle unbroken once a farm has transitioned to organic dairy production. Continual introduction of non-organic animals into an organic herd provides a loophole for animals that have been fed with genetically engineered feed and slaughter by-products, as well as those treated with various medications. Such allowance will likely result in reduced consumer confidence in the label.

Allowing continual transition of conventional animals or

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from Organic Dairy Replacements page 8)

allowing conventional feeding and management of youngstock on organic farms not only breaks the organic circle but it also reduces the incentive for farmers to put best management into place. I know. I've been there. When we were first organic years ago, young stock could be treated with antibiotics, and having that back-up capability let us be more lax in ensuring an optimum environment, management, and doing the hard job of learning and applying alternative health care for our youngstock.

If conventional replacement animal are allowed, many farms would stop raising their youngstock organically and the demand for organic replacements would never develop. Therefore, many calves from organic farms would go into conventional production, while conventional animals take their place on organic farms. That, it turn, will lead to more health problems in herds from animals having weakened immune systems, the continual exposure of organic herds to new animals and the disease they may bring, and a potential lessening of the quality of organic milk produced.

Allowing continual transition of animals would be virtually impossible for certifiers to thoroughly monitor—to be sure that all animals were indeed coming onto the farm when stated in the paper work and truly under organic management for the minimum amount of time. Also, if it came to be that antibiotics and other materials and feeds prohibited for some classes of organic animals could legitimately be on farm, the chance for error or intentional cheating is likely to increase.

NODPA wants to see a level playing field for all. The varying interpretations by certifiers have not been providing that. A few certifiers are allowing conventional replacements and at least one is currently allowing treatment of young stock with antibiotics. The rest of the certifiers rightly require replacements to be organic from the last third of gestation and require removal of any animals treated with antibiotics.

Even though allowing conventional replacement animals to come into organic dairy production across the board could help fulfill the current unmet demand for organic milk, weakening standards to increase production is a short-sighted solution to the current undersupply. A Rule change is for the long term and we must consider the long term view and the views and desires of our consumers.

If you are a NODPA dairy producer, please keep an eye out for the dairy replacement survey you will soon be receiving and be sure to let us know what you think. NODPA will be working diligently on this issue to represent the view of our membership.

Kathie Arnold is the Policy Committee Chair for NODPA and is an organic dairy producer in Truxton, NY.

Vermont Announces Dairy Task Force

The Vermont Dairy Task Force has completed its first major job: identifying what the Vermont Dairy industry's strengths and weaknesses are, and what can be done to build on that industry.

Governor Jim Douglas and Agriculture Secretary Steve Kerr convened the task force in the spring of 2005. Charged with building dairying as a business, the task force was comprised of 34 members representing business, government, conventional farming, and organic farming. The group has met once a month since then, with sub-committees meeting even more often.

The sub-committees were focused on business management; economic development; government, community relations and information; and education. Each committee came up with three potential strategies. Those were then focused into the final report.

That report focused on four main goals and steps to implement them, which include:

Goal - To reduce costs, increase returns and increase profitability of Vermont dairy farmers as measured by return on assets to 8%.

*Continue and Enhance Vermont Farm Viability Program - Farm Viability Program uses consultants to provide technical assistance tailored to a farmer's needs to fulfill specific business goals.

*Ease of Transfer of Assets for Vermont's Dairy Farmers - To reduce taxes to Vermont's dairy farmers for capital gains during the transfer of the farm to a new farmer.

*Continue and Enhance Farm Labor Management - Work with existing agricultural organizations in the state to provide information and training to Vermont's dairy farmers on farm labor issues.

Goal - To increase the dairy herd in Vermont to 150,000 animals.

*Dairy Ombudsman to assist dairy farmers in information collection, training opportunities and location of consults – Dairy farmers with good management skills and solid financial dairy operations desire more advanced information and training opportunities and access to consultants to improve business operations.

*Utilization of Dormant Farm Land – There is a great opportunity to bring dormant farmland and buildings back into active dairy production in Vermont. Dormant farms with intact buildings can be transitioned to organic

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from VT Dairy Task Force, page 9)

dairy production more easily than some conventional farms. The transition of existing dairy farms can take up to three years, while dormant farm land may be able to be transitioned in one year or less to organic production. Attracting new farms to Vermont would add farms and cows to Vermont and would be a benefit to rural communities and Vermont's economy through the multiplier affect of dairy farmer income.

Goal - To enhance the dairy industry in Vermont by attracting new dairy processing to the state, developing new opportunities for existing dairy processors and to assist with innovation and growth of those processors.

***Build a benchmark on Vertical Integration and Broader Market for Vermont Dairy Industry** - Analyze the vertical integration of dairy farms, dairy cooperatives and dairy processors in Vermont and determine the broader market affect on the dairy industry.

***Recruitment of a Strategically Important Dairy Processor to Vermont** - Vermont Department of Economic Development and Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets will utilize recruitment methods designed to bring other businesses to Vermont to attract a strategically important dairy processor to the State.

***On-Farm Dairy Processing: Needs and Opportunities** - The number of on-farm dairy processors has increased

by 32% since 1995. What are the needs and opportunities for growth of these on- farm processors?

Goal - To enhance the image and attitude of Vermont's dairy industry and dairy products for dairy farmers, the dairy industry, related agricultural businesses and the general public.

***Impact of Dairy on Vermont's Economy** - An economic study will be completed covering all aspects of the dairy industry in Vermont. The report will be valuable for use with many audiences and will be utilized by the media.

***Image and attitude of the dairy industry in the state of Vermont** - The image and attitude of the Vermont dairy industry will be improved through use of the media, a speakers' bureau to provide information to business organizations, farm tours and increased information to state government on positive dairy activities.

***Key Messages for the Dairy Task Force and Dairy Industry** - Dairy Task Force members will utilize existing expertise to formulate key messages and to obtain training on media relations. The Dairy Task Force will be the united voice for Vermont's dairy industry.

***Evaluation of Vermont Agricultural Services and Providers** - Understand what services and service providers are available to dairy farmers through a survey of in-

(Continued on page 11)



Enter a growing field.
Go organic.

There's a growing demand for organic milk. Together, we can help fill it. We'd like to add you to Hood's new organic milk routes and we are pleased to be able to offer a signing bonus in addition to transition payments.

For more information,
call toll-free 866-383-1026.



You Can Feel Good About Hood®
— America's Dairy Report Since 1946™ —

Seeding Pastures and Fields This Spring

by Rick Kersbergen
University of Maine Cooperative Extension

What a winter we have been experiencing. I am sitting at my kitchen table writing this article in early February, 45 degrees and raining! As I drove back from New Hampshire last week, I was struck by the number of fields that were ponds with vast areas of pastures and hayfields completely submerged.

What does that mean as we head into spring? Most likely, there will be large patches of winterkilled perennial forages. Not only will these conditions kill some of the more sensitive plants, such as alfalfa and other legumes, but with these conditions, many grasses will also be winterkilled. Winter grains will also be in jeopardy.

Trying to be an eternal optimist (trust me, I am not very successful!), I encourage you to look at this as an opportunity. With pastures that may contain large dead sections, think about spreading grass and legume seeds and letting your cows or heifers graze and incorporate the seeds with their hooves in late April or early May. It will be important to control the grazing of these sections as the seedlings develop to allow good establishment. This method will probably be more effective than frost seeding, especially for grass establishment.

If the hayfield or pasture is severely damaged, consider using it as an early sacrifice pasture. Let the animals do some of the tillage work for you, before you reseed that field or put it into a new rotation. Perhaps this is the year you try something new like BMR sorghum sudan grass.

This spring may also be a time when a no-till seed drill could be very useful. From our experiences with the University of Maine no-till drill trials that we conducted on many of your farms, seed depth was a critical factor in success or failure. When we planted more than 1/2 inch deep, we saw very little establishment. You should shoot for a depth of 1/4 to 1/2 inch when possible. Soil moisture and the weight of the drill played a big part in the final depth of the seed. One of our most successful seedings was on an area of winterkilled alfalfa that was well drained and firm and we were able control the depth with our drill. Several years ago, a Maine organic farmer rented a local no-till drill and successfully seeded alfalfa into existing sod on more than 100 acres that had been winter damaged. Controlling the existing forage by

timely harvest to allow seedlings to establish is a key management point.

Winter grains that experience damage will respond differently. If populations are lowered due to winter injury, individual plants will probably respond by increased tillering and fill in to some extent. However, if large sections are dead due to ice and water ponds on the surface, then you will have to evaluate your options. Many producers do under seed clover into small grains

in the spring, and you may think about seeding the dead areas as you do this. Some of you may think about using the remaining winter grain as a green manure crop and change your rotation, planting corn or another warm season annual.

If you decide to plow up some dead sod ground to reseed, think about growing an annual (small grain if early... warm season annual if you are late) and seeding down the field in late summer instead. This will give you an opportunity to control some of the weeds in the seed bank. Late summer seedings usually have less weed pressure as well. As always, when seeding down perennial forages, remember the basics. Soil test and make pH and fertility adjust-

ments while you can. Firm seedbeds are essential for good seedling establishment and survival. Depth is critical-- 1/4-1/2 inch in clay & loam soils and 1/2-3/4 inch in sandy soils. Never plant below 3/4 inch.

Perhaps all my dire predictions of dead plants will not come to be! It is however always good to have a backup plan.

Rick Kersbergen can be reached at: richardk@umext.maine.edu



(Continued from VT Dairy Task Force, page 10)

state agricultural organizations.

*Dairy Products and a Healthy Diet - Provide information and presentations to Vermont School Board Association, Vermont School Nutrition Association, Vermont School Nurse Association, Vermont Department of Education and the media on the importance of dairy in a healthy diet.

The four committees will now guide the implementation of these goals through contacts with agricultural organizations and their own interest in the success of the dairy industry.

You can view the entire report at the Vermont Agency of Agriculture web site, www.vermontagriculture.com.

Frost Seeding Rates	lbs./acre
Red Clover	4-8
Birdsfoot Trefoil	4-6
Alfalfa	5-8
Other Clovers	3-4
Perennial Rye/ Annual Rye	8-15
Orchard Grass	3-4
Bromegrass	12
Timothy/ Red Canarygrass	Not Recom-

Meyers Family Wins Vermont's Highest Quality Award 2nd Year in a Row

By David Bruce

The Meyer family, St. Albans members and Organic Valley farmers from North Hardwick, VT were given Vermont's 2005 "Highest Quality Dairy Award" for the highest overall quality milk on any Vermont dairy farm for the second consecutive year. The award was presented to Steve and Patty Meyer on January 26, 2006 at the Dairy Banquet at the Vermont Farm Show. In addition to winning the overall award, the Meyers were also the category award winner in the somatic cell count category.

The Meyers began farming on their North Hardwick dairy in 1979. Steve Meyer's family had been farming in Vermont since the late 1750s. Over the years a number of family members became involved in different types of farming all across the country. Steve and Patty raised four sons on their farm and two of them decided to return to the farm in 2003. The family's original barn couldn't accommodate their current herd of 65 cows so the decision was made to build a new barn. Their sons Nick and Taylor came back to the farm in May 2003, the family's organic certification was completed in August 2003, and the barn was completed in October. The extended family works together on the farm. Patty describes Nick and Taylor as the managers who determine direction for the farm. Patty and Steve are the support team who provide assistance with milking, chores and other work. A third son, Andrew, lives close by and provides assistance as needed. Andrew worked for eight years as Senator Jeffords' agriculture assistant before returning to Vermont.

Nick Meyer said that while the initial draw to organic was in the consistent and higher pay price paid to farmers, they have

discovered a way of farming that makes sense to them and fits with the way they choose to farm.

Patty echoed these thoughts saying, "Organic is a whole philosophy that looks at leaving the land in better condition than we found it. By improving the soil, we improve the animals' feed and the health of the cows. We're proud to produce a product that's so good for people." ♦

John Cleary Joins Organic Valley

by David Bruce

Pools Communications Manager
Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative

New England organic industry veteran John Cleary has joined Organic Valley Family of Farms/CROPP Cooperative as the New England Regional Pool Coordinator. In his new post, Cleary will provide outreach, education and support to current and prospective organic farmer members of the cooperative.

In addition to holding regular educational workshops and organizing hands-on barn meetings, Cleary will participate in a wide range of dairy industry events and make personal farm visits to interested farmers who want to learn more about how they can participate in the growing organic dairy market.

Cleary comes to his new post with extensive leadership experience in the organic community of New England. Most recently he served as Certification Director of the Vermont Organic Farmers L.L.C, owned by NOFA-VT, where he was responsible for the annual organic certification of over 380 Vermont farms, including over 100 organic dairy farms. He simultaneously served as the Technical Assistance Coordinator of the Northeast Organic Farming Association, where he oversaw aspects of NOFA's technical assistance programs for farmers and processors. For the past several years, he has focused on helping dairy farms make the transition to organic, providing financial planning and production assistance. ♦



Barnet, Vermont • 802-633-4387

**Organic Custom
Manufactured Bulk Feed
Made in Vermont**

Organic products also available in bags:

18% Poultry Grower Pellets	12% Dairy Pellets
21% Poultry Grower Mash	14% Dairy Pellets
Layer Pellets	16% Dairy Pellets
Hog Grower Pellets	

Ask your local feed dealer if he stocks certified organic feeds from Morrison Custom Feeds, Inc.

20 Years Manufacturing Feed



GREEN MOUNTAIN FEEDS

We are excited to be producing and selling organic feeds in our mill in Bethel, Vermont. We carry feed for dairy, beef, sheep, goats, poultry and hogs. We can also meet your needs with custom mixes in bulk or bags.

802-234-6278
Bethel, Vermont

DMS Organic Team Member Elected To PCO Board

by Tracy Trudell
DMS Communications Coordinator

SYRACUSE, NY – Dairy Marketing Services (DMS) Organic Team member, Dave Eyster was elected to serve on the advisory board for Pennsylvania Certified Organic (PCO), at its annual meeting held in York, Pa. He was also awarded one of two volunteer of the year awards. During PCO's January 12 meeting, Eyster was elected vice president of the advisory board, which makes him part of the management board.

Eyster began working for Dairylea Cooperative Inc. approximately 16 years ago, as a regional manager. In 1999, when Dairylea and Dairy Farmers of America came together to create DMS, Eyster's responsibilities were shifted to DMS as well. As the organic market for milk began to increase, Eyster expressed interest in working in that area and became responsible for organic producer relations in 2004.

Under this title, he is responsible for the interaction between the six organic team members working for DMS, and the office in Syracuse. He monitors communications between the office and the field staff, as well as new member solicitation, payroll and procedures. Eyster is also a sought-after speaker in the organic industry. He is an educator, and



frequently speaks at industry events and functions enlightening people about the organic market.

In 1999, Dairylea Cooperative Inc. and Dairy Farmers of America's Northeast Council created a milk marketing entity, Dairy Marketing Services, LLC (DMS), to jointly market milk together. Including other marketing relationships, DMS now serves as the marketer of 16 billion pounds of raw milk annually produced on more than 9,500 Northeastern U.S. farms. Dairylea is a farmer-owned agricultural marketing and service organization based in Syracuse, N.Y. It has more than 2,500 member farms located throughout the Northeast. Dairy Farmers of America, Inc. is the largest milk marketing cooperative in the United States. DFA's Northeast Council, also located in Syracuse, N.Y., represents 2,100 members. ♦



New England's Original Organic Milk

The Organic Cow of Vermont® proudly supports local family farms that provide us with certified organic milk. As our business grows, so grows the opportunity for more farms to transition to organic. The Organic Cow of Vermont continues to look for milk in the region. The Organic Cow of Vermont will financially assist you with \$1.00/cwt during the 12 month herd transition. Contact Cindy Masterman 888-648-8377 to discuss the opportunity.

Horizon's HOPE Initiative

At Horizon Organic, converting acres to organic practices, partnering with family farmers and providing nutritious organic dairy products to millions of consumers is not just our business – it's our mission. We honor this principle with the Horizon Organic Producer Education initiative (HOPE); an ongoing campaign to recruit, educate and champion organic dairy farmers.

The HOPE initiative encompasses every aspect of our farm-first commitment, beginning with our dedicated team of regional farm support reps. These experienced dairy professionals travel the back roads every day to connect with our farmers in the field. Offering technical assistance through the transition process, as well as ongoing education and support, our field reps help keep our community vital and united in pursuit of the organic ideal. Through the HOPE program, Horizon Organic also offers significant financial assistance to aid farmers during the three-year transition to organic.

The HOPE initiative begins on the farm, and grows naturally from there. We work with an advisory team of leading dairy and land conservation experts to share best practices on grazing, animal welfare and land restoration. We also work directly with state and federal legislators to make sure all organic farmers' voices are heard.

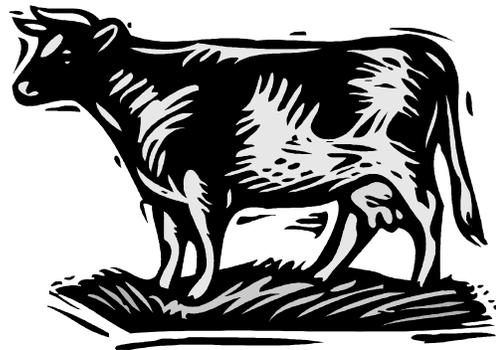
Our growing "herd" of hundreds of family farms is truly the heart of Horizon Organic, providing more than 80% of our milk. Through our HOPE initiative, we seek to expand and strengthen that community, building a healthy, sustainable future, one organic acre at a time. ♦

How Can NODPA Best Serve Your Farm?

What direction should NODPA be looking towards for the future of the organic industry? The NODPA Board, representatives and staff do their best to keep in touch with as many farmers as possible by surveys, through the Odairy list serve, at the NODPA annual meeting, conference calls and at meetings sponsored by other organizations.

The Board has recently decided to invest time and money in conducting (random) phone surveys with organic producers to assess what you are thinking and where you need help. Please participate in these surveys if your farm is called. If you are interested and have not been called please contact Ed Maltby.

Thanks to all those who have taken the time to voice their opinions. ♦



New Report Rates Organic Dairy Brands

At press time The Cornucopia Institute announced that their long awaited study, ranking virtually every organic dairy marketer or brand in the United States as to their milk production/procurement practices, is expected to be released by the end of February.

Cornucopia has said in the past that their intention is to "empower organic consumers and wholesale buyers in the marketplace so they can make good, discerning purchasing decisions."

"We, along with the rest of the organic dairy community, continue to collaborate with the USDA in hopes that they crack down on factory-scale farms that are de-luding the consumer and placing ethical family farmers at a competitive disadvantage," said Will Fantle, co-founder of the Wisconsin-based farm policy research

group. "But after five years we are tired of the government looking the other way as large corporations game the system. We are now appealing to a higher authority; the organic consumer."

The Institute has also suggested that farmers will find the study useful for checking on the ethical conduct of their marketing partners, to help prevent their organic milk from getting mixed in with milk from factory farms, violating the trust of the consumer. The survey and supporting information are posted on Cornucopia's Web page at www.cornucopia.org. ♦

More Organic Milk Sought in Northeast

Horizon Organic continues to grow its producer partner network in the Northeast states of ME, MD, NH, NY, PA, VA & VT and its Midwest base in IN, IA, IL, KY, MI, MN, OH & WI. Horizon Organic offers competitive pay, assistance during transition and long-term contracts. Producers in the east please contact Cindy Masterman at 888-648-8377 or in the Midwest contact Troy Thomas at 800-237-2711, x-213.

United Ag Services in Seneca Falls, NY is looking for organic milk in NY and northern PA. Please contact Jim Patsos at 315-568-2750 or 800-326-4251.

HP Hood is starting new organic milk routes in a number of Northern Tier States (ME, NH, VT, NY, PA, OH, MI, WI, MN, IA) and would like to hear from you. Our support of sustainable agriculture, a signing bonus and transition assistance have helped many already. Please call Mike Suever at 617-887-8419.

CROPP Cooperative~Organic Valley Family of Farms is looking for organic dairies, both established and transitional organic dairy producers, in New York, Pennsylvania, and all of the New England States. Competitive Organic Milk Pay Price once certified organic and complete year of Transitional Funding for new farmers during herd's transitional year.

~In New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia contact Peter Miller, Northeast Region Dairy Pool Coordinator, at (888) 444-6455, x407 to leave a voice message, or call at 612-801-3506, peter.miller@organicvalley.coop.

~In New England States contact John Clearly, New England Dairy Pool Coordinator, at (888)-444-6544 x330 to leave voice mail, or mobile at (612)-803-9087, or email at john.clearly@organcivalley.coop

Upstate Farms Cooperative, a member owned cooperative headquartered in LeRoy, NY, is establishing their own supply of organic milk. Upstate Farms Cooperative and their owner-members operate 3 milk plants in Buffalo and Rochester, NY. Our members are interested in producing organic milk. If you are in the Finger Lakes/Western NY area and are interested in learning more about Upstate Farms Coop, please contact Bill Young at 800-724-6455 x 6225, byoung@upstatefarms.com or visit our website at www.upstatefarms.com.

LOFCO continues to look for milk in PA/MD, particularly southeast PA. The market is strong. Please contact Levi Miller at 717/661-8682 or Jerry McCleary at 717/577-8809.

Dairy Marketing Services (DMS) is looking for organic milk for its customers - H.P.Hood and Horizon Foods - at very competitive prices. We also have very attractive packages available for farms transitioning into organic dairy farming. Please contact Dave Eyster at 1-888-589-6455 extension 5409.

Any buyers looking for organic milk who would like to be listed in this column for the May issue, please email the desired text to Kathie at randkarnold1@juno.com or call 607/842-6631 by April 5th.



**Thank you,
organic dairy farmers,
for all that you do.**

From all the folks at Stonyfield Farm



NODPA STAFF & REPRESENTATIVES

NODPA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ed Maltby
30 Keets Rd
Deerfield, MA 01342
emaltby@comcast.net
phone 413-772-0444
fax 866-554-9483

NEWSLETTER CO-EDITORS

Lisa McCrory
341 Macintosh Hill Rd.
Randolph, VT 05060
lmccrory@together.net
phone 802-234-5524

Mia Morrison
159 Atkinson Rd
Charleston, ME 04422
mmorrison@midmaine.com
phone 207-285-7085
fax 207-285-0128

Kathie Arnold
3175 NYS Rt 13
Truxton, NY 13158
randkarnold1@juno.com
phone 607-842-6631
fax 607-842-6557

WEBMASTER
Elisa Clancy
407 Patnoe Farm Dr.
Hyde Park, VT 05655
webmaster@3wpromotions.com
phone 802-888-8456

PENNSYLVANIA
Arden Landis
667 Puseyville Rd.
Kirkwood, PA 17536
C2graz@epix.net
phone 717-529-6644
fax 717-529-3911

Dave Johnson, Vice President
1254 Black Creek Rd
Liberty, PA 16930
provident@epix.net
phone 570-324-2285

NEW YORK
Liz Bawden
119 Factory Rd.
Hammond, NY 13646
bawden@cit-tele.com
phone 315-324-6926

Nancy Gardiner, Secretary
Jim Gardiner, Board Member
2549 State Hwy 26
Otselic, NY 13072
horseingaround@citlink.net
phone 315-653-7819

Siobhan Griffin
2518 Co. Hwy 35
Schnevus, NY 12155
raindance@baka.com
phone 607-286-9362

John Stoltzfus, Board Member
1553 Hesselton Gully Rd.
Whitesville, NY 14897
itstribes@yahoo.com
phone 607-356-3272

VERMONT
Annie Claghorn
1395 Leicester Rd.
Leicester, VT 05733
foxclag@emavt.net
phone 802-247-3979

Beverly Rutter
1450 Middle Rd.
Bridport, VT 05734
brutter@emavt.net
phone 802-758-2615

CONNECTICUT
Rick Segalla, Board Member
96 Allyndale Rd.
Canaan, CT 06018
mocow@earthlink.net
phone 860-824-0241

MAINE
Henry Perkins, Treasurer
Box 156 Bog Rd.
Albion, ME 04910
bullridge@uninet.net
phone 207-437-9279

Steven Russell
RR2 Box 5660
Winslow, ME 04901
jwinrussel@adelphia.net
phone 207-872-6533

Steve Morrison, President
Mia Morrison, Board Member
159 Atkinson Rd
Charleston, ME 04422
mmorrison@midmaine.com
phone 207-285-7085
fax 207-285-0128

Are you interested in becoming a NODPA Rep. ?

Contact Ed Maltby

The Natural Farmer

the journal of organic agriculture

Keep up with what's happening at the root hairs!
The Natural Farmer is where organic farmers throughout the Northeast talk to each other.

Each quarterly issue features:

- a special supplement - designed to be saved - on a single topic
- how-to-do-it articles on organic techniques
- interviews with successful organic farmers and their families
- updates on certification standards for new products
- research results, legislative reports, news notes
- listings of available jobs, equipment, land, and services
- letters, editorials, ads for organic products and much more!

The Natural Farmer, 411 Sheldon Rd., Barre, MA 01005

Yes, I'm interested in The Natural Farmer.

- Please send me the next 4 issues - I enclose \$10 (\$18 outside US)
- Please send me a sample issue - I enclose \$3 (\$5 outside US)

name _____

address _____

city _____

state _____ zip _____

Organic Production

Feature Farm

Spring Wood Organic Dairy Farms Roman and Lucy Stoltzfoos and family

By Nora Owens

Roman and Lucy Stoltzfoos farm on 200 acres in Lancaster County, PA and their most important crop is their children. "It may not be the easiest way to make a living," admits Roman, "but it's the best way for me to teach my children how to work, and for them to learn where their food comes from and what it takes to produce it." Roman says he loves being able to work along side his wife, and adds, "it is priceless to be able to work with my children." Together with 9 of their 11 children, they own and operate Spring Wood Organic Farm, a 3rd generation, 200-acre Mennonite family dairy farm in Kinzer Pennsylvania, just 50 miles west of Philadelphia. Their oldest son, Dwight, and his wife Brenda, are living in South Carolina and Dwight is busy constructing houses, while their daughter, Hilda is working in a birthing clinic on a mission station in Paraguay and will be returning this month.

Roman grew up on the farm, then a conventional dairy farm managed by his father. In 1982, following 3½ years of mission work on a farm in Virginia, Roman and Lucy took over the family farm. They transitioned to an organic operation in 1987; converted to a full grazing system in 1993 and began shipping organic milk in 1995. Today, Roman and his sons, Delmar, 20, and Clifford, 15, manage the herd of 100 Holstein x Jersey milking cows. Milking takes less than an hour, two times a day, in their 22-unit New Zealand style swing parlor. A big proponent of grassed based dairying, Roman produces all of the hay, grass and baleage for the dairy herd, and uses intensive grazing practices. In addition to the 200 acres at the home farm, Stoltzfoos rents 250 acres within 100 miles where he harvests hay and baleage, and transports it back to the farm. His experience with rye grass hasn't been good, noting that rye grass varieties he has used only seem to do well in the spring



and fall, but don't do well under dry conditions. However, he's been trying a new variety of Fescue grass, produced by Pennington and not yet available on the market, and is very impressed. According to Roman, "It is good in drought and holds up well under wet conditions, too; whereas rye grass tends to be fragile in the winter when there's a lot of moisture." The dairy herd is out on pasture, year-round with baleage provided outside all winter. A small amount of grain, 5 lbs. of corn and 3 lbs. of oats per cow, is fed out daily, and with slightly less used at the height of the grazing season. It is never fed alone, always

as part of a total mixed ration (TMR), combined with hay and straw.

The Stoltzfoos' herd is particularly hearty, much of which Roman attributes to both his efforts to move to a Holstein and Jersey cross and keeping his cows outside year round, "Holsteins haven't been as successful at coping

with the rigors of a grazing program. This cross has a better positive energy balance, with fewer cases of mastitis, and great legs and feet." The cows are kept on pasture all year except in extreme cold weather when they have access to an open shed at night during the coldest months.

Excellent herd health and reproduction results are also credited to breed and management. Roman recognizes that cows need to reproduce annually and to have healthy udders, and to achieve these goals he feeds a high forage diet; does not push production and ensures that the cows are well exercised and receive regular health checks. Roman uses artificial insemination and cleans up with the bull with 85% of his herd calving each year; he rarely needs to help when a cow freshens, and he has had only 1 case of milk fever in many years. Roman hasn't had a hoof trimmer at Spring Wood Farm in over two years and has had a very low rate of Strawberry Wart in recent years. With a smile on his face, Roman reported that his veterinarian said he'd go out of business if he had to depend on the Stoltzfoos' for income. Roman is quick to note that everything is not always rosy. The 2005 summer heat and drought brought a number of problems including much stressed cows who had a higher than usual rate of mastitis and a somatic cell count that crept up for a time.

At Spring Wood Organic Farm, the Stoltzfoos' practice

(Continued on page 18)

(Continued from Featured Farm—Spring Wood Organic Farm, page 17)

a modified seasonal dairying plan. They breed only between June and the early fall, and freshen between March 1st and the end of June. At the time of writing this article (February), they are milking about 48 cows. “By following this breeding schedule, we are able to take full advantage of rich spring grass when the cows freshen and have the greatest nutritional needs,” reports Roman.

When asked what has made the biggest difference to the family farm, Roman was quick to say that diversifying the farm’s enterprises has made a big difference. The Stoltzfoos’ are raising about 10,000 organic turkeys that they sell to wholesalers. Joshua Stoltzfoos, 14, is in charge of the day-to-day turkey operations, with his brother Clifford in charge of grinding the feed. Further diversification includes the recently converted house on their property, which they have turned into a vacation rental and have named ‘The Little Stone Cottage’. The whole family was involved in this major remodeling project. You can view this beautiful cottage, and book a stay there, by going to www.vrbo.com and looking at property number 73588.

The Stoltzfoos’ recognize the importance of being an organic farm, from both a healthy lifestyle and financial perspective. They raise almost all of their own food; Lucy is in charge of the garden, and they have a variety of livestock, all raised organically. The health of the livestock, the soil and the humans is very important to this family. From a financial perspective, Roman points

out that it is a good business decision, citing his December milk check as a good example, when he received \$30.41 per cwt. He ships milk through Lancaster Organic Farmers Cooperative, or LOFCO, a cooperative he helped start about 3 years ago, and in which he remains actively involved as a board member. “Starting the cooperative took a lot of work but it has paid off,” says Roman Stoltzfoos, “we felt the need to be independent from the other milk cooperatives and processors who have vested interests in their own organizations, where we are only focused on the best interests of the farmer members.”

When asked about the future of the farm, Roman said that it isn’t something that worries him. With six sons and 5 daughters, a number of whom are actively involved on the farm, he is quite optimistic about the family remaining in farming.

In conclusion, Roman spoke of the state of the organic food industry: “it will be important to keep the price of milk up, which is challenging because the USDA has not been very understanding of organics.” He expressed concern that organic standards are being watered down and will lead to a loss of consumers’ respect and confidence. Additionally, if significant pasture intake is not required of organic ruminants that will lead to a decrease in the quality of the products especially milk, and distort the original purpose of organic production.

Nora Owens is the NODPA Membership and Events Coordinator. ♦

Animal Remedies
from Nature

Since 1979, Agri-Dynamics has been producing natural formulations for livestock, equine, pets and aqua-culture using the finest botanicals, essential oils, nutrients, chelated and colloidal minerals. Contact us for additional information and a free catalog.

agri-dynamics
PO Box 267 Martins Creek, PA 18063
(610) 250-9280, Fax (610) 250-0935

“From the Dawn of Creation . . .”
Introducing Geothermally Produced
DESERT DYNA-MIN

ALL-Natural Researched & Proven Colloidal Trace Mineral Supplement for all Livestock, Pets & Crops

Extensively Researched & Proven by:

- U.S. Government Agencies
- Land Grant Universities
- Independent Laboratories
- Numerous Field Trials

Mined in the Imperial Valley Desert of California Since 1947

agri-dynamics PO Box 267 Martins Creek, PA 18063
(610) 250-9280, Fax (610) 250-0935

Research and Education

UNH Organic Dairy Farm Off to a Good Start

By Chuck Schwab and Kevin Brussell, UNH

As some of you may know, the University of New Hampshire is well on its way to having a 300-acre organic dairy farm. Fund raising for buildings and equipment is in high gear and 48 Jersey heifers are in transition to organic. More Jerseys will be added to the herd but they will be coming from organic herds. With timely breeding and obedient heifers, the first load of organic milk is expected to go out the door on December 30, 2006! We write this article not only to update you on our activities, but also to answer some of the questions that have been asked regarding the organic farm.

Why is the University of New Hampshire starting this?

Many things have fallen into place during the last 2 years to point UNH in this direction. There is an exciting movement on our campus to expand and link our programs in agriculture, food and nutrition. The organic



dairy farm initiative is a part of this larger and long-term commitment to research and education.

We have also come to realize the need, and urgency, of getting researchers, educators and students to work together across state boundaries. The world is getting smaller, and the issues in agriculture are becoming more complex. The truth is, no one program, or institution, regardless of their size, can be everything to everyone. To that end, UNH is committed to participating in regional activities where talents and expertise are shared. In this case, we believe an integrated team-approach is needed to address the challenges of preserving our farming heritage, and to promote new opportunities and greater profitability for the regions' dairy industry. By further partnering with the food, feed and agronomic and health industries, farmers, and governmental agencies, a mechanism is created to deal with the more complex issues of agriculture and food production in a cost efficient way. We are fortunate to have excellent administrative support in following these directives.

Our central geographic location to the other New Eng-
(Continued on page 20)

CreamLine



a new voice for little dairies

CreamLine is a quarterly publication with emphasis on cheesemaking, farmstead processing, local marketing, ecofriendly milk production and unusual breeds of dairy animals.

**Subscription: \$27/yr, \$50/2 years
or send \$2 for sample issue to:**

CreamLine
P.O. Box 186-ND
Willis, VA 24380

24-hour phone/fax (540) 789-7877

E-mail: ladybug@swva.net
(Paypal accepted at this address)

www.smalldairy.com

THE COOPERATIVE CHOICE
FOR ORGANIC DAIRY FARMERS



Wouldn't you rather be a vital member of the farmer-owned cooperative that's provided seventeen years of stable, growing pay prices? *Organic* is America's lifeline for family farms. Organic Valley has led the way. Help us carve out a better future, enjoy excellent cooperative support, and market your milk locally. *Call our farmer hotline to learn more about our organic dairy transition assistance program, 888-809-9297.*

John Cleary, New England Pool 612-803-9087
Peter Miller, Northeast Pool 612-801-3506

CROPP COOPERATIVE
INDEPENDENT and FARMER-OWNED
www.organicvalley.coop/farmer

(Continued from UNH Dairy Farm, page 19)

land universities, and the availability of two contiguous farms (the Burley-Demeritt and Bartlett-Dudley Farms) were important factors. The two farms provide over 300 acres of cropland, pasture, woods, wetlands, and trails. The University also has other farm land that has already been certified organic, or will be certified organic, that can provide feed for the organic herd.

In summary, the 80-cow Jersey farm campus is being developed for use as a regional research farm to address the research, demonstration and educational needs of the organic dairy industry in the northeast. The farm is to help organic dairy farmers, farmers undergoing or considering transition to organic, and farmers and students interested in more sustainable agricultural practices. All who are interested in organic, sustainable, and low input farming practices are encouraged to participate in the research and activities at the farm.

Why Now?

As a reader, you are probably thinking that such an initiative is long overdue. We agree. There is no doubt that there is an unprecedented demand for organic food, a need for more information about sustainable and low input farming practices, a need for science-based information on organic production practices, and a need for regional centers of excellence for organic dairy and cropping systems research. Organic dairy farmers need, and deserve, research-based information.

Although there has been a sharp decrease in agricultural researchers in New England and the Northeast, excellent complementary expertise still exists to mount a strong regional research program on organic dairy farming practices. Our goal is to partner with organic dairy farmers in their efforts to provide a growing number of consumers that want organic dairy products in the search for practices that produce high quality milk, while being environmentally sustainable and economically viable. This will help preserve the northeast regions farming heritage and rural communities, help build new opportunities and greater profitability for the regions' dairy industry, and help educate a new generation of young farmers in sustainable farming practices.

Why Jerseys?

This is a frequently asked question by farmers and

others alike, and one that deserves an honest answer. One answer is why not? They are dairy cows and do well grazing!

Another answer is that the dairy folks at UNH missed their Jerseys. Before moving into the UNH Dairy Teaching and Research Center in 1989, UNH had two dairy herds...a larger breeding and genetic herd which consisted of 4 breeds (Holstein, Jersey, Guernsey and Ayrshire) and a smaller research herd which was all Holsteins. There was a desire at the time of building the new dairy facilities to have a mixed herd of Holsteins and Jerseys, but issues involving housing, total herd size, research and other factors made it necessary to go with a single breed. Because

they are the predominant dairy breed, Holsteins were selected. The organic dairy initiative has given UNH an opportunity to bring Jerseys back to campus, and in greater numbers than otherwise possible.

Accomplishments to date

There have been several. Our colleagues in Maine invited us to participate in the writing of a grant to the USDA/CSREES Integrated Organic Program to study cropping systems aimed at reducing the reliance on imported grains. The 4-year grant was funded (\$829,000). The involved parties in the grant are the University of Maine, University of New Hampshire, the USDA/ARS

New England Plant Soil and Water Laboratory, and the Maine Organic Milk Producers (MOMP). It should be noted that it was the input of organic dairy producers in Maine and Vermont that provided the basis for the grant. A one-year \$25,000 NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) grant to hold twilight meetings for farmers on rotational grazing has also been obtained.

Over \$200,000 has been obtained to help with the development of the farm.

An additional \$70,000 has been raised through a combination gifts for animal purchases or animal donations. Feed mixing and processing equipment, organic grain, a grain combine, and semen and breeding supplies have been donated.

Will farmers be involved?

(Continued on page 21)



First heifers at UNH for future organic herd.



Please consider donating organic Jersey youngstock to UNH.

(Continued from UNH Dairy Farm page 20)

The answer is, absolutely. Sixteen farmers, two from each of the eight northeast states, have been asked to serve on a 27-member advisory committee along with other agricultural practitioners. The group has been established to be a source of expertise for the farm, to help identify research, demonstration and educational priorities for the farm, and to help foster communication between researchers, producers and all of the partners in the initiative.

An executive committee is currently being formed to complement the responsibilities of the advisory board and to help in establishing the direction and the promotion and funding of the programs at the farm. There will be 5-7 members representing NODPA, retailers/grocers, consumer organizations, milk processors, etc.

How you can help

As you can see above, we are a long way from our targeted goal of \$1.5 million for the development of the farm. If you believe in this effort, please consider making a donation. **No gift is too small or too large.** Gifts have ranged in size from \$100 to \$200,000. As we believe that the best and most cost effective research will be conducted at the farm using a team-approach, we also believe that genuine grass-roots support is needed to underpin this effort.

We are also looking for 25-30 organic Jersey heifers. Please consider donating an animal from your farm to this initiative. We are interested in some comparative studies to look at herd transition.

If you are interested in helping, or have questions about this initiative, please feel free to contact either of us (Chuck: 603-862-1341; Kevin: 603-862-1281) or Jennifer Goldberg (603-862-1654) or Peggy Sullivan (603-862-2042) in the UNH Foundation Office. If you are interested in donating cows contact Brenda Snow at 802-728-3920. For donations of farm machinery, fencing materials, or cattle equipment contact Chuck or Kevin

For those wishing to contribute without speaking to someone, please make checks payable to: UNH Foundation, Inc. with reference made, somewhere on the check, to "organic dairy". Mail check to the attention of Jennifer Goldberg, UNH Foundation Office, 9 Edgewood Road, Durham, NH 03824.



Alfred State Proposal Adds Organic Herd to Dairy Operations

Alfred State University Press Release

ALFRED, NY – Alfred State College will help shape the future of family farming locally, regionally, nationally, and globally, with development of its new Centennial Farm.

A multi-million dollar "Smart Farm" business plan, formulated by Cornell Cooperative Extension experts James Grace and Joan Petzen and approved recently by President Gupta and her Cabinet, incorporates and expands on recommendations put forward last fall by an Alfred State College Farm Task Force.

The Centennial Farm will be operated according to principles of sustainable agriculture. Sustainability rests on the principle that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Therefore, stewardship of both natural and human resources is of prime importance.

While college officials did not release a price tag on the new complex and new programs, Alfred State is embarking on an ambitious plan which calls for dramatic changes in the current facilities and operations.

A portion of the Centennial Farm will be certified organic. An additional dairy herd will be added to the conventional herd already in place at the farm. The additional herd will produce certified organic milk and will be managed according to organic veterinary principles. College officials believe adding organic production and management to the current conventional herd will allow Alfred State to offer a new slate of opportunities for research and continuing education.

"The farm is taking a giant leap forward and it will be the keystone of our centennial celebration," said Robert J. Albrecht, Alfred State College interim vice president for Academic Affairs. "It will be the anchor for practical sustainable agriculture education in New York state," he added.

"This plan is not just a business plan," said Alfred State College President Dr. Uma G. Gupta, "It is a plan that will help shape the future of agriculture for the region, the state, and our country."

With approval of the proposal, the college has embarked on the resource development phase of the project, according to officials. The College believes the key to development of the plan is outreach to and partnerships

(Continued on page 22)

(Continued from Alfred State page 21)

with business, the organic dairy industry, the food industry, state and local governments, farmers and Alfred State agriculture graduates.

The Centennial Farm’s new facilities will make it a “smart farm” where every technology innovation will be used or piloted. The goal is to meet the needs of farmers and the agriculture industry in the 21st century.

The smart farm facilities will include:

- * 140-cow freestyle dairy barn
- * A milking center with a double-8 milking parlor
- * A 110-head dairy heifer barn

The “smart farm” also will utilize alternative fuels, permanent perimeter fencing, and computerized dairy farm management systems. The farm management system will be based on a more sustainable model featuring grasslands dairy management. Ultimately, the college plans to develop a National Grazing Institute and a Center for Sustainable Agriculture Advocacy, officials said.

“Our hope is that the facility will be utilized by the entire regional community,” said Victoria Bolton, chair of the Alfred State College Agriculture and Horticulture Department. “The college hopes to partner with other agricultural organizations to offer programs, workshops,

and examples of modern agricultural methodology. The college farm will be a working farm that will offer a site for extraordinary teaching, research, and demonstration value.”

Alfred State College also proposes to significantly update the academic programs related to agriculture. The proposal includes a two-year degree in Agriculture Technologies with provost-approved tracks in dairy, veterinary technology, agribusiness, organic farming, and nutraceuticals. Agricultural Technologies graduates could transfer to the college’s Technology Management baccalaureate program, pending state education department approval.

“The addition of a complementary organic herd and adoption of free grazing will open up opportunities for faculty-student research studies and permit agriculture and veterinary technology students to investigate comparable care and treatment of animals,” said Dr. Joanne M. Cepelak, dean of the School of Arts and Sciences.

College officials believe the uniqueness of the Centennial Farm will result in it becoming a nationally significant facility, powerfully linked to economic development.

“Our new vision for the farm as an organic and grazing powerhouse makes Alfred State College a trailblazer in

(Continued on page 23)

We have Premium Quality Pasture Mixes
made with top quality

CERTIFIED ORGANIC SEED

*All of these mixtures contain clovers
to boost productivity*

ORGANIC STAR
For dairy quality pasture on varying soil types

ORGANIC GREENFAST
Lots of tonnage fast for pasture or balage

DAIRY GREEN ORGANIC
Extremely high forage quality and palatability

*A full line of untreated seed for the serious dairy or beef
farmer: Alfalfa, corn, BMR sorghum sudan, forage type
small grains, clovers, and leafy grasses.*

**CALL FOR A FREE PRODUCT
INFORMATION GUIDE**
866-687-6224

**DEALER INQUIRIES
WELCOME!**



**King's
AgriSeeds** LLC

Helping the family farm prosper by specializing in
high quality forages and grazing since 1993.
96 Paradise Lane, Ronks, PA 17572

Specializing in High Energy Forages for Healthier Cows & Profits




**USDA Organic Certification for
Dairy Producers in PA
and Adjoining States**

New “Focus on Organic Dairy” program provides a specialist to help you transition to organic with:

- * Technical assistance and on-farm support
- * Organic dairy bulletins
- * Business planning
- * Workshops and field days
- * Experienced organic farmer-advisors

Contact us for a free info pack or to speak to one of our certification specialists.

Pennsylvania Certified Organic
Assuring the Integrity of Organic Products

406 S. Pennsylvania Ave. Centre Hall PA 16828
814.364.1344 pco@paorganic.org www.paorganic.org

NOFA-NY Receives Funding To Help Transitioning Dairy Farmers

This three-year project, funded by a Research and Development Risk Management Research Partnership grant from the USDA's Risk Management Agency, will develop planning and management tools for the growing number of farmers in the Northeast who wish to transition to organic dairy production. These tools will be designed to reduce or eliminate the substantial risks posed by the transition process and to help transitioning farms develop into sustainable and profitable organic dairy operations. The project will assemble a team composed of experienced organic dairy farmers, experts in dairy and farm management, and other stakeholders in the organic dairy industry to develop two risk management tools: a self-assessment workbook and a transition notebook.

The workbook, focusing on the pre-transition period, will take a "whole farm" approach in helping growers to critically assess their farming operations in relation to organic management standards, methods and associated costs and to realistically plan the transition process. The notebook will be a comprehensive compilation of information needed during the transition process, including sections on specific topics such as herd health and nutritional management, a troubleshooting guide, and methods for tracking farm performance. These tools will be improved and refined through extensive field-testing on farms before being made available to farmers in the Northeast.

An additional component of the grant will be a training program for extension educators, private dairy consultants, and staff of regional NGOs and relevant state and federal agencies to support farmers in the use of these tools. NOFA-NY's institutional partners in the project include Cornell University, The New England Small Farm Institute, and NOFA-VT.

For more information contact, Sarah Johnston, NOFA-NY, Inc, P.O. Box 880, Cobleskill, NY 12043, sarahjohnston@nofany.org ♦

(Continued from Alfred State, page 22)

the convergence of agriculture and technology," Gupta said.

The current farm sells about 20,000 pounds of milk per cow per year. Currently, the farm has 67 milking-age animals.

"The (new) dairy herd would consist of 140 milking age animals plus replacements split into two parallel herds. One herd would be managed in accordance with organic standards outlined by the Federal Organic Standards and the other conventionally," the business report says. "The herds would be managed to optimize production within the resource constraints of the quality of forage available for grazing and procured for stored feed."

Approximately 200 students are enrolled in the Agriculture and Horticulture Department programs at Alfred State. ♦

Net Update



ODAIRY- If you need information on feed, politics, equipment, workshops and much more from people doing the work, join 520 subscribers to the list-serve which is moderated by NODPA.

This is yet another service of NODPA, so don't forget to pay your dues to keep this list serve alive and working. To subscribe to ODAIRY, follow the instructions on our Web Site, www.nodpa.com or email: ODAIRY-subscribe@yahogroups.com.

A taste of the cream or perhaps the skim of ODAIRY!

Should the retailer not make a better percentage on a higher quality product? Yes there is greater investment for them also. Speaking of not making a very good hourly wage, on the whole the organic farmer makes more than the conventional farmer if he watches what he is doing. I believe if the retailer is price gouging the consumers will stop buying or take their business some other place. Promote your product, process your product, market your product RETAIL will give you the greatest returns. VALUE ADDED is what farmers need more of, then everyone WINS MORE.

I am presently in development of a 350 acre grass based seasonal organic dairy in eastern NC. Plans are to begin milking in the spring of '07. I need someone with extensive grass experience and prefer that it be organic. This could be a golden opportunity for the right person as my company's plans are to rapidly expand with 10,000 cows being our long-term goal (7-10yrs). Our philosophy will allow employees to earn equity in the business. This will be more of an opportunity than a job.

Here are some feed costs that I'm aware of: locally produced shell corn(very limited availability) 250; cornmeal from Morrison's(VT)-370 alfalfa hay(from Midwest) 200RFV-285; alfalfa pellets(21cp)-@240 14% dairy mash(50%corn,wheat,mids,flax,soy,min,-410In my opinion, it looks like grain costs for 2006 could very well eat up much of my recent pay increase. Time for another pay raise anyone?

Your first question: Is it maybe ringworm? For this we use apple cider vinegar and copper sulfate squirted onto ringworm. Maybe others can confirm that they think it is lice or mange. Your second question: Personally, I would recommend putting heifers/older calves in with the cows only when they are ready to breed. This gives plenty of time for them to get used to your cow routine. If the young heifers are put in with cows now, they see other calves sucking, they might follow suite. Waiting 4-5 months to put them in could be a big deal in them not sucking later, especially if they nursed on the cows as baby calves. We learned the hard way and got a bunch of mastitis due to 9-10 month old calves sucking on cows dry/drying up. ♦

Commentary



'Commentary' is an open forum for sharing thoughts, opinions, concerns, and whatever else inspires you. Please send your submissions to any of the Editors (see page 16 for contact information). The views expressed below are those of the author(s) and in no way represent the official views of NODPA or any of its representatives.

What Is an Organic Dairy? The Replacement Issue

by Mark A. Kastel

In the fight to protect the integrity of organic dairy products, and economic justice for family-scale farmers, the organic community has, rightfully, been working hard in an attempt to get the USDA to crack down on a handful of "organic" industrial farms that are principally practicing confinement agriculture. Regardless of the percentage of pasture they afford their animals, in the eyes of the consumer, factory farms are not organic!

Our research has indicated a number of other potential violations on these farms. But regardless of the legal interpretation; these farms are undoubtedly violating the trust of the organic consumer.

Some large farms, with hundreds or thousands of animals, are, as a standard ongoing practice, acquiring conventionally raised replacement heifers. First of all, let me make our position quite clear: with the exception of aggressive culling for herd health, or for expansion, almost all legitimate organic farms have cull rates low enough that they can sustain themselves without buying outside animals—except, again, to grow the total size of their herd or for health reasons.

Many of the largest farms we have investigated have exceedingly high cull rates consistent with conventional confinement operations. The organic law and philosophy make it incumbent upon the dairy producer to put an emphasis on "health and natural behavior" of animals. If a farm is pushing for high production, in traditional confinement-like conditions, and that results in a high slaughter rate, the farm is not operating as the law intended.

Please allow me to be specific as to our findings on how some dairy operations are "gaming the system":

1. Some producers simply buy commercial heifers in the 700-pound range (one year old) to supplement reproduction within their own operations. These are purchased from auctions and other sources, with no regard to the history of these animals relating to prohibited substances, including genetically engineered feed.
2. Other farms sell off 100% of their calves and simply

purchase replacement animals on the open market, again, without regard to the animals' history. This saves them the extra effort and expense required to limit mortality without an arsenal of pharmaceuticals, and, of course, it means that they are only incurring the cost for organic feed for one year prior to these animals entering the milking line.

The most egregious practices currently taking place are on a number of farms that sell their calves off at birth to conventional heifer ranches. At one year of age these animals are shuffled into "organic management," either in segregation on the same facility (a split operation) or transferred to a third ranch. Then these calves are returned to organic dairies. This practice is patently illegal because of the prohibition in the organic regulations of transitioning animals back and forth into organic production.

The bottom line here is that this is just one more way these large industrial dairies are placing ethical family farmers at a competitive disadvantage. Real organic farmers raise their replacement animals from birth and incur the full expense prior to the animals becoming productive.

We cannot allow these large farms to continue to burn out their animals and access cheap conventional replacements. Both practices are repugnant to our customers and, in our opinion, violate the current law.

Mark Kastel is the senior farm policy analyst with the Wisconsin-based Cornucopia Institute.
www.cornucopia.org

A View From New England Farm Country

The following commentary was written and submitted to NODPA News in response to the article by Nancy Hirschberg, "Stonyfield Farm and Organic NFD from New England," printed in the November 2005 issue of NODPA News.

Dear Mrs. Hirschberg,

I started shipping organic milk in 1999 to Horizon. I sold my herd to Horizon last July because I had not made a profit in 2 years. When conventional milk was cheap and the government made up \$2 or 3 per hundred, we did ok. We are ones who will not compromise on cow comfort and cleanliness and our employees have hospitalization, insurance which we pay in full for \$1040 per month for families. We were making over 3 million pounds per year. I know people that are compromising their integrity to stay alive in organic milk. I believe the consumer deserves better even if they have to pay more.

Corporate executives in the organic industry can't imagine how mad you make the small farmer milking his

(Continued from Commentary page 24)

cows on Sunday morning while you are on a long holiday weekend with your families skiing or mountain climbing.

You don't think that what you are doing buying milk from CAFO's and New Zealand is going to affect family farms because you are offering to buy more local milk and can't find it. There is a reason you can't find it. You want to buy it for less than the cost of production.

There are thousands of family farms that would jump at the chance to ship organic milk, but when they check with their neighbor they find that the cost of production has far outstripped the premium being paid and many organic farmers can't pay for basic needs such as grain, bedding for their cows and calves so they are nasty, which impacts the quality of milk you buy. They don't have money enough to hire help so they can get their haying done in a timely manner. Their machinery is broken down when they should be cutting hay.

The barn roof is leaking and the windows are broken with nobody to fix them because they are too busy doing things that can't be put off like milking and fencing. While you are at your children's or grandchildren's ballgame, think of the farmer who makes it possible for you to have that good job and free time enjoyed in the corporate world because that farmer isn't there to enjoy it with

you because he doesn't have money enough to hire someone to fill in.

I was at a meeting from 11AM to 2 PM recently trying to figure out how to get farmers anything resembling a pay price enough to survive. I asked how they handled hospitalizations for their families. Bear in mind, this was the group that are the leaders in milk business. They weren't like most that can't escape for 3 hours once a month to be involved.

In this group, several people didn't have any health insurance at all for their families. They either tough it out when one is sick or Medicaid pays their doctor bills. Several farmers had a policy with a \$5000 deductible and one had a policy with a \$20,000 deductible.

One of the farmers had a daughter with appendicitis. He was a lucky one with a \$5000 deductible. He told me that he had to set up payment plan with the hospital and was paying \$100 a month for five years. His daughter's problem will be paid off just after she graduates from high school. She damn well better not get sick again or the bill could get to be part of her dowry. At least they won't have that separation anxiety when she goes away to school because there certainly isn't any college fund going on here like the beautiful people have.

(Continued on page 26)

DMS is looking for new Organic Milk to fill the ever - growing Organic milk market.

DMS, the largest supplier of milk in the Northeast, also markets milk to all major Organic Milk Handlers.

We offer a competitive premium package for Organic Milk and can help farms making the transition to Organic with loans and supplies.

Want to know more?

For details call 1-888-589-6455
Dave Eyster, extension 5409

DMS
Dairy Marketing Services

www.dairymarketingservices.com

Looking
for an
Organic
Milk
Market?

Neptune's Harvest Organic Fertilizers:

Products from the nutrient rich North Atlantic Ocean. Plus many new products including Fertilizers, Animal Feeds, Repellents and more...

- Increase Yields
- Raise Protein & Nutrition Levels
- Breakdown Manure Faster
- Create Healthy Soils and Animals
- Plus Many Other Benefits

"Our Products Work"



Call for **FREE** catalog and **SAMPLE**

1 (800) 259-4769

www.neptunesharvest.com

(Continued from Commentary page 25)

A cost of production study has been completed from 2004 and will be coming out soon and also will be ongoing. It shows that a 50 cow farm in Maine and Vermont spent \$375 for seed in 2004 which buys less than 4 bags of corn seed or 2 bags of alfalfa which will seed down 6 acres. Fifty cows and fifty young animals would require about 200 acres of pasture and hay land. When you divide this out, it will take about 33 years to rotate to new seed fields. A reasonable rotation would be 5 or 6 years, which makes it plain that the farmer doesn't have money enough to do the right thing by his cattle.

Farmers have done so much with so little for so long. They don't have a clue what it would mean to have a long weekend off to do something with the family. What they get is a chance to be with family doing fun things like trying to fix the gutter cleaner on Christmas morning at -10 degrees. At the same time, someone else tries to get the 30 year old loader to run to feed cows. Meanwhile, mom is thawing out the water lines in the milk room so she can wash the milk dishes before she gets Christmas dinner.

So if you would ponder these thoughts while you folks are opening presents around the fireplace with your family. We are doing things in the barn with our families. Luckily they don't get paid, which certainly helps your bottom line.

But I did notice that Stonyfield no longer could afford to buy local milk for some of their producers and were going to New Zealand. That's what we should expect with the WalMart mentality. When the local can't produce what you want for less than nothing, you go overseas to buy it from the Chinese who work for pennies per hour and lie in smog because they are expendable. **This isn't what you are telling your customers.** They think they are paying for a more fulfilling life style for small farm families. Then, there is Horizon that refers to us as their producer partners. I sure wish they would come do their share of the work some day so the farmers would not have to milk 14 times per week. To give the devil his due, it is Horizon that leads the way in pay price. They are leading all the time about \$5.00 per hundred behind a fair price. Then CROPP is always sure they can't possibly give their farmers any more because they don't have the deep pockets of the other players, and if you rock the boat you will lose your company equity, so go home and milk your cows and be quiet.

Just because milk goes up \$5.00 a hundred at the farm doesn't mean that dairies have to multiply their margin by the same percent all the way through the chain.

So, in conclusion, Mrs. Hirschberg you are a very nice person because I have met you several years ago and enjoyed you very much. However, in your idealistic world you don't have a clue what you are doing to fam-

ily farms in New England and what they hoped would be the salvation of 40-80 cow family farms.

Thank you for your consideration on this very important issue.

Ralph Caldwell, *Turner, ME*
207/225-3871

PS. The Cost of Production Study came out since I wrote this letter and it verifies the fact that the average farmer lost 3% of his equity in '04 which is a lot better than '05 is going to be. It suggests that in order for a farmer to have made a 5% return on investment in '04 he would have had to have got \$28 cwt and again '05 is a lot worse. Also have in mind that this is only a reflection on what farmers did spend, not what they should have spent to do things properly if they had any money to work with.

I apologize if some people from CROPP or Horizon or Hood or Stonyfield are offended by my comments. I thought someone should let you know that all wasn't well in small town New England. If you think this letter is a bit sour you should have read the first draft when the NODPA paper first came out and I was very angry.

NASS to Assess Financial Situation of U.S. Farmers With a Breakout for Organic Production this Year

How are agricultural producers surviving when fuel and other input costs continue to rise? Are government program payments providing producers an adequate safety net when crops are damaged by dry weather or tropical storms? The United States Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will give agricultural producers the chance to answer these and other questions by participating in the upcoming Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS).

ARMS survey provides the leading economic indicators of state and national agriculture for producers, agribusinesses, and government. The results will show the impact of higher expenses, the shifting global markets, farmer production decisions and governmental policies on the agricultural economy.

Producers chosen to participate in the Agricultural Resource Management Survey will be mailed a questionnaire or visited by an interviewer during the January through March data-collection period. ♦

Calendar

March 2 & 3

Northeast Sustainable Livestock Conference

Lake Morey Inn, Fairlee, VT

This two-day conference with featured Key-note speaker Catherine Austin Fitts on creating local wealth, www.solari.com is followed by multi-topic sessions including General Livestock Health and The Botanical Pharmacy with Dr. Hue Karreman, What You Can't See Can Cost You and It's a Matter of Udder Health with Dr. Linda Tikofsky, plus workshops on soil fertility, grazing, crops, finances and marketing. Thursday night offers Vern Grubinger, Director of the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture speaking on Global Climate Change and Agriculture to complement dinner. Cost: \$60 for each day or \$100 for two days plus \$20 for Thursday dinner. Contact: Heather Darby, 802-524-6501, heather.darby@uvm.edu or Lisa McCrory, 802-234-5524 lmccrory@together.net, www.nofavt.org to download the brochure

March 4

The Scoop on Poop: Using Fecal Exams in Your Small Ruminant Parasite Control Program

Castleton State College, Castleton, VT
Parasitologist Dr. Anne Zajac will teach a workshop on how to recognize and count parasite eggs in fecal samples and how to use that information in designing parasite control programs and checking for drug resistance worms. This workshop will focus on the actual hands-on skills of performing a fecal egg count and egg identification. Bring your own sheep or goat fecal samples (fresh and kept below 60 degrees F). There will be microscopes available for your use through the generosity of Castleton State College. Dr. Zajac will finish with a discussion of how to use those results on your farm.

Cost: \$5 per person for VT Sheep and Goat Assn. members. \$40 for non-members (membership costs \$35) Pre-registration needed. Send name (s) complete mailing address, phone and email. Make check payable to "VSGA" (Worm Workshop in memo) and send to UVM Center for Sustainable Ag., 63 Carrigan Drive, Burlington, VT 05405
For questions or to receive VSGA member form (directions sent upon registration), Carol.Delaney@uvm.edu, 802-656-0915

March 4

NOFA-NH's Fourth Annual Conference

Winnsquam High School, Tilton, NH
Workshop sessions will include: Raising the Family Cow, First Aid Homeopathy, Organic

Certification, Organic Pesticides, Food Preservation and other home arts, as well as several talks on alternate energy. A discussion on NH's Campaign for Raw Milk will be highlighted during lunch or at another appropriate time. If you are interested in the conference check out the NOFA-NH web site at www.nofanh.org or email nofanh@innevi.com.

March 11

Cultivating an Organic CT-NOFA End of Winter Conference

Windsor, CT

James Howard, Kunstler, author of "The Long Emergency", keynote speaker. The day-long event includes workshops, exhibits, and a farmers market. Contact 203-888-5146 or www.ctnofa.org for more info.

March 11 & 18

Holistic Management ® Planned Grazing Workshop

Cimmaron Farm, Swanton, VT, 9 – 4:30
Planned Grazing makes use of a simple, comprehensive planning procedure and chart to address, one step at a time, all the variables involved in people managing livestock on grasslands. Covering all your bases with planning pays. A working understanding of the Holistic Management ® model and a personal or holistic goal are required for this workshop. Contact: Abe Collins, 802-527-2913, famfarm@sover.net

April 22

Horses, Livestock & Heritage Breeds Day with Pesticide Safety and Equipment

UMass Eastern Extension Ctr, Waltham, MA
This all-day program will appeal to back yard gardeners and beginning or part-time farmers. The program will feature UMass Extension

Educators and University of Massachusetts faculty. Instruction will emphasize how to manage livestock and small farms in a sustainable manner. The following topics will be presented: Exploring the Heritage Breeds of Livestock & Poultry, Managing Pastures for Horses & Livestock, Managing Nutrients and Manure on Horse Farms, West Nile, Encephalitis, Lyme Disease, and Rabies, Understanding Hay Quality for Horses and Livestock. Preregistration is required. You can register for individual sessions or for the whole day! Phone: 413-545-0895, <http://www.MassAggieSeminars.org>

May 6 & 7

Fencing Clinic

Wellscroft Fence Systems, Chesham, NH

The morning session will concentrate on polywire, rope and tape systems for horses, cattle, and sheep as well as wildlife control. The afternoon session will focus on the construction of permanent high tensile, smooth, rail and woven wire fences. Bring your own lunch.

Contact: David Kennard, 603-827-3464

May 23-25

Eighth Annual Mid-Atlantic Consortium (MAC) Regional Dairy Extension Inservice Training Program

Woodlands Inn & Resort, Wilkes-Barre, PA. Putting Knowledge to Work for More Profit in Critical Areas: Mastitis Control, Reproduction, Organic Production, and Internal Herd Growth. This conference draws extension agents and specialists from all over the Northeast. Registration and housing information will be available soon. Contact: Julie Smith, Julie.M.Smith@uvm.edu

Advertise With Us!

Half Page Ad (7.5" W x 4.5" H) = \$180

Quarter Page Ad (3.5" w x 4.75" h) = \$100

Eighth Page Ad or Business Card (3.5" w x 2.25" h) = \$60

Classified Ads: Free to Northeast organic farmers

All others \$10 for the first 30 words; \$.10 per word over 30

Deadline for the next issue is April 5, 2005

Please send your ad and check (made payable to NODPA) to: Lisa McCrory, NODPA Newsletter, 341 Macintosh Hill., Randolph, VT 05060 For more information, call 802-234-5524 or email lmccrory@together.net

- **Note:** Ads requiring typesetting, size changes or design work will be charged additional fees, according to the service (minimum charge \$30.00).
Please send a check with your ad.

**Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
(NODPA)**

c/o Ed Maltby
30 Keets Rd.
Deerfield, MA 01342

Prsrt Std
US Postage Paid
Permit 183
Turners Falls, MA

Classified Ads

FOR RENT

Organic Dairy For: Free stall, double parlor, computerized milk weights, ATO, ID, 2 milk tanks if transitioning, some organic Holstein bred heifers available, feed on site. Horizon, Hood, Organic Valley markets all available in town. Springers and bred heifers \$2500, \$3000. Caldwell Farms, Turner, ME (207)225-3871

ORGANIC LIVESTOCK

Certified organic herd for sale, about 40 cows and youngstock. Mainly Holsstein but many Holstein Jersey crosses and some regular Jerseys; breeds with Jersey bull. Owner is Amos M Lapp, 717-768-8423

Bred and bagging organic Heifers for sale. Start freshening late Feb. 2006. Contact John Laskowski in Clayville New York, 315-737-3521 jborganic@aol.com

EQUIPMENT

CMS self propelled Compost turner 400 hours With compost cover(toptex) hydraulic roller in front 12 volt powered water reel with 160' x 1" hose. Hydraulic side shovels up/down open/close. Retractable rotor - rotor lifts up and tucks in behind to pass over pile and lay compost cover 100 hp Iveco water cooled, hydrostatic 4 wheel drive control panel - RPM, engine temp, oil pressure, hydraulic pressure, hydraulic oil temp and level, lights, rotor height, water flow to pile windrow size 5h x 10 w fits on a 18 ft. tag along trailer(drive on side ways) 29,000. Bob Walker, bwalker@tvconline.net, 518-766-9460, Claverack, NY

FORAGES AND GRAINS

Open Pollinated Corn Seed. We ship 75,85,88,90,120 day open pollinated corn seed. We

concentrate on the early season varieties. Most of the varieties we have are available certified organic. \$49/50lb bag conventional. \$59/50lb bag certified organic. Green Haven Open Pollinated Seed

Group, opcorn@usadatanet.net
607-566-9253

3x3x8 certified organic alfalfa hay, Krumm Farm, jdkrumm@bektel.com, 701-336-7644, Strasburg, ND



Get Your NODPA Gear Today!

Hat = \$15.50 **T-shirt** = \$13.50
Bumper Sticker = \$1.25 each (or)
25 for \$19.75

Shipping Included

Make check payable to: NODPA.
Send to: NODPA, c/o Ed Maltby
30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342