

# NODPA NEWS

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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## Organic Industry News

### Proposed Pasture Rule Expected in August

by Kathie Arnold

The National Organic Program (NOP) is currently writing a Proposed Rule for changes in the regulation on Access to Pasture. The NOP received over 64,000 comments plus nearly 18,000 signatures on petitions during the 60-day public comment period on the Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on pasture that ended on June 12<sup>th</sup>. Over 99% of the comments received were positive towards rule revision, asking that enforceable pasture standards for organic livestock be put in place.

During the comment period, there was an extensive level of communication and cooperation between organizations within the organic community--collaborating on coming to a shared position. NODPA submitted extensive comment to the NOP in conjunction with MODPA and WODPA, NODPA's counterparts in the Midwest and West. The document, which answered all 35 questions posed by the NOP and included an extensive bibliography of supporting studies, was developed with input from numerous people and organizations. It was co-signed by 63 supporting organizations, including natural foods cooperatives from across the country, businesses, farmer cooperatives, and a myriad other national and regional organizations. 31 individuals signed on in support as well, from university professor emeriti to organic dairy producers, and

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### NODPA 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Field Days Event August 18 & 19, 2006 Organic Dairy Research Farm, Durham, UNH

by Ed Maltby

This years Field Days event sponsored by **Horizon Organic, Organic Valley Family of Farms, Stonyfield Farm Inc, OCPP/Pro-Cert Canada Inc and Lakeview Organic Grain** will be held at Huddleston Hall, University of New Hampshire, 73 Main St, Durham, NH. At this critical time for the organic dairy industry, the two day event promises to be a lively couple of days filled with information, discussion, education and networking.

The event kicks off on Friday afternoon with a tour of the new UNH Organic Dairy Research Farm with Chuck Schwab and Kevin Brussell: Chuck Schwab, Professor, Dairy Nutrition, UNH, and Kevin Brussell, Farm Manager, who previously lived and worked on his family's fifth-generation, 500-acre Illinois farm, which produces a wide diversity of crops and forages, including certified organic grains and beans. They will share their vision for this exciting project as they guide the tour around the two adjoining UNH-owned farms, the Burley-Demeritt Farm and the Bartlett-Dudley Farm. Together, the two farms provide over 130 acres of cropland and over 170 acres of woods, trails and permanent

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**Deadline for the next issue is October 6, 2006**

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that was without any formal effort to solicit individual signatures.

The NOP plans to issue a Proposed Rule on pasture access by the end of August, which will be followed by another public comment period. After that, a Final Rule will be issued as the final step in the process, and the regulation will likely become effective with a designated phase-in period. ♦

*(Continued from Field Days, page 1)*

pasture, of which 215 acres are certified organic. The buildings will be located at the Burley-Demeritt Farm, the former home of the UNH Livestock program. New facilities will include a milking center with parlor and holding area, a pack barn for 80 cows, a small feed mill attached to a 3-sided shed for equipment, feed and bedding storage, and a small loafing shed for winter housing of heifers (see article in this issue for more detailed information).

On Friday evening, after socializing and some great food, NODPA President, Steve Morrison will introduce Ned Porter, Maine Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, who will speak on the great work that organic dairies have been doing in Maine. The keynote speaker for the evening will be Mark Bradley who is the Associate Deputy Administrator for the National Organic Program (NOP) and is responsible for the development and maintenance of the U.S. National Organic Standards and the accreditation of private and government organizations that certify organic producers and handlers on behalf of the USDA. Mark previously worked as NOP Accreditation Manager, where he supervised the review and approval of approximately 100 NOP-accredited organic certification bodies worldwide. Mark Bradley will speak about the work he does and how he sees the future for the program; the need for clarity in rule making and the need to work together to enforce high standards. He is even brave enough to take questions!

NODPA's annual meeting will follow the keynote speech and will be restricted to organically certified and transitional dairy farmers. This is one time of the year that NODPA members can talk freely with each other in person, share experiences, and give direction to the NODPA Board. During the annual meeting, NODPA members will be informed of the past years activities and encouraged to give feedback on ways in which the organization can better represent their interests. Ed Maltby will then moderate a discussion that will set the priorities for the coming year.

Saturday will start early with breakfast from 8:00

am. The proceedings start at 9:00 with a welcome by New Hampshire Commissioner of Agriculture, Markets and Food, Steve Taylor, and USDA Associate Deputy Administrator Mark Bradley. Following the welcome, nationally recognized Lancaster County PA dairy practitioner, **Dr Hubert Karreman, VMD** will talk about treating cows naturally and will take questions at the end of his presentation. Hue, and his wife Becky, run Penn Dutch Cow Care, a practice dedicated to working with dairy farmers who are ecologically motivated and who prefer natural treatments for their cows. Karreman's experience in agriculture currently spans 20 years and encompasses soil science, soil conservation, cropping, and management intensive grazing. His interest in complementary and alternative treatments stems from his tenure as herdsman on Seven Stars Farm, a Biodynamic farm in Kimber-ton, PA. During a six-month stretch of using only natural treatments on the milking herd, he realized that going to school to learn conventional veterinary medicine would better prepare him to work with all kinds of therapies in dairy cows.

**Gary Zimmer, president, Midwestern Bio-Ag**, Spring Green, Wis., will follow Hue and will talk about how healthy soils produce healthy feed for healthy livestock, and practical ideas on what works well in New England. Gary is a farmer, author, agribusinessman and educator dedicated to biological agriculture. Raised on a Wisconsin dairy farm, he studied dairy nutrition, earning a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin and a master's degree from the University of Hawaii, combined with years of hands-on farming experience. Teaching agriculture in southern Minnesota, he continued learning, studying, reading, asking questions and looking at ways of farming with an open mind. For the past 25 years, Gary has been evaluating farming practices as a consultant, on his family's farm, and as president of Midwestern Bio-Ag, a biological farming consulting company located in Blue Mounds, Wis. He operates the Bio-Ag Learning Center, where biological farming practices and agricultural products are field tested. The Zimmer family owns and operates Otter Creek Organic Farm, which includes a 150-cow organic dairy herd and utilizes the ideas Gary has gleaned over a lifetime spent studying agriculture.

At around 12:30, a deli-style lunch buffet will be available, with the raffle for door prizes being held during lunch. Door prizes will include some books from Acres USA; 80lb bag of calf feed from Lakeview Organic Grain; Masto Cream and an Urgent

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Care Kit from Washington Homeopathic Products; live-stock supplements from Celletech Ltd plus hats, bumper stickers and donations from trade show vendors.

Attendees will then travel to the Stonyfield Farm for a tour of the facility hosted by Nancy Hirschberg, Vice President of Natural Resources for Stonyfield Farm. Nancy oversees the environmental initiatives at Stonyfield, including working with organic farmers and suppliers. Before Stonyfield she worked with non-profits, business, and the federal government, on a farm and with the U.S. Forest Service in Alaska. Nancy enjoys her direct contact with the dairy farmers who supply Stonyfield, and she considers this the best part of her job. "They keep me grounded, give me hope and inspire me!" she says of the farmers. Once upon a time, Nancy dressed up as a dancing cup of yogurt for a consumer event, an experience she still claims was fun and she proudest of starting Stonyfield's organic program. Nancy, assisted by Stonyfield production managers, will lead the tour and answer any questions on the production challenges that organic processors face. The afternoon will end with a snack and discussion on processing and marketing of organic dairy products with Nancy and Stonyfield's marketing managers. Other processors that are attending the tour will be encouraged to share their experiences with the participants, too.

**NODPA thanks the supporters of the Field Days:** Don Faulkner and friends; HP Hood LLC; River Valley Fencing; PA Certified Organic; Upstate Farms Cooperative; NOFA VT; Acres USA; Dairy Marketing Services; Fertrell and NOFA/NY.

**NODPA also thanks those companies that have provided donations** including Horizon Organic Dairy; Organic Valley; HP Hood LLC; Washington Homeopathic Products; Stonyfield Farm; Barts Homemade and Celletech Ltd.

(See registration form on back page)

**NODPA Field Day Sponsors**



**From The NODPA Desk**

*By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director*

Where to start – flooding and a wet spring; melt-down in the Middle East; abuse of organic certification by rogue certifiers; gas at well over \$3 per gallon; bombs in India, Pakistan, North Korea and now the Big Dig starts to dig again!

As the old proverb says: concentrate on what you can do something about.

The flooding and wet weather have wreaked havoc for farmers in the Northeast in ways that can't be immediately remedied. Some conventional dairies affected by the weather may not have the incentive to start again with record low milk prices and a downward curve in prices that is predicted to last another year. Organic dairies have unique problems recovering from flooding and extremes of weather with the added constraints for satisfying the requirements of certification. We anticipated questions about the effect that flooding may have on certification, with some questions posed to certifiers in an article in this issue.

NODPA has set up a fund to provide relief for farmers affected by the extremes of weather this year and possibly in future years. We have already received money and product to be distributed quickly to help those most in need and we are working with Farm Aid to access greater resources. Charity and giving begin at home, so I hope that consumers, farmers, businesses and other organizations will respond to this need in our organic community.

Over the past few months, NODPA members have expressed concern in two areas; one, the most recent ruling by National Organic Program (NOP) on dairy herd replacements, and two, the practices of some certifiers. The ruling leaves a very confusing two track system, and many different ways to interpret the rule (see Kathie Arnold's article). To address both of these concerns, Kathie Arnold, Emily Brown Rosen and I met with Barbara Robinson, Deputy Administrator of Transportation and Marketing at the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, and Mark Bradley, Associate Deputy Administrator for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Transportation and Marketing Programs, National Organic Program (NOP) in late June. We had a frank and friendly conversation in rain soaked DC. Barbara and Mark recognize that farmers are confused and frustrated from

*(Continued on page 5)*