

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Maximizing Milk On Homegrown Forages And Grains

By Lisa McCrory

The cost of fuel and feed has been increasing at an unpredictable and astronomical rate since the fall of 2007. A drought in many parts of the Northeast in 2007 did not help matters. The weather conditions led to low forage yields, a shorter grazing season, and the need to purchase forages and grain to make it through to the

next growing season. All this is compounded by a very wet 2006, where feed quality in many places was poor because producers could not get onto their fields to harvest. It seems like each load of grain is creeping higher and higher with no end in sight.

Continued on page 20

Realistic Expectations: What Are They?

By Darlene Coehoorn, MODPA President

Would it have been realistic in the beginning of 2007 when fuel was \$2.30 a gallon to expect by the beginning of 2008 that we would be looking at \$4.00 a gallon for gas and diesel?

Is it realistic for processors to pay transition dollars and increase the competition for feed stuffs while they contend they cannot pay existing farmers enough to compete for the same feedstuffs?

Is it realistic for the grain side of operations to lose dollars to keep the dairy side going?

Would it be considered realistic for corn to go from \$6 to \$13 in a 2-year span or soybeans to go from \$12 to \$27 and most small grains to see at least a 50% increase in price?

Is it realistic to expect to get what you need without requesting it?

Is it realistic to expect future generations to put in the long hours needed to make

farming work without a reasonable return for the input and investment?

Is it realistic to keep doing the same things expecting different results?

Is it realistic to settle for less than parity? Especially when you are paying parity for some feedstuffs?

Is it realistic for the retail sector (after all middle costs are met) to get more than the farmer gets for the raw product?

Is it realistic to expect that anyone would pay \$1.50 per gallon for water when much of the time the same water can be had for pennies out of their tap?

Is it realistic to keep doing what we are doing without a profit or return on investment?

Is it realistic to expect or need off farm income to be able to afford to farm?

From my view it is realistic to expect cost of production and a profit. ♦

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

A Word From The Outgoing President Of NODPA's Board

It has been a pleasure and an honor to work with the many farmers and support people that have developed NODPA from an idea in 2000 to the well known and well connected organization it is now. As the first president of NODPA's board I have had the opportunity to serve the organization and its membership since its incorporation as a non-profit. The board has recently elected its second president, and I would like to extend congratulations to Kathie Arnold of New York State. Kathie has been deeply committed to NODPA from the beginning, and is especially involved in our work related to the national organic standards. She is an excellent choice to help NODPA pursue its mission in support of family farms.

I remain committed to the ideal of strong organic standards and a strong pay price to the farmer for organic milk. I will continue to act as a state representative from Maine, and would encourage others to do the same for their states.

NODPA, along with our sister groups in the Midwest and West, is one of the only organizations of its kind in the nation. It is truly “of the farmer, by the farmer, for the farmer,” and works strictly to promote the interests of family farms.

Thank you for supporting and contributing to NODPA.

Steve Morrison

From The NODPA President

By Kathie Arnold, NODPA President

Needless to say, these are challenging times on organic dairy farms with so much in flux and so much upward movement in most input costs. What hasn't changed is the need for farmers to work together to help secure our future. As the newly elected president of NODPA, I will be working to strengthen our organization and bring new involvement by more farmers. I wish to thank Steve Morrison for having taken the helm of this organization back in 2001 and for guiding it to where we are today. Thanks Steve!

Although I was not party to the decision to hold an organic dairy summit in Vermont in February of 2001, I did attend
Continued on page 18

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From The NODPA Desk

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The NODPA Team

In many cases folks only get praised or thanked when they leave an organization but I would like to reverse that trend by thanking the wonderful colleagues that are working for NODPA. For those of you that have been with NODPA for many years then you'll know the important work that Lisa McCrory does for us all, mostly with the NODPA News, the NODPA website and also with ensuring we remain grounded in the NODPA mission of representing all organic dairy farmers on pay price and the integrity of the organic standards. Lisa does an excellent job of writing many articles, including the farmer profiles, and pulling together a wide variety of information to educate producers on new production techniques as well as activities in the organic dairy community. Liz Bawden and Darlene Coehoorn have been doing some great work in editing, writing and reviewing articles and assisting Lisa with editorial decisions. We have a new webmaster and newsletter designer: Chris Hill of Chris Hill Media who has a long history of working with sustainable agriculture. He has done a great job of redesigning the website and updating it regularly, plus his other work with us on the NODPA enewsletter and the transfer of Odairy to the NODPA.com domain.

Grant Funding

NODPA thanks the John Merck Fund for its generous grant funding to support the expansion of our administrative infrastructure and fund NODPA's programs as they move forward. We would also like to thank CROPP's Farmers Advocating for Organics Fund for their grant to assist with the development of the ODairy listserv and update our website. These grant funds, the donations from producers, sponsorships, advertising income and subscriptions are being used, with great frugality, to support NODPA's mission of promoting a sustainable pay price and integrity in organic milk production.

Overview

The many articles in this edition show all sides of how we need to view the future of organic dairy. Every farm has its own individual production system to match its climate, soil type, location and size but there is an increasing number of producers who are looking to learn new ways to maximize forage consumption, grow small grains or improve their genetics to maximize their return. Unfortunately most of these techniques take time for some trial and error and require capital investment, both of which are in short supply when the producer's bottom line is threatened.

We are at a pivotal time in organic dairy as the brands fight for

market share and the producer ends up with about \$1.20 per ½ gallon on a retail price averaging \$3.93. Some producers are losing as much as 60 cents for every gallon they produce and an unprecedented number of organic dairies are returning to conventional production or entering the hazardous area of running a conventional milking herd and raising organic heifers in the hope that the economics of organic dairy will change in the future.

How can we improve the process for setting pay price that recognizes the complexity of the organic dairy market? Annual price setting no longer works and the current practice of waiting until there is a crisis or when the producer shouts loud enough, isn't working. The industry knew that the “supply surplus” would disappear by November 2007 and that the price of feed was increasing. A pay increase in November 2007 of \$2 per cwt followed by a \$2 increase every quarter until the end of 2008, which was then passed on to the consumer at a rate 20 cents per ½ gallon every 3 months, could have been implemented with a positive outcome for everyone.

It is time for organic dairy leaders to set aside their egos, their brand loyalty and their personal legacies and return to being the pioneers of the organic dairy world that we all hold in high esteem. Unless a dialogue is started immediately, which includes all sectors of organic dairy community, the future for organic dairy family farms is bleak, with it moving toward a system of setting pay price that will mirror the dysfunctional conventional milk market. ♦

NODPA STAFF		Board Members & Representatives	
NODPA Executive Director Ed Maltby 30 Keets Rd Deerfield, MA 01342 ednodpa@comcast.net Phone: 413-772-0444 Fax: 866-554-9483		PENNSYLVANIA Arden Landis, State Rep 667 Puseyville Rd. Kirkwood, PA 17536 C2graz@epix.net Phone: 717-529-6644 Fax: 717-529-3911	
Newsletter and Web Editor Lisa McCrory 341 Macintosh Hill Rd. Randolph, VT 05060 lmccrory@together.net Phone: 802-234-5524 Fax: 802-234-6462		MAINE Henry Perkins, Treasurer Box 156 Bog Rd. Albion, ME 04910 bullridge@uninet.net Phone: 207-437-9279	
Newsletter Editors Liz Bawden 119 Factory Rd. Hammond, NY 13646 bawden@cit-tele.com Phone: 315-324-6926		VERMONT	
Darlene Coehoorn Viewpoint Acres Farm N5878 Hwy C Rosendale, WI 54874 viewpoint@dotnet.com Phone: 920-921-5541		Craig Russell, Board Member Brotherly Farm LLC 570 Lavender Road Brookfield, VT 05036 crussell@bishca.state.vt.us Phone: 802- 272-7726	
Webmaster/Newsletter Layout Chris Hill Media 368 West Duval Street Philadelphia, PA 19144 Phone: 215-843-5704 chris@chrishillmedia.com		STEVEN RUSSELL, Board Member RR2 Box 5660 Winslow, ME 04901 jwinrussel@adelphia.net Phone: 207-872-6533	
		Steve Morrison, State Rep 159 Atkinson Rd Charleston, ME 04422 smorrison@midmaine.com Phone: 207-285-7085 Fax: 207-285-0128	
		CONNECTICUT Rick Segalla, Board Member 96 Allyndale Rd. Canaan, CT 06018 mocow@earthlink.net Phone: 860-824-0241	
		NEW YORK Kathie Arnold, President Policy Committee Chair 3175 NYS Rt. 13 Truxton, NY 13158 randkarnold1@juno.com Phone: 607-842-6631 Fax: 607-842-6557	
		Beverly Rutter, State Rep 1450 Middle Rd. Bridport, VT 05734 brutter@gmavt.net Phone: 802-758-2615	
		MASSACHUSETTS Morvan Allen, State Rep Maple Shade Farm Inc. 229 Hewins St Sheffield, MA 01257 Phone: 413-229-6018	
		DAVE JOHNSON, Vice President 1254 Black Creek Rd Liberty, PA 16930 provident@epix.net Phone: 570-324-2285	
		Liz Bawden, Secretary 119 Factory Rd. Hammond, NY 13646 bawden@cit-tele.com Phone: 315-324-6926	
		JIM GARDINER, Board Member 2549 State Hwy 26 Otselic, NY 13072 herbswork4u@citlink.net Phone: 315-653-7819	



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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

With Prices Rising, How Will Consumers React?

By Samuel Fromartz

I just paid \$7.29 for a gallon of Organic Valley organic milk! I'd swear it was \$6.29 per gallon last week. What happened?! I had just gotten used to paying far more for organic than conventional milk. I had stopped wincing when I put it in my cart. I wasn't even afraid to tell friends and family, who complain about \$3.00 per gallon milk, that I buy organic milk.

But I don't think I'll be able to pay \$7.29 for a gallon of milk next time. There's something magical about that number. It's a tipping point ...

I read that comment on Grist.org, an environmental web site, and it brings up the question, **How high can organic milk go before consumers react?**

I put that question to a couple of co-op supermarket buyers, a prominent market researcher and a long-time, if controversial, participant in the organic milk business. They all told me organic milk consumers are committed and are likely to keep buying, but prices can still get uncomfortably high.

"We're testing those waters now," said Mark Retzloff, the co-founder of Aurora Organic Dairy, with 12,000 cows. "We've seen what happens when milk prices go down, but we don't know a lot about what happens when they go up."

Organic milk is often called a "gateway" organic product, which means it is found in practically every organic consumer's shopping cart, from the once-in-awhile shopper to the deeply committed core consumer.

The reason organic milk commands such a prominent place has to do with its health benefits. Since consumers want what's most healthy for their children, they will skew organic purchases to items children consume, like milk.

Given that intrinsic value, consumers are unlikely to stam-pede out of a core product even as prices rise. "You might buy less organic snack foods, or organic packaged goods, to save money, but if you really see a health value of organic milk for your kids, you're probably going to continue to buy it," said Laurie Demeritt, president of the Hartman Group, which surveys consumers about organic food.

As an example, researchers have found that consumers may buy organic milk for their kids but conventional milk for themselves. Why? They don't see as great a value for adults

and take that move to economize.

Currently, supplies for organic milk are starting to tighten, putting upward pressure on prices. At the same time, farmers are facing pressure – in the form of rising costs for feed, fuel, and insurance – and seeking a price hike.

This dynamic is not unique to the organic sector, but rather is underway in the food world. But the question becomes whether consumers will move away from a higher priced product as prices overall rise.

Aurora provides an interesting case study in these rising costs, since its feed and fuel expenses have jumped dramatically. (Retzloff noted that the figures in last month's NODPA news-letter were similar to what Aurora was experiencing).

Aurora has raised prices twice in the past six months and has not seen resistance from retailers. But he noted that Aurora generally follows the organic milk labels in pricing, trying to keep a roughly 10 percent price advantage for the private label milk Aurora produces. "Demand has not been affected by the price rises," he said.

In the shopping cart aisle, Stephanie Steiner, a buyer at PCC Natu-ral Markets, the huge Seattle-based food co-op, said she has not yet seen higher prices in the dairy case, so it's a little soon to say what the reaction will be. But her gut feeling was that if organic milk got above \$7 a gallon, "there's going to be a reaction."

A lot depends on the comparable price for conventional rBGH-free milk, since budget-conscious consumers might switch if the price gap between the two widened.

Over at the Wedge Co-Op in Minneapolis, dairy buyer Turk Mehmet said there has been absolutely no change in demand for organic milk despite a couple of price rises over the past year. He worried that consumers might draw back at \$7 a gallon, but he found a few co-ops in the area were already at that level.

Locally produced milk costs even more, but it too has been selling. "Our local supplier – in the half-gallon size – they're out of milk," Mehmet said. But even he cautioned that con-sumers might economize if prices went too high.

Mehmet noted an instance where a locally produced organic butter, from grass-fed cows, reached \$7 a pound – roughly double the price of butter right next to it on the shelf. "That is the best butter around, and I could sell it at \$6.49 a pound," he said. "But at \$7, I couldn't sell any of it."

Clearly, rising costs are painful, but unless everyone in the food chain—farmers, processors, retailers, and consumers—share the burden, the market will not work at all. If one party bears the disproportionate weight of those rising costs, they will stop producing, or selling or buying. And that would not be good for anyone. ♦

NODPA 8th Annual Field Days

SAVE THE DATE

NODPA's 8th Annual Field Days Event and Annual Producer Meeting

Monday October 27th at 9:00 am to Tuesday October 28th at Noon
Holiday Inn, Auburn/Fingerlakes
New York 13021

This year's NODPA Field Days are at a different time of year as we have heard from many of you that the mid August date conflicts with other commitments. We have also decided to move away from a farm based venue and schedule the meeting just prior to the Understanding Organics: Livestock Management and Health Conference for veterinarians, extension educators and agri-service personnel to facilitate some networking between the different participants.

NODPA's Field Days are a great place to re-connect with friends and with what is going on in the organic dairy world. The annual producer meeting on Monday evening will be an opportunity for NODPA farmer members to be updated on the previous year's work and set the priorities for the NODPA work in 2009 -2014.

As usual, we will have a trade show for 1½ days, workshops and speakers talking on the many issues that affect organic dairy, and a visit to a local organic farm. There will also be many opportunities for farmers to visit the trade show, net-work with one another, learn about trends in the industry, and meet resource people who will be on hand.

Save the date and watch the mail for a brochure on the event; remember to check out the NODPA News and the NODPA website for further details as they develop. If you are interested is sponsoring this event, or making a dona-tion to support it and NODPA's great work, please contact Ed Maltby in order to be included in the 3,000 brochures that will be mailed out. If you want to be an exhibitor and promote your product at the tradeshow, contact Ed Maltby quickly before the limited space disappears. **For more information** contact Ed Maltby by phone: 413-772-0444 or email: emaltby@comcast.net.



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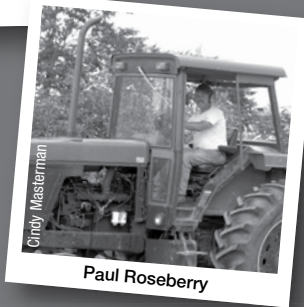
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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

When Your Processor Requires More than Organic Certification:

Additional Requirements in Organic Milk Contracts

By Jill Krueger of Farmers' Legal Action Group, Inc.

This article discusses contract clauses that require organic dairy producers to use farming practices not specifically required by the National Organic Program (the "NOP") regulations. Such contract clauses will be referred to as "additional requirements" in this article. In some cases, processors use contract clauses to emphasize the NOP requirement, or to express the processor's interpretation of an NOP regulation. This article treats all of these contract clauses as "additional requirements." The fact that a processor imposes additional requirements does not necessarily mean that its contract terms are worse or better overall than those offered by other processors. It is important to read and understand all of the clauses in a contract before signing it.

In preparation for writing this article, unsigned contracts for sale of organic milk with Dairy Marketing Services (DMS), HP Hood, Horizon Organic, and the CROPP Cooperative (Organic Valley) were reviewed. The Organic Valley documents reviewed did not include the Membership Agreement for the cooperative. The contracts reviewed were being used in summer and fall of 2007, though other contracts may also have been used by these processors in 2007. Contracts offered in 2008 may differ.

What types of additional practices do processors require?

Because processors use additional requirements in order to set themselves apart, some processors' additional requirements differ. Yet, several types of additional requirements were common among the contracts reviewed. Many of the additional requirements contained in the contracts are described below:

Pasture and feed

[Note that in 2006, USDA issued an advance notice of proposed rulemaking in order to clarify the NOP requirement of access to pasture for ruminants. No further regulatory action has been taken.]

Both the HP Hood and Organic Valley contracts reviewed had detailed requirements regarding access to pasture and the amount of forage in a lactating cow's diet. Both contracts require the producer to submit a written plan describing how

the producer will ensure the dairy herd's access to pasture and that related contract requirements are met.

Some of the language in the contracts reviewed was vague, such as "must be a pasture based farm." This phrase does not make it clear exactly how or when the producer must make pasture available to the dairy cows.

Other language in the contracts reviewed was quite specific. In general, the contracts focused upon the number of days of access to pasture during the growing season (120 days was a common minimum). Contracts that addressed pasture requirements also frequently specified the amount of dry matter intake which must be provided by grazing, with 30 percent a common minimum. The contracts usually set forth the age of the individual animal at which the pasture requirements applied. Contracts tended not to specify the amount of time per day that grazing was required, though some specified the number of animals allowed per acre.

Contracts with pasture requirements generally referred producers to the Natural Resource Conservation Service for information on grazing and appropriate pasture conditions in their area. Several processors also offered mentoring programs with other producers.

Whether a producer is presented with vague or specific contract clauses, it seems likely that processors expect these details to be addressed in the written pasture plan. The processor's approval of the producer's written plan would seem to provide strong evidence that the producer meets contract requirements.

Antibiotics, hormones, other substances

Most of the contracts reviewed addressed the use of antibiotics, hormones, and other substances. Detailed discussion of these contract clauses may be found in a longer version of this article available online.

Family owned and/or operated

The HP Hood contract reviewed required the producer to
Continued on next page

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Continued from previous page

attest that the labor and/or management of the farm is provided by the family that owns, or leases, the productive assets.

Humane treatment

The HP Hood contract reviewed required the producer to attest that the farm practices “humane and caring animal husbandry, in accordance with industry standards.” The contract did not indicate what the “industry standards” are, nor did it describe the practices that would comply with the requirement. The contract did not indicate whether the “industry standards” referred to were those of the organic dairy industry, or of the dairy industry more generally, or of a specific humane treatment certification program.

Origin of livestock/ replacement animals

The HP Hood contract reviewed required that dairy replacement animals entering a certified organic herd are treated organically from the last third of gestation.

Generally neat

One HP Hood contract reviewed required producers to maintain a “generally neat” farmstead. Another HP Hood contract required producers to maintain an “aesthetically pleasing” farmstead. Neither contract defined “generally neat” or “aesthetically pleasing,” or described how a farm’s compliance would be measured.

Does imposing additional requirements violate any laws?

Whether additional requirements are lawful depends upon who imposes the additional requirements, and for what purpose. An accredited certifying agent must not require producers to meet a higher standard than that contained in the NOP regulations in order to grant organic certification. However, a buyer may impose additional requirements before it will agree to buy goods from an organic farmer.

The organic standard is intended to be a consistent national standard. However, it is lawful for a producer or handler to include both the USDA Organic seal and additional claims related to farming and processing practices on products labeled organic. Thus, if a processor would like to make claims in addition to “organic” on its products, the processor is free to require farmers to meet additional requirements. As with

any contract to buy or sell goods, the buyer may set forth its requirements, and the seller is free to agree to the contract or not agree to the contract.

Must producers comply with the additional requirements?

Yes, if a producer agrees to a contract, he or she is bound. “A contract” may include several different documents. For example, several of the contracts reviewed for this article included additional practice requirements in an appendix or other document. If the main contract signed by the producer included a

reference to the appendix, then the producer is bound by the appendix. This is known as “incorporation by reference,” because by referring to the other document in the contract, the other document becomes part of the contract. For example, one contract reviewed stated, “The producer agrees to abide by attached terms, guidelines, and qualifications for organic milk (Exhibit A) required by HP Hood.” The Organic Valley contract reviewed required producers to sign an affidavit specifically agreeing to comply with practice requirements in addition to those under the NOP.

If any additional requirements are not incorporated in the written contract, then the processor could have difficulty proving their existence in court. Indeed, the

HP Hood contract reviewed included a clause stating that the “entire understanding” of the parties was included in the written agreement. Under such an “entirety clause,” a contract may generally not be added to or changed, unless the parties enter into another written agreement. Similarly, if a contract includes an entirety clause, both parties are generally barred from submitting evidence of any oral agreements.

What happens if a producer fails to meet the additional requirements?

To understand what the consequences would be if a producer were to fail to satisfy the additional requirements, the producer should read his or her contract language. The 2007 contracts reviewed addressed failure to meet additional requirements in a variety of ways.

At least some of the DMS contracts reviewed stated that, “DMS will market milk as conventional temporarily in situations where a DMS member or a member of a coop affiliated with DMS is taken off the organic truck provided they meet DMS quality standards for conventional milk.”

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Contracts

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The Horizon contract stated that, "Failure to meet quality standards will result in a series of progressive responses." These responses include follow up communication and investigation, written warning, probation, and suspension. The HP Hood contract also provided for suspension from the organic milk market if quality standards were not met.

The HP Hood contracts reviewed stated that, for pasture requirements, producers who failed to come under compliance will be given six months to adhere to the pasture requirements. Some versions of the contract stated that if the producer failed to comply with pasture requirements in the six-month period allowed, Hood could terminate the agreement by giving the producer a six-month notice. The contracts noted that producers could request mentoring in order to receive guidance on how to comply.

The Organic Valley contracts reviewed stated that, "Any existing Organic Valley producer that currently does not meet this Farm Pasture Plan has one year to comply. If needed, more time may be arranged through a written appeal process to the Dairy Executive Committee." The contracts also noted that

other producers would be available to serve as mentors to help those producers in need of guidance and expertise to expand their pasturing operations."

Under some contracts reviewed, if the processor finds the producer failed to meet contract requirements, the processor may terminate the contract. However, where the contract addresses specific contract violations—such as the failure to comply with pasture requirements—in a specific clause, then arguably that clause should control how the processor responds to those specific violations, rather than the contract clause for a general failure to meet contract requirements. Contract cancellation is discussed further in the next section.

A producer would not lose his or her organic certification as a result of failing to meet a processor's additional requirements, as long as the producer was still in compliance with all organic requirements, as determined by the accredited certifying agent.

When may a contract be cancelled?

As noted above, several of the contracts reviewed have clauses that describe how the processor will respond if the producer fails to meet additional requirements, such as pasture requirements. In addition to those clauses related to violations of additional requirements, several of the contracts have clauses that address when the processor or the producer may cancel a contract.

At least some of the HP Hood contracts reviewed stated that,

Continued on next page

Some steps to prevent problems related to additional requirements

The first step for producers trying to prevent problems is to understand any clauses in their contracts that include requirements beyond organic certification. Before agreeing to a contract, producers should be sure they understand all additional requirements. Is it a measurable standard, such as 30 percent of dry matter intake must come from grazing; or is it a vague standard or a standard depending upon personal taste, such as maintaining an aesthetically pleasing farmstead? For some standards, it may not be obvious how the producer can comply.

The producer should ask the processor what records are needed to demonstrate compliance with additional requirements. If the processor does not require a form or recommend what types of records should be kept, the producer may want to ask a producer mentor for guidance. Or the producer may adapt his or her organic system plan to show that additional requirements have been met.

Who determines if the producer has complied with the additional requirements?

This is one of the most important questions for producers to consider before entering into a contract which includes additional requirements. The contracts reviewed do not spell out who determines if the producer has satisfied additional

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COMMENTARY

Purchased Feed Costs Punishing Organic Milk Producers

By Peter Hardin, Brooklyn, WI

Organic dairy producers who purchase any significant quantities of organic dairy feed and/or hay are in a world of financial hurt. Outside the Midwest, prices for a 16% protein organic dairy feed ration have climbed above the \$600/ton mark.

The current terrible “milk price/cost squeeze” threatens to seriously disrupt the supply of raw milk supplied by “traditional” organic dairy producers. An exodus from organic milk production by “traditional” producers has started... with more organic dairy producers questioning the wisdom of continuing.

(By “traditional”, we refer to family dairy farms, usually located in the Midwest or Northeast, which provide their cows with the requisite, minimum 120-day access to pasture. In contrast, the evolution of factory-style “organic” dairies has “grown” organic milk volume – gobbling much of the limited supply of organic grain.)

At \$600 per ton (or higher) for feed, the “milk-feed price ratio” for organic milk edges very close to a 1:1 relationship. Put another way (for city folks), for organic dairy producers right now, at current prices and costs, a pound of milk will barely

purchase a pound of 16% protein grain. For “conventional” dairy farmers purchasing most of their grain-based feeds, a milk-feed price ratio of less than 3:1 is generally considered a money-losing deal. For organic dairy producers, the current approximate 1:1 milk-feed price ratio is a dream-crusher.

Stepping back from the organic producer’s milk price dilemma and taking an overview of the bigger picture reveals and ugly “double-whammy”:

- **Two major organic fluid dairy processors** – Dean Foods and Aurora Organic Dairies – operate their own “mega” organic dairy farms. In 2007, USDA finally nailed Aurora Organic Dairies for 14 violations of organic milk production regulations. From a practical standpoint, there’s simply no way that a “factory-style” organic dairy in an arid Western state can comply with minimal 120-day access to fresh grass pasture. Structurally, milk supplied by the increasing number of “organic” factory dairies has added volume to the organic milk supply. These added milk supplies from “organic” factory dairies have become a lever used to hold down prices paid to “traditional” organic dairy producers. Thus, the factory dairies owned by two of the biggest processors of organic milk are driving down the milk prices paid to family organic dairy farms.

Continued on page 15

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

More Organic Milk Sought in Northeast

Farms should be sure to have a market secured before beginning the 12 month herd transition.

The Word from DMS

Dairy Marketing Services (DMS) continues to market more than 50 percent of organic milk in the Northeast. DMS was established to deliver efficiency in services and enhance returns from the market directly back to producers at a minimal cost. It offers a wide range of services to producers such as health insurance and workers compensation through Agri-Services Agency, leases and loans from Agri-Max Financial, farm inputs and supplies through Eagle Dairy Direct, and herd management software from Dairy One. For more information, please contact Dave Eyster at 1-888-589-6455, ext. 5409 or david.eyster@dairymarketingservices.com.

The Word from CROPP

CROPP Cooperative~Organic Valley Family of Farms, the nation’s largest farmer owned organic marketing cooperative continues to grow its dairy producers base now and into the future in New York, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and all of the New England States. Current market conditions underscore the need for our founding principles of supply management. CROPP/Organic Valley is currently looking for producers interested in starting their 12 month transition anytime. We offer a stable, competitive organic milk pay price once certified organic and a complete year of Transitional Funding for new farmers during herd’s transitional year as well as Staff Veterinarians, Farmers Relations staff support, the Organic Trader, and inclusive communications. In addition, our Farm Resource department can help refer, source and finance feed purchases for your operation.

In New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia contact Peter Miller, Northeast Region Dairy Pool Coordinator, at (888) 444-6455, x3407 to leave a voice message, or mobile at (612) 801-3506, peter.miller@organicvalley.coop. In New England States contact John Cleary, New England Dairy Pool Coordinator, at (888)-444-6455 x3330 to leave voice mail, or mobile at (612)-803-9087, or email at john.cleary@organcivalley.coop. In the Great Lakes Region contact Jake Schmitz, Great Lakes Region Dairy Pool Coordinator at (888) 444-6455, Ext. 3507, cell phone (270) 779-1526 or jake.schmitz@organicvalley.coop

The Word from Horizon

Interested in transitioning to organic dairy? At Horizon Organic, it all begins on the farm. As America’s leading organic dairy brand, we owe our success to the growing community of family farmers who support our mission, one organic acre at a time. We believe that farmers deserve to know where their milk is going – and consumers deserve to know where it originated. Over the years, we’ve

maintained a dedicated milk supply and nurtured a direct relationship with each of the hundreds of farms in our network. And we’re committed to keeping it that way.

Horizon Organic produces a full line of products from cheese to yogurt to fluid milk, and is the leading brand in the grocery store, as well as the number one source for bringing new organic milk consumers into the category.

Join Horizon Organic, the leading brand in one of the fastest growing categories within the number one segment of agriculture, and enjoy the experience, stability and competitive pricing that we have come to be known for.

Contacts: Cindy Masterman (New England) (888) 648-8377; Peter Slaunwhite (Northeast) (800) 381-0980; Steve Rinehart (Midwest) (866) 268-4665; Michelle Sandy (Mid Atlantic) (866) 412-1380; Mike Bandstra (Midwest) (877) 620-8259; Greg Dabney (West) (800) 588-9283 x4747

The Word from HP Hood

HP Hood continues to look for high quality farms for our organic milk supply. We are eager to talk to farms that are ready to begin their herd transition in the fall of 2007. Our routes encompass a number of Northern Tier States (ME, NH, VT, NY, PA, OH, MI, WI, MN, IA) and we would like to hear from you. Our support of sustainable agriculture, a signing bonus and transition assistance have helped many already. Please call Karen Cole, HP Hood Milk Procurement, karen.cole@hphood.com or at 1-866-383-1026.

The Word from LOFCO

Lancaster Organic Farmers Cooperative (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.

The Word from Upstate Niagara

Upstate Niagara Cooperative, a dairy farmer owned, full service cooperative headquartered in Buffalo, NY is continuing to grow its supply of organic milk. The members of Upstate Niagara Coop own and operate 4 milk plants in Buffalo, Niagara Falls and Rochester. Our members are interested in producing organic milk and processing organic dairy products. We currently process & package fresh, not ultra-pasteurized organic milk in our Rochester Milk Plant. If you are interested in learning more about Upstate Niagara Coop, please visit our website at www.upstatefarms.com or contact me. Enjoy your day....Bill Young, 800-724-6455 byoung@upstateniagara.com.

The Word from United Ag

United Ag Services in Seneca Falls, NY is looking for organic milk in NY and northern PA. Please call 800-326-4251.

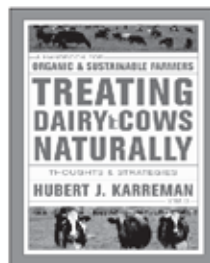
Any buyers looking for organic milk who would like to be listed in this column for the July 2008 issue, please email the desired text to Ed at ednodpa@comcast.net or call 413-772-0444 by June 18th, 2008.

TREATING DAIRY COWS NATURALLY

THOUGHTS & STRATEGIES

—BY HUBERT J. KARREMAN, V.M.D.—

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

What's Doing in Dairy: Organic Dairy Farmers in Uncharted Economic Waters

By Kathie Arnold

Organic grain has continued its climb up the price ladder, putting an ever growing squeeze on organic dairy farmers. Even with using alternate sources of protein, rather than sky high soy, many farmers are paying almost as much for a pound of their organic grain mix as they are getting paid for a pound of their organic milk.

That means there is an organic milk/feed ratio near 1. That situation is unheard of in conventional milk production. Dr. Mark Stephenson, agricultural economist with the Cornell Program on Dairy Markets & Policy told me that "We have never had a traditional milk-feed price ratio anywhere near 1".

The milk/feed ratio (the price of a pound of milk divided by the cost of a pound of feed) is a basic measure of profit potential. Currently, conventional milk is at a historically low milk/feed ratio of 2.05 (March 2008 figure). Since 1995, when the

current NASS (National Agricultural Statistics Service) ratio calculation was put into place, it has ranged from the current low of 2.05 to as high as 4.3 in 1999, when a pound of milk would have bought 4.3 pounds of grain.

In a 2004 newsletter, Christopher Wolf, an agricultural economist specializing in dairy issues at Michigan State University, wrote this about milk/feed price ratio: "Historically, milk/feed price ratios consistently below 2.5 have triggered herd liquidation and ratios above 3.5 have triggered herd expansion." We have already seen more organic dairy farmers in the Northeast go back to conventional production or go out of business in the last several months than at any time prior.

Is the organic milk/feed ratio likely to change? That will depend on what happens on each end of that ratio.

OFARM, a group of organic grain cooperatives who work together on pricing and marketing has a published organic grain price target list (<http://www.ofarm.org/documents/tpl08.pdf>). The historical data in the chart shows that organic corn rose an average of 25% from 2006 to 2007 and feed grade soybeans rose 35%. Their target prices show most all grains doubling in price from 2006 to 2010, saying "The target prices represent the levels necessary to sustain a fair return for organic farmers" and "to move additional acres into organic production". Their target price for 2008 corn shows a 22% increase from 2007 prices and then another 7% increase for 2009 and for 2010.

What about the other end of the ratio—the organic milk price? We ship to HP Hood LLC and our base price on January 1st of this year went up 40 cents from \$24.50 to \$24.90, a 1.6% increase. On April 1st, HP Hood began paying an additional \$1 to its current \$2 market premium (MP). The MP is a flexible pay instrument that can be taken away at any time, not like the base price that is obligated to be paid in full through the whole contract period. This dollar represents a 3.7% milk price increase on the base plus MP.

So while OFARM shows organic grain increasing in price by 22% from 2007 through 2008, our base milk price plus market premium increased 5.3%. When I take into account our full pay price including what we get paid on average for components, quality, and volume, the \$1.40 increase represents a 4.7% increase over 2007's pay price for us. No wonder the organic milk/feed ratio is near 1.

What does this portend for the organic dairy industry? Unless farmers are paid more for their organic milk, I can't see anything but 1) economic pain for farmers who have to buy their organic grain and 2) a static or decreasing level of overall organic milk production here in the Northeast as cows give less milk when fed less grain (the normal response when a farmer can't afford to buy the feed) and few conventional farmers see any financial incentive to transition to organic production. ♦

COMMENTARY

Continued from page 12

- The second half of the "double whammy" is like this: additional dairy cow numbers at "organic" factory dairies are gobbling up scarce supplies of organic grain – diminishing supplies and driving up prices of that valuable commodity. Thus, the impact of "organic" factory dairies (often owned by the big processors) is one factor driving up grain costs to "traditional" producers.

That's the "double-whammy" facing organic dairy producers: a virtual ceiling on prices ... as grain costs rise. And both of these factors in the "price/cost squeeze" are thanks to "organic" milk factory farms.

A tremendous structural shift is occurring on organic milk production right now. Numerous "traditional" organic dairies are quitting production, or reconsidering their options. In fact 2008 looks like the critical year in decisions by "traditional" organic dairy producers. Whether to continue producing organic milk, shift back to conventional milk, or leave milk production altogether (and perhaps produce high-priced organic crops).

For many traditional organic dairy producers, the commit-

ment to organic is something close to a practice of faith – that by shunning chemical inputs for their dairy animals and crops, they will achieve a higher quality soils, crops, livestock and food products marketed. That's the wisdom of organics held by most consumers buying organic dairy products. And that "faith" or visit held by many "traditional" dairy farmers, is under full assault due to the milk/grain price squeeze.

USDA's long failure to enforce pasture rules

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has created national oversight on rules for organic agriculture including dairy. One key issue that's been a long-term bone of contention for critics is USDA's failure to vigorously enforce the mandatory, 120-days per year pasture access rule for "organic" factory-style dairies. Despite pleas from organic dairy producers for years to enforce pasture access rules, USDA's oversight is mired in bureaucratic mumbo-jumbo.

As with many other issues of agriculture policies and practices, USDA's failure to enforce pasture-access for "organic" factory dairies basically represents on more sample of the federal government catering to rich financial interests of the "big boys".

What's ahead???

Organic dairy producers are trying to improve their lot, strategizing about which items included on an action list

Continued on page 23

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

A New Look for NOP

The National Organic Program (NOP) website has taken on a whole new look at www.ams.usda.gov/nop. You can find the following information at the new website: Q&A's that have been submitted to staff, as well as the relevant original Q&A's on the former NOP website; updated fact sheets; a listing of all accredited certifying agents (ACAs) and their certified organic operations; a list of completed recent Audit, Review, and Compliance (ARC) on-site audits and document reviews of ACAs, 2005-2006; and appeals decisions by the AMS Administrator. Any new information will be posted in the NOP Reading Room under the appropriate section.

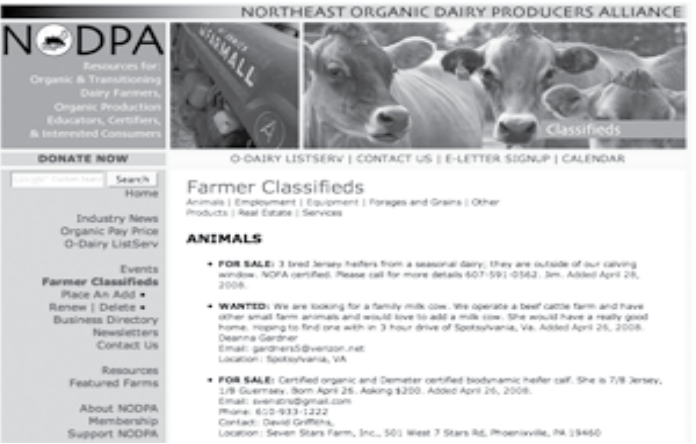
National Organic Standards Board to Meet May 20-22

The USDAs National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) will meet May 20-22 at The Holiday Inn Inner Harbor Hotel, 301 W. Lombard Street, Baltimore, MD 21201. Sessions will run from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tuesday, May 20; 8 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Wednesday, May 21; and 8 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Thursday, May 22, 2008. All sessions are open to the public. NOSB committees will present recommendations to the full board for a vote concerning the use or prohibition of 32 petitioned substances and 13 sunseting substances due to expire in November 2008 under review for the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances; revisions to the NOSB policy and procedures manual and the Guide for New NOSB Members; guidance for accredited certifying agents regarding annual commercial availability determinations for organic seed sourcing by farmers under § 205.204; and recommendations on standards for organic aquaculture, including the use of fish meal and oil as feed, open cage net pens and the management of aquatic plants. The NOSB will also receive an update from

the National Organic Program and will hear committee progress reports regarding work plans and discussion items.

Times for public input are Tuesday, May 20, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, May 21, from 3:45 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Thursday, May 22, from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. The deadline for requesting an oral presentation at the meeting has passed but contact Valerie Frances by email to valerie.frances@usda.gov, by fax to (202) 205-7808, or by phone to (202) 720-3252, as, if time is available, attendees may sign up for additional public input at the meeting. For more information, contact Valerie Frances, or visit www.ams.usda.gov/nop. ♦

NET UPDATE

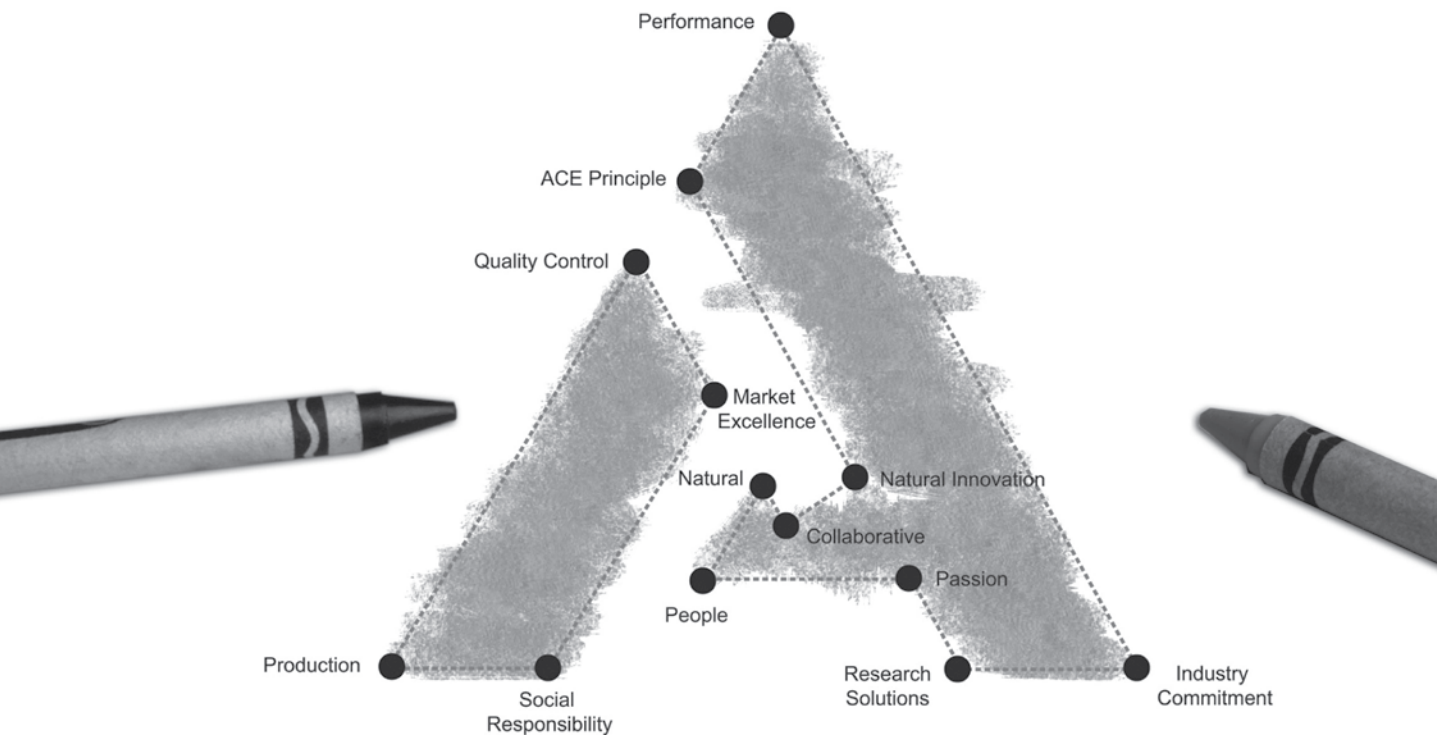


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New look and feel. Easy-to-use navigation. Great photos. Updated weekly. **AND, COMING SOON:** We'll be bringing the O-Dairy Listserv, with all of its archived conversations, in-house. More info coming in May, on the web site and in our **new monthly email newsletter**. To sign up for the e-letter, go to:

www.nodpa.com/nl_email.shtml

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From The NODPA President

Continued from page 2

that initial meeting that birthed NODPA, and I have been involved ever since (as a Board member, NODPA News co-editor and writer, and Policy Committee Chair). I thank those who had the foresight to recognize the need for organic dairy farmers working together and organized that very first gathering. The issue precipitating the meeting was a decrease in pay price to a segment of organic dairy farms in the Northeast. We face a similar challenge now—not a decrease in pay price but a continuing erosion of our profitability because of dramatically rising costs without commensurate increase in pay.

Challenge and change are always a part of farming. My husband, his brother, and I have been farming in partnership in central NYS since 1980. Over those 28 years, many changes have occurred in our operation—going from 70 cows to 130, adding both rented and purchased land so we now have around 700 certified acres, changing practices by adding intensive grazing management in 1993 and then certified organic production in 1998. We are always on the lookout for

better ways of managing and times like these bring changing realities and a need to reevaluate.

With the rise in price for fuel and feed, the most secure farms will be those who can grow most of their own feed needs, for forage prices have gone up as well as grain.

Top quality baleage has been sold in NYS for \$95 a bale, but now that supply is gone. Availability is a factor as well as price if you are dependent on off-farm feed purchases.

I urge all of you to think about how you can become more feed self-sufficient. Is there any land available for rent that is organically certifiable or can be transitioned that would be a good fit for your operation?


Intensifying rotation of pastures will give increased yield and higher quality feed. We will be working to increase our herd's intake of pasture this year as pasture is the cheapest feed source we have. Our herd currently walks up to a mile from the barn for pasture but this year's economics will make us consider turning some even farther hayfields into pasture later in the year to reduce even more our use of stored feeds and purchased grains.

But while there may be ways we can tweak our operations, we still must receive a fair and adequate return for our product, and right now, the buyers are behind the eight ball in keeping up with the dramatically rising costs.

While I would love to have more farms in the area transition to organic dairy production, currently I cannot advise them to make the move. With the conventional milk to feed ratio at an all time low, I would be potentially suggesting business suicide for farms that have to purchase organic grain during their one-year transition. It is hard to see how they could ever climb out of that hole when a large share of existing organic farms can't keep current with their organic feed bills due to the poor organic milk/feed ratio (see page 14 for article on milk/feed ratio).

New farmers, most who have high debt loads, are also at great risk in the current environment. Having to service debt payments for cows and the farm adds a whole extra layer of economic vulnerability to the viability of their farms when cost increases are outpacing income.

Like never before, it is important for us organic dairy producers to work together on sharing new and successful production practices, to work together to ensure that all organic dairy is certified on a level playing field, and to work together to secure a pay price that will enable us to financially survive and thrive. I want the next generation to see a future in organic dairying, I want more conventional farms to see it as a viable option, and I want existing organic dairy farms to be economically sound. Right now, few see those as realities. ♦



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

**From all the folks at
Stonyfield Farm**



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Maximizing Milk On Homegrown Forages And Grains

Continued from page 1

To address this situation, UVM Extension and NOFA-VT worked together to organize a series of workshops titled ‘Maximizing Milk on Homegrown Feeds’. This workshop traveled to 4 regions of Vermont and included presentations from Rick Kersbergen, University of Maine Extension; Karen Sullivan of USDA NRCS in NY; Sid Bosworth of UVM Extension; Heather Darby, UVM Extension; and organic dairy producers Guy Choiniere, Jack Lazor, Earl Fournier, Brent Beidler, Earl Ransom, Dan Tilley and Joe Hescocock. Two to three producers shared the stage at each location, presenting their strategies for growing high quality forages and grains including the crops they grow, crop rotations, feeding programs production goals and economics.

Nutritional Needs

The day started by talking about the nutritional needs of the ruminant. Forage quality was discussed from the perspective of the microbes living in the rumen of the cow. Plants in their young, vegetative stage provide the highest quality, most digestible, feed for the microbes. A young plant generally consists of 40% cellulose (digestible fraction), 50% hemicellulose (digestible fraction) and 10% lignin while a mature plant contains 20% cellulose, 30% hemicellulose and 50% lignin. If you let your hay crop become more mature before harvesting, it turns a plant that was

80-90% digestible into one that is only 50% digestible. Rumen bugs can very easily break through the cell wall of a vegetative plant while the wall of a mature plant is much more difficult.

As expected, young plants have higher protein, lower fiber and higher energy. Maximizing intake from high quality forages can reduce your concentrate needs while maintaining good production levels and good animal body condition.

Dry matter intake potential of the cow is dependent upon the NDF (Neutral Detergent Fiber) and the ADF (Acid Detergent Fiber) of your feed; ADF reflects energy available and the NDF measures intake potential. Giving the rumen bugs the best quality forage with the least amount of fiber can have the greatest impact on intake. Forage should be 60% to 100% of the ruminant’s diet and pasture is by far the cheapest forage, providing you with a very inexpensive source of protein. Because pasture forage (grazed at 6-8 inches) is so digestible, dry matter intake potential is greater and can provide an additional 2 lbs of additional milk for every extra lb of dry matter consumed.

To determine how much forage a cow can eat, one must determine the NDF of the forage. A cow can eat about 0.8 – 1.0% of her body weight in NDF if the forage quality is low, up to 1.2% of her body weight in NDF if the forage quality is high, and 1.4% of her body weight in NDF on high quality pasture. A ration with some grain and good pasture can have the cow eating 3.5 – 4.0% of her bodyweight in dry matter per day provided the NDF is no higher than 45%.

What is Fed in the Barn Will Directly Affect What the Cow Will Graze

For every pound of forage that you feed in the barn, your cow will eat 1 pound less on pasture, and for every pound of grain fed, she will eat about half a pound less on pasture.

Organic Prices: Who Loses?			
	12 % CP Grain	16 %CP Grain	18 % CP Grain
2005	\$310	\$330	\$349
2006	\$350	\$380	\$395
2007	\$360	\$393	\$412
2008	\$490	\$565	\$598

(Table provided by Rick Kersbergen, UMaine Extension: An 18% protein dairy grain shows a 45% increase from 2007 to 2008 and a 71% increase from 2005 to 2008)

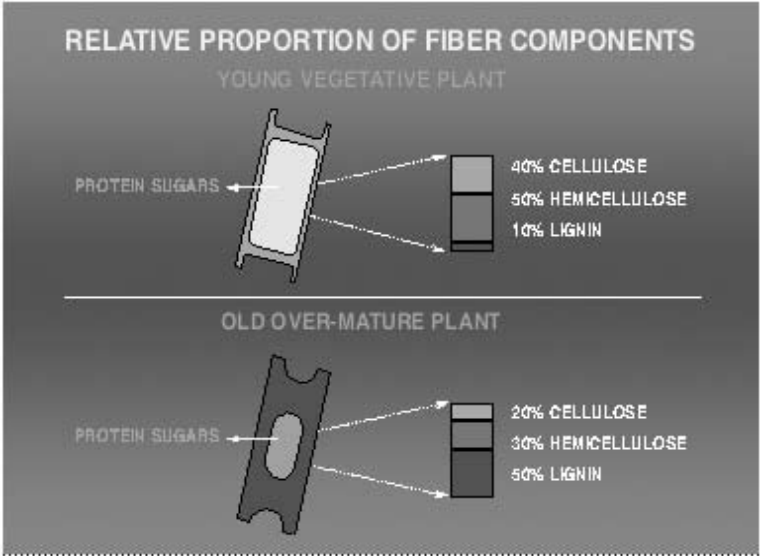


Table: Grain production information for New England.

Grain	Planting Date	Seeding Rate (per acre)	Harvest Date	Storage Moisture (%)	Yield Range (per acre)
Spring Grains (Barley, Oats, Peas, Wheat)	April - Mid May	125-175 lbs	August	12%	1000-2000 lbs
Winter Grains (Wheat, Triticale)	Early -Late Sept	90-175 lbs	July - August	12%	1500-2500 lbs
Soybean (Maturity Groups 00, 0, 1.0)	Mid May - Mid June	150,000-180,000 plants	Oct. - Nov.	13%	20-60 bu
Grain Corn (Shorter season corn)	Early to Mid May	35000 plants	Nov. - Dec.	15%	100 - 200 bu
High Moisture	Early May to Early June	35000 plants	Oct. - Nov.	28-35%	2-6 tons
Silage (slightly longer season)	Early May to Early June	38000 plants	Sept. - Oct.	60-70%	12-20 tons

Research conducted by Fred Provenza (www.behave.net/people/provenza.html) has shown that what is fed in the barn will directly affect what the cow will graze when she is out on pasture. Preference for protein or energy will depend upon what requirements were provided earlier, so a ration high in protein will have the cows looking for the highest sources of energy (grasses, young plants) from pasture and a ration low in protein and high in energy will have cows looking for sources of protein (clover, alfalfa, forbs).

Good quality, vegetative pasture is high in digestible protein, which is broken down to Amino Acids, Peptides and Ammonia. The degradable protein gets used by the microbes, who match it up with energy. If there is not enough energy to match to protein, the excess protein gets converted to ammonia and then it goes into the blood-

stream (which takes energy to do) and off to the liver. The liver converts the ammonia to urea (taking more energy) and then gets excreted. So if you are feeding a protein concentrate to your animals while on pasture, you are paying for protein that you don’t need which is using up valuable energy to excrete from the cow (literally ‘pissing your money away’). Appropriate levels of Milk Urea Nitrogen (MUN) = 10-14; high MUN levels can lead to laminitis & poor reproductive performance.

Economics

Economics of improved forage quality

- > 14% CP improving to 17% CP
- > Organic protein is valued at \$1.10/lb
- > 60 lbs of protein per ton of forage DM
- > Forage yield of 4 tons/acre
- > \$240 increase in protein yield/acre
- > 100 acres of grass....\$24,000 in potential grain savings
- > Don't forget to add increase in energy content and intake potential with improved forage quality

Ways to reduce off-farm grain inputs was discussed and included the following options; 1) improving pasture management and forage quality, 2) improving quality of stored forages and 3) introducing other crops to the farm. By improving forage quality from a 14% to a 17% protein, you would be able to reduce the protein level and the volume of grain

Continued on next page

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Homegrown Forages And Grains

Continued from page 21

fed, which could offer some significant savings. Rick Kers-bergen presented a scenario showing how a farm could save \$25,000 in grain expenses just by having forage quality from 100 acres of grass/le-gume hay improve from 14% protein to 17% protein (see box at left).

Some other important tidbits Rick shared were; 1) delaying first cut by 5 days can cost a 100 cow dairy \$8000 in extra feed cost or lost milk pro-duction due to lower forage quality, 2) Forage maturity is the number one factor in quality 3) quality only declines after the plant is cut, and 4) more rapid drying will reduce losses as respi-ration losses are the most severe nutritional losses.

Research trials are currently being conducted on farms in Maine and at the UNH organic dairy farm. They are in their 2nd year of looking at 4 different feeding com-binations using corn silage, perennial forages and home grown grains (not pellets). They are also investigating options to improve old sods on dairy farms using either improved grazing manage-ment or reseeding. These tri-als are being done over a 3-4 year period and will provide information on costs, risks, equipment and management needed so that farmers in the Northeast can decide what

makes the most sense on their farms.

What about feeding no grain?

Most numbers show that feeding grain is still cost effective even at the currently high prices. What happens in a zero grain diet? The grasses and legumes harvested by the cows enter the rumen with varying levels of fermentable energy, which is the limiting factor on pasture. There is an ideal energy to protein ration that must be met in order for the cow

to turn her feed into milk. With high sugar grasses you can make even more milk, and some farms are using a higher pre-grazing height with a small amount of molasses as an energy source. Much of the dairy genetics on our farms today have not been selected to perform well without a supplemental fermentable energy source but many grass-based farm-ers have invested years into building good grazing genet-ics, allowing them to do well as a 100% grass-fed dairy.

What about growing your own grain or small grain silage ?

Growing your own grain can have some benefits and some challenges that one must consider. Do you have the time, labor, equipment, enough land, the right soils and the skills to do this? Incorporating grains into a farm requires a crop rotation that can offer improvements to underproductive perennial sods, and provides lots of op-portunities for growing high quality forages such as warm season grasses for grazing during the summer slump. Small grains have flexibility in their harvesting, storage and feeding methods; many of

Ten Factors to Consider Before Growing Grains

1. **Timing** – often planting of grain crops can interfere with timely harvest of first cut forage. Do you have the time and resources? First priority should be harvesting and storing quality forages.
2. **Selecting proper grain** – Are you looking for a protein or an energy grain? Need to select a grain that fits your growing season and minimizes new equipment pur-chases.
3. **Equipment needs for growing grain** – Combine will be needed to harvest most grains. You may also need to purchase weed control tools. It is always helpful to talk to other local grain producers to discuss equipment purchases and dealers.
4. **How many acres to grow** – It might be best to set a goal and grow some of your energy or protein needs. As you gain more experience, you can continue to expand the acreage and types of grains.
5. **Site Selection** – Most grain crops like well drained loamy soil – rocks are not your friend.
6. **Proper rotations** – crop rotations are one of the most powerful tools for weed control and maintaining fertil-ity. Also, certain crops follow nicely after another based upon their needs.
7. **Proper fertility** – the first step is to soil test and identify any deficiency and make corrections for a high quality high yielding crop.
8. **Weed control in grains** – Proper timing and experience will determine success with mechanical weed control. Good crop rotations will minimize the weed pressure.
9. **Harvesting and storing grains** – Harvesting grains at the proper moisture content will prevent spoilage and/or additional costs associated with drying grains.
10. **Feeding and processing grain** – Most grains will need to be processed through a grinder/mixer or a station-ary hammermill before they are fed to dairy cows. Have your grains tested so that you can build your grains into a balanced ration for your cows.

the producers at these workshops spoke highly of small grain silage stating that it was high quality, high yielding, and very palatable feed.

How much grain you grow depends partly on the amount of land that you have, but can also be determined by the amount of grain that you plan on feeding. If you are feeding 10 lbs per head per day over the year, you would be need about 2 tons per cow per year. With yields of 2 tons of grain corn per acre, you would need 60 acres to produce enough corn for 60 cows. If you have a 4-year crop rotation, you would need at least 240 acres of tillable land available to you and if you had a 5-year crop rota-tion, you would need at least 300 acres.

The producers that participated in these workshops shared very useful information filled with wisdom and experience gained from growing grains and forages year after year on their farms. No farm was alike in what they grew and how they did it, which made sense as each farm has its own history, topography, and soil types. What was also interesting to learn from these producers is that each year most of them are trying something new and some-times the weather and the growing season will dictate whether or not the crop is a grain crop or a forage crop for that year.

Recently a new group called the Northern Grain Growers

Association was formed. This group includes growers and farmers from all over the Northeast region plus a few farmers from Quebec. For more information about this new associa-tion, please contact Dr Heather Darby, 802-524-6501 x 206, or email her at: heather.darby@uvm.edu. ♦

COMMENTARY

Continued from page 15

they’ve drawn up may bear fruit. Regional organic dairy producers from the Northeast, Midwest and Western states have boosted communications. For the most part, they basically sell to many of the same few buyers.

It’s an added source of frustration for some organic produc-ers that the producer-owned cooperative processor - Or-ganic Valley (LaFarge, Wisconsin) - has in recent years not been an agent of milk price enhancement.

And it’s ironic that the combined double whammy of processor-owned “organic” factory is serving both to di-minish honest “traditional” organic producers’ milk prices and drive up their grain costs.

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Ecological Control of Pasture Flies

By Fay Benson, Cornell Cooperative Extension's NY Organic Dairy Initiative

Organic Farmers are familiar with the phrase "An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure." This is certainly true with pasture flies. If we wait till the flies are a problem, we have less control over them. May is a good time to start putting the plan into place, since June is when flies start to be a nuisance. By July, if a control program isn't in place, production losses occur.

The information for this article was drawn from a pasture walk I organized to help farmers put a fly control program into place. Speaking at the pasture walk was Dr. Phil Kaufman veterinary entomologist with Cornell University and Keith Waldron, NY Integrated Pest Management extension specialist. This team has been working together to present this topic for a number of years. Throughout the presentation they repeated the need to clean up around the farm.

Two of the three most common flies affecting animals on pasture, Face fly and Horn fly, breed in undisturbed manure piles. The third, Stable flies, breed in moist rotting organic material: moist straw bedding, the base of big bales stored on the ground, and poorly composted grass clippings.

Use ecological controls

Dr. Kaufman stressed the importance of managing fly control ecologically since organic methods aren't as effective against populations that are already out of control chemically. Conventional approaches take large doses of chemicals, and the results become less and less successful as the flies become resistant to pesticides. By reducing breeding areas, populations will be decreased, thus reducing the need for insecticide use, which will in turn improve

the effectiveness of chemicals.

The following are ecological control methods and thresholds for when numbers of flies will negatively affect production.

Face flies

Face flies, found (you guessed) on the face, become a problem when there are 10 or more flies on the face. The female face fly is the most commonly seen. She is there to feed on the protein that is in the mucus around the eyes and nose, which she uses for reproduction. If there isn't enough mucus, she pokes around the eyes,

irritating them and causing them to tear, which is what the fly is after. This feeding behavior is how pink-eye is spread.

Horn flies

Horn flies are found on the animals back and belly area. They become a problem when they reach 50 per side in dairy animals and 100 per side in beef animals. Both sexes have biting mouthparts that they use to pierce the skin to obtain blood meals. You may notice horn flies billowing up from the backs of cows as they enter the barn, since horn flies don't like dark areas.

A number of non-chemical traps have been designed to take advantage of this behavior. Both the face and horn fly females lay eggs on undisturbed cattle dung. Female horn flies wait by the tail head or lower rear of the animal to await dung deposition so that they can lay their eggs on the dung within seconds of it landing on the ground.

Pasture pests

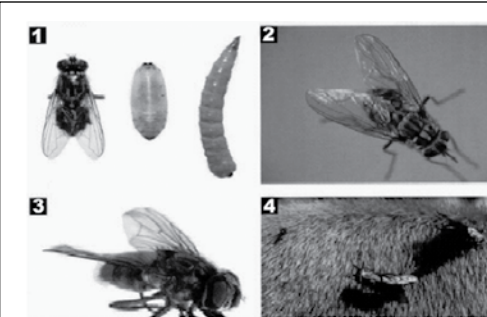
Both of these flies affect only animals on pasture and are outdoor insects. Control of face flies is difficult if other animal owners in the area don't have a program in place. The face fly females leave the host daily and can fly up to 5 miles to find animals the following

day. Because horn flies stay with the animals, their movement between herds is more restricted than face fly movement.

Stable flies

The stable fly is a pest on pasture animals and will also attack animals in confinement. Found on the legs of cattle, they are

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1. Face fly, similar to house fly.
2. Stable fly, similar size to face fly, has a spear-like mouthpart.
3. Horn fly, 1/2 the size of face fly, wings held at 45 degrees.
4. Horse fly, usually the size of a quarter or larger.

Fly Control Web Sites

New York Livestock and Field Crop IPM Program:
<http://www.nysipm.cornell.edu/lfc>

Cornell's Veterinary Entomology Program:
<http://www.entomology.cornell.edu/Extension/Vet/index.html>

ORGANIC PRODUCTION: FEATURED FARM

Skyrocketing Costs Put Full-time Farming On Hold

A mix of family and supportive neighbors are making it work for Craig and Angela Russell of Brotherly Farm in Randolph Center, Vermont

By Lisa McCrory

It has been almost 2 years since Craig and Angela started shipping organic milk to Horizon Organic. They were hoping that once their organic transition period was complete, Craig could start working full time on the farm but that dream is yet to happen as skyrocketing costs for grain, fuel, electricity and other expenses has put their dream on hold. Craig's off-farm job will have to continue playing a role in staying on top of the bills until the Russells have less debt hanging over their heads or the pay price for organic milk is more sustainable.

Craig and Angela own 15 acres and rent their dairy farm from Craig's father, which includes the barns plus 40 acres. Another 400 acres is rented from a handful of neighbors who are very supportive of Craig and Angela's organic farming practices. 250 acres is used for pasture, 170 acres is harvested as wrapped or dry round bales and 30 acres is used for growing corn silage.

Craig grew up on a dairy farm and has been farming on his own for 6 years. Prior to that, he worked on a dairy farm for 6 years and then went to college and got a bachelors degree in accounting. Craig's brother Caleb came back to the farm one year ago and has been working full time ever since as the Herdsman. They also have a VTC intern working part time on the farm and Craig puts in most of his farm hours on the weekend.

Currently, Craig works as a Captive Insurance Examiner for the State of Vermont. His accounting skills and love for numbers has helped him greatly as he keeps close tabs on his production costs and is currently pulling together a business plan for the farm. As a newly appointed NODPA Board Member, he is also able to provide valuable input to NODPA as it advocates for a sustainable pay price to organic producers.

The Russells have a mixed herd; 40% are Holsteins, and the rest are Jerseys, Jersey crosses, Ayshires, Normandes and Holstein/Normande crosses. Craig does all his AI breeding, getting his Normande semen from Normande Genetics, and using Select Sires and Alta Genetics for his Jersey and Holstein genetics. A

bull is used for breeding heifers in the summer time as they are off on a distant pasture during those months.

Like more and more organic dairy farmers, Brotherly Farm



is diversifying their product line. Angela has started a CSA (community Supported Agriculture) where their farm provides a variety of vegetables, baked goods, organic chicken, organic turkey and organic beef to its CSA members. Angela also sells products at some farmers markets and sells the beef at a few stores in Vermont. Over time, they see these enterprises contributing more and more to the household income.

On top of farming and the off-farm job, Craig and Angela have three young children (their budding labor force); Alex is 7, Emily is 4 and Abigail is 2 years old. The kids are involved in 4-H and are showing heifers at the Tunbridge Fair each September. This has gotten them back into registering their Hosteins, which Craig loves.

Transition to Organic Dairy

Part of Craig and Angela's motivation for transitioning to organic production was for health reasons. Their drinking

water got contaminated, they believe, from the runoff from a conventionally managed cornfield nearby. On top of the health concerns, it was clear that the pay price for conventional milk was not sustainable and the organic pay price (at the time) was attractive. Conventional milk was only \$12/cwt, and the debt incurred from the whole herd transition was \$40,000 after taking away the transition payments. On top of that, they are still paying off their cows as they refinanced that debt when they transitioned the herd in 2005. They were already pasturing their cows, and there was very little within their livestock management program that they would have to change. A lot of the land was already organic, so their transition for most of their farmland was one year. Their farm is certified by Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF).

One of the goals for Brotherly Farm is for the dairy to support 2 families; Craig's family and Caleb's family. They are not there yet, but are working closely with Willie Gibson of NOFA-VT in creating a business plan and intensifying their grazing system. For Brotherly Farm, 42 milking cows will support the needs of one family. They are milking 65 cows right now, and would need to add on 19 more cows in order to support both families. They would love to own their own farm some day, and having a business plan in place will give them a clearer vision of where they are and where they are going, plus it will give them more credibility if they approach a financial institution for a loan.

Housing for Cows, Heifers, Calves

Cows are housed in a freestall and are managed in two groups; a high group and a low group. Craig started managing with two groups in January of this year and feels like his cows have already responded positively. He has seen the milk production and components increase, and has been able to reduce the grain fed to his low group providing a significant savings of about 3 lbs of grain per cow. In the summer time, they plan to continue managing two lactating groups on pasture. Cows will go out to pasture day and night during the grazing months, but during the high heat of summer, they will probably keep the high producing group in during the day and will graze at night only. The low group will continue to graze day and night.

Once the dairy cows are out on pasture, they plan to reduce the protein in the grain from 16% to a 12%; the high group will get 18 lbs, and the low group will get 6 lbs. Cows are fed a TMR that comes to about 5-6 lbs of forage dry matter per cow per day combined with the high or low ration of grain. Forages and corn silage are mixed in a vertical TMR that mixes dry hay grass, corn and grain together. They purchase a custom grain mix from Green Mountain Feeds, which is based on the

pasture or forage analysis that the cows are eating. The grain ration is reconfigured every 2 weeks in the winter and every month when the cows are on pasture. Calculations show that during the grazing months, the cows will be getting just over 40% of their total dry matter needs from pasture.

Heifers 12-24 months old are currently housed in a barn across from the dairy barn and have access to the outdoors and are fed from round bale feeders all winter long. Heifers 6-12 months old are housed in open packs and are fed outside all winter as well. This year they are acquiring another farm, which has 148 acres of certifiable land, 52 acres in transition, and some barns.



They will start raising their heifers 6 months of age to springing on this farm. With this additional land and buildings, the Russells will be able to turn the old heifer barns on the main farm into a dry cow barn and a calf barn, providing the opportunity for growing the herd to support two families.

Livestock health and Preventative Measures:

There are a number of things that the Russells do on their farm to maintain health, and catch problems early. They have a vaccination program and have certain remedies and practices that work on their farm. If they notice that a group of animals are showing signs of barn itch or weight loss, for example, they will put apple cider vinegar in the water, will provide a higher quality feed ration, and will take fecal samples. As a vaccination program, they give a 9-way vaccine every 6 months for the milk cows and for heifers 6 months and older. They also vaccinate for harjo Bovis (specific Lepto Vaccine) in

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FEATURED FARM

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the fall, and vaccinate for rabies. Calves get the oral vaccine called ‘Scour Guard’ and are vaccinated with a 9-way soon after birth. Calves are left with cows for 24 hours, giving the cow time to clean the calf and making sure the calf gets a good amount of colostrum from his/her mom. If a calf gets scours, they will use Deliver and feed the calf Stonyfield yogurt.

They have had great success with their dry cow program: they feed Redmond salt and a selenium mix to the dry cow group and not more than 2 lbs of grain per day. They have very healthy calves and have only had one case of milk fever in the past 2 years. Heel warts have been a problem in Craig’s herd for a long time. To stay on top of this, he runs a copper sulfate foot bath daily in the winter and weekly in the summertime. Hoof trimming happens every 12-18 months and those with heel warts get treated with Ichthamol.

For cases of mastitis, they culture the milk to identify the bug and will turn first to PhytoMast, a product by Dr Karreman (Penn Dutch Cow Care). They also use a quarter milker on infected quarters and will make sure to milk those cows last. Other products that they like to use are aloe and garlic pills made by Brookfield Ag Services, and aspirin. They rarely have ketosis on the farm, but when they do, they feed kelp and a high energy bolus.

Management Tools and Services

The Russells utilize a number of services including DHIA, Agrimark Field Staff, NOFA-VT, NRCS, UVM Extension and the VT Agency of Ag’s CRP program. With DHIA, they milk sample twice a month, keeping track of individual SCC count, body condition scoring, and calculating income over feed costs. Each cow is evaluated based upon milk production and profitability, taking into consideration the value of components and quality. Cows are culled based upon these figures; the cull rate right now is 12% involuntary and 8% voluntary.

Being Agrimark members, they take advantage of the services provided for monitoring and maintaining milk quality on the farm. If there is a new person milking their cows, they bring in an Agrimark representative to teach the new milker good milking protocol. As a result of staying on top of their milk quality, the Russells consistently receive the additional \$1.12/cwt premium for low PI.

Part of Craig and Angela’s motivation for transitioning to organic production was for health reasons. Their drinking water got contaminated, they believe, from the runoff from a conventionally managed cornfield nearby. On top of the health concerns, it was clear that the pay price for conventional milk was not sustainable and the organic pay price (at the time) was attractive.

A few years ago, working with Dan Koloski of NRCS, the Russells received \$75,000 in cost share and transition funds to put in lane ways, high tensile fencing, water systems, and transition their land to organic production. They fenced in 95 acres of pasture with high tensile fencing and feel this the best funding they have ever received.

They are currently working with Heather Darby (UVM Extension) and Jason Fleury (Agency of Agriculture), developing a nutrient management plan for the farm. This project is being funded through CRP money (\$12,000 over 3 years). The funds are used to cover soil sampling manure spreader calibration, and hopefully to cover the costs of applying wood ash and other nutrients to the fields. The farm must follow the nutrient management plan for 10 years.

NOFA-VT has also been a tremendous help; Willie Gibson, one of the Dairy and Livestock Technical Advisors, has been working closely with the Russells, evaluating the farm operation, finding ways to make the farm more efficient and profitable, and helping them write a business plan for the farm.

Future needs of the organic dairy industry

Craig and Angela are a perfect example of young farmers getting started from ground zero. As young producers with lots of debt, the price of grain and fuel has hit their pocketbook hard. Banks are skeptical about working with young producers like the Russells; they don’t own the farm, are still paying off the cows, and organic grain prices are very volatile. Craig would love to own a farm someday, but at this point lenders are not interested in talking with them. They are hoping that with a business plan in place, lenders will be more amenable.

Craig would like to see more research done on cost of production for farms transitioning to organic dairy for the benefit of the producer and the lending institutions. He also feels that milk processors need to be more involved in helping to curtail these high production prices by implementing a pricing factor/cost index to the farmers.

With that said, there are lots of great things happening at Brotherly Farm; many new things have been implemented on the farm over the past few years and this year they should be reaping the benefits from all these improvements. Craig loves farming, saying “it is different every day”. Let’s hope that his commute to his off-farm job is short lived and his dream of farming full time becomes a reality before year’s end. ♦



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COMMENTARY

A Visit to Horizon Organic’s Maryland Farm

Klaas Martens, Penn Yan, NY

I’d like to give a report on my visit to the Horizon Farm in Maryland for the benefit of everyone on this list. (This essay originally appeared on the O-Dairy listserv.)

Our daughter Elizabeth and I presented at a conference in Maryland on March 11. Greg Heidemann, manager at the Horizon farm was also presenting at that conference. I asked if we could visit the farm on the following day since the conference was very close to Kennedyville where the farm is located.

We were invited to visit the farm and to talk with the staff.

I had a pretty long list of questions that I wanted to ask. A lot of my questions dealt with, how cow and pasture management decisions are made, manure & nutrient management, amount of forage produced on the pastures etc.

Greg answered every question that we asked. We toured the whole farm, walked across the pastures, saw the calves, the heifers, and the milking cows.

There were 535 milking age cows on the farm of which 480 were milking and the rest were dry cows and close up heifers. The milking cows were divided into 4 groups according to production and stage of lactation. They have 133 acres of certified organic pasture for the milking cows and are in the process of transitioning 44 additional acres of land for milking cow pasture.

The farm also has 400 head of young stock. They are grazed on an additional 400 acres of pasture. The calves are started in hutches and then moved in small groups to a new calf raising barn. The calf barn has doors for access to pasture in each pen. The pasture behind the calf barn is well laid out for rotational grazing and has fences that allow efficient movement of animals. Some of the young stock are being raised on other farms in the area but it looks to me like the new barns and pastures I saw might reduce that need.

I think the heifers have more pasture than they should really need for most efficient grazing unless they are on much less productive forage than the milking cows are. That is probably common situation on organic farms. Many organic farmers could improve profits and need less land if we managed our heifer pastures as well as we do our milk cow pastures.

The cows go out to pasture on improved cattle lanes underlayed with geo-textile material and covered with gravel. There was water available in all of the paddocks from underground lines and they use poly wire fencing on the sides of the cattle lanes and around all the paddocks. I think the improved lanes and piped in water are practices

that all organic dairy farmers would be wise to employ.

I’d like to encourage all organic farmers who haven’t already done so to apply for cost sharing to improve their farms and pastures. In many cases, farmers can get reimbursed for much of the cost of lime, fertilizers, and seed for starting new pastures just as they can to seed new hay fields. In New York, local conservation districts can even provide cost share funds to help build concrete barnyards and roof them over. Cows do much better and pastures are more productive if we keep animal traffic on improved lanes when it is muddy. Somatic cell counts go way up and it takes a lot longer to do a good job of cleaning off udders before milking when cows have to live on wet muddy paddocks and lanes.

Greg said that they had started grazing three groups of milking cows on March 7. I asked to see their feeding records and calculated that the grazing cows had gotten about 35% of their total dry mater intake from pasture on the 10’t, the previous day. That was figured on total dry matter intake, percent of forage from pasture was higher. We saw 360 cows out on pasture grazing excellent quality grass on March 11. A water line had broken earlier preventing the 4’t group from going out that day but it looked to me like the repair was just about finished. The pipe was back together but the trench hadn’t been filled back in yet.

Greg wanted to get the 4’rth group of cows outside as soon as the trench was filled back in. It’s easy to see that it’s cheaper to make milk with good pasture than to use stored feeds. All the feed that the cows get in the barn is weighed and whatever is swept back out is also weighed and recorded. The total amount of dry matter the cows consume is known, so when the cows graze, it is easy calculate dry matter from pasture quite accurately.

Fresh cows who are milking well can eat over 4% of their body weight in feed DM per day and maintain that level of intake until they drop off in milk. Greg’s records showed the high group to be eating over 4% of BW in dry matter per day. Another rule of thumb I use is to figure that an average sized Holstein eats about 6 tons of dry forage (hay equivalent) per year. That averages out to about 1/2 ton per cow per month and would total about 240 tons of dry forage per month for the whole Horizon milking herd in Maryland.

I estimate that the Maryland farm should easily be able to produce about 6 tons of dry equivalent forage per acre per year on their pasture land with their long growing season, excellent soil and irrigation. 6 tons times 133 acres equals just under 800 tons of dry matter from pasture over an 8 month grazing season. If their average forage intake is 1/2 ton per cow per month, their total forage intake would be about 1920 tons over the 8 month period. That figures to just a little under 42% of their forage from pasture over a 240 day period. When the 44 new pasture acres are certified, they will increase the pasture production to a little over 50% of the forage intake during the 240 days that the cows can graze. ♦

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Ecological Control of Pasture Flies

Continued from page 25

considered to be an economic problem when there are an average of 10 or more flies per animal, counted on the legs of 15 animals. Like the horn fly, they are blood feeders. If you see your animals stomping or standing in water or muddy areas, it often means they are being bitten by stable flies. Ecological control of this pest requires cleaning up rotting organic material, such as silage left around the blower, calf hutches, or round bale feeders left in the same place for too long.

The pasture walk group went out into Bill and Joanne’s pasture to look at dung pats to see what interesting things we could find. Under the pats there were small holes that were made by a beetle that lays it’s eggs into dung balls and buries them in the ground. Dr. Kaufman said there are more than 125 different species that live part of their life cycle in the dung pat. Of these, only three are considered pests. For this reason,

he cautions people not to disturb the manure pats as a way of controlling just the three pests.

One question that most farmers came with was: What are those yellow fuzzy flies that are seen on cattle dung early in the spring and then later again in the fall? This year there seemed to be more of them then usual. One producer felt that it might be a harbinger of fly problems to come. It turns out that they are Yellow Dung flies, a predator that sits on the dung pat and waits for flies to come along and pounces on them to eat. Parasitic wasps and other non-pest flies were also discussed at the pasture walk. It was stressed that the parasitic wasps are an important part of a successful fly control program, but only in confined systems.

Here’s the recommended control program to reduce flies on your farm:



1. Clean up breeding areas.
2. Identify pests, and know their life cycles.
3. Monitor numbers; keep track of thresholds.
4. Use organic chemical controls as last resort.
5. The earlier your program is in place, the more success it will have. ♦

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NET UPDATE

Recent Discussions On ODairy

By Liz Bawden, NODPA Rep and Newsletter Co-Editor

Pay price continued to be a leading topic on ODairy over the last month. Several producers cited that the root of the problem lies with the lack of an enforceable pasture rule, allowing cheaper milk from confinement dairies to flood the market. A few producers expressed concerns about consumers' ability or willingness to pay more at the retail level. One farmer coined the slogan, "Parity Not Poverty!". And others wondered that the squeeze on our bottom lines could be pushing more farms into seasonal production.

A farmer shared some observations about seeding oats for grazing. Forage oats seeded in the spring for summer grazing performed as expected, out-producing the grain-type oats. But when he seeded the grain-type oats in the summer for fall grazing, they out-produced the forage oats planted at the same time.

Another farmer questioned the list if they thought that testing purchased cows for BVD was a good idea. Others responded that it is a good idea to test, based on the potential havoc a persistently infected (shedding live virus) individual can cause. John's testing was also recommended. Individual cow testing for BVD was described as an ear-notching procedure, where a lab applies a stain to test for the presence of the virus. There is also a bulk milk test to determine infection in the herd.

Grain prices are at parity prices these days, so they are a big target. But one farmer expressed that they are only a small part of the problem putting an economic squeeze on organic dairy farmers. The USDA Parity Price for conventional milk in January of 2008 was \$43.80. The calculations used for these unbiased figures as based on economic indicators that don't include organic grain prices.

Discussions and frustrations over PI counts came up again this

month. Several strategies were discussed: the usual culprits of erratic PI counts included slow cooling of the milk, hot water not hot enough, cleanliness issues, milk handling after pick up on the farm. One farmer shared her success in keeping the counts down by using peroxyacetic acid as an acid rinse and sanitizer.

A farmer reported having a calf with her ears dry and curled up. Responses from the veterinarians on the list suggested that it may be a rare congenital defect known as "baldy calf syndrome".

Another farmer asked when the best time is to band bull calves and de-horn. It was suggested that bull calves should be banded at 3 to 4 weeks old, de-horning at 2 weeks to 3 months. The veterinarian preferred disbudding by the burners over other methods.

A herdsman for a farm reported that several of the fresh cows were in poor health after calving, had difficult births, several retained their placentas. They

reported the appearance of ringworm on some older bull calves. It was suggested to look at the minerals; get a good 2 to 1 mineral in place, supplement with Redmond salt and kelp. Selenium was suggested, so MU-Se shots would be in order. Lack of energy was also suggested, since immune systems of ketotic cows will be suppressed. It was suggested to feed the best quality hay; supplement with molasses if needed. Injection of Vitamin A, D, and E was also suggested.

A farmer asked for feedback from those that have used fly parasites/predators in the past. Several farmers reported good reduction in flies using them.

The health benefits of apple cider vinegar have been discussed frequently on ODairy, but there was a brief discussion on how to make your own if you have a source of cider in the fall. A farmer shared her technique: she fills 6-gallon wine bottles with the apple juice, adds a bit of the "mother" (the stuff at the bottom of the cider vinegar bottle), covers it with cheesecloth so it can breathe, and puts it in a warm place to work for about 3 months. When you get to the bottom of the jar, save the mother for the next batch--one cubic inch of mother is sufficient to start a 6 gallon batch. ♦

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ODairy will be moving in-house to our own web site soon. We'll keeping you posted on the details of the transition.



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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Update from the NODPA Board and the State Representatives

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The dedicated group of organic dairy producers that represent all the members of NODPA in overseeing the governance of NODPA are unsung heroes for their commitment to the future of all organic dairy family farms. They meet at least monthly by telephone conferencing and always have a very full agenda for their 2 to 2 ½ hour calls. The topics covered vary from exchanging information about growing practices, pay price and complicated advocacy work to strengthen the integrity of the USDA Organic Seal.

At the meeting of the Board and State Representatives on April 11th the State Representatives conducted elections for Board Members and Officers in keeping with the bylaws that were adopted in February 2005. Steve Morrison, who has guided the organization so well over the last seven years, stepped down as President and Kathie Arnold was elected to take his place. Nancy Gardiner's term as Secretary had come to an end and Liz Bawden from New York was elected as NODPA Secretary. Steve Russell from Maine and Craig Russell of Vermont were voted onto the Board by the State Representatives and Jim Gardiner retained his Board seat as did Rick Segalla.

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The Board and State Representatives have been working on amending the bylaws that were in use when the organization became a non-profit corporation in 2005. The bylaws that have served NODPA since its inception needed to be updated to reflect the increasing volume and diversity of work that NODPA is now doing, while ensuring grassroots representation from organic dairy producers who sell milk to all brands and to independent companies. Most of the changes were in clarifying the voting structure for State representative, Board members and Officers in order to have as broad cross section of producers on the board representing the different states and different companies that buy their milk. Three year Board terms were retained in the amended bylaws but officer elections will now be an annual event. The Board and Reps adopted the amended bylaws on April 11th and they can be viewed at www.nodpa.com as can the updated list of Officers, Board members and State Representatives. If you would like more details or a comparison between the new and old bylaws please contact Ed Maltby at ednodpa@comcast.net

Finally for those of you who enjoy discussing organic farming, the intricacies of the organic standards, the pay price you receive and have a good sense of humor (plus internet and a phone connection) you might want to consider becoming a NODPA State Representative. Conference calls are usually monthly, start at 8:00 pm and last about 2 hours. NODPA is always looking for more family farmers that want to participate in deciding the policy direction and governance for NODPA.

If you are interested, please contact Ed Maltby, 413-772-0444 or ednodpa@comcast.net. ♦



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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Contracts

Continued from page 11

requirements. In practice, the processor will generally make the first decision about whether or not the producer complied. Under the HP Hood contract reviewed, the processor has the right to conduct random drug testing of the producer's herd, to conduct surprise inspections of the farm, and to review the producer's records to assure compliance with NOP regulations and contract requirements.

Agreeing to a contract that allows the processor to determine compliance can be risky. The processor has its own interests and is not a neutral decision-maker.

If the processor says the producer has not complied with the additional requirements, what can the producer do?

To understand how to resolve disputes about whether a producer has met the additional requirements, the producer should read his or her contract language. In general, the 2007 contracts reviewed did not address how disputes would be resolved. One exception was found in the Organic Valley Pasture Policy, which provided that a producer needing more than one year to come into compliance with the Farm Pasture Plan could seek to arrange more time through a written appeals process to the Dairy Executive Committee within the cooperative.

For some disputes, having a written plan may help protect the producer. For example, as noted above, several of the processors with additional requirements related to access to pasture require a written plan explaining how the producer will comply with the requirements. If the processor approved the producer's written plan as sufficient under the contract, then the producer will have evidence that he or she is in compliance with the contract as long as he or she carries out the written plan.

Producers may want to find out whether their state has an agricultural mediation program that could provide a neutral facilitator to help resolve the dispute and try to preserve the relationship between producer and processor. Otherwise, the producer may choose to challenge the processor's decision in court. While it is hard to predict how a judge would decide any particular case, in general, if the dispute involves a

Options for producers when offered a contract containing additional requirements

Producers have a variety of options when offered a contract for the sale of organic milk which contains additional requirements. Producers may want to consider one or more of the following strategies:

- Consult an attorney in the producer's state. The producer is not bound by the contract until he or she has signed it.
- Negotiate with the processor for the removal of the additional requirements. Research on whether the processor's competitors require the same or similar additional requirements might help in the negotiations. However, if the processor notes the additional requirements on its product labels, the producer is unlikely to succeed in negotiating for the removal of the additional requirement.
- Cross out the clause(s) containing additional requirements (the producer should initial and date the change) and sign the contract. The processor may accept the cancellation of the clause(s), or reject the change proposed by the producer.
- Negotiate with the processor for changes to the additional requirements. For example, the producer might ask for objective ways to measure compliance with contract requirements. If the contract offered does not require a written plan describing how additional practice requirements will be met, the producer may want to suggest it. The additional recordkeeping burden might pay off later if a dispute were to arise and the producer were able to show that the processor had approved the producer's plan. Or the producer might ask for more time to comply with the additional requirements.
- Negotiate with the processor for a clause setting forth how any disputes under the contract, including disputes about whether the additional requirements were met, will be resolved.
- Negotiate to require more notice from the processor before the processor may cancel the contract in return for agreeing to the additional requirements.
- Decline to sign the contract. Search for another processor.
- Sign the contract with the intention of complying with the additional requirements. Be sure to understand exactly what is required in order to comply. Maintain records to document that additional requirements have been met.
- Immediately discuss any difficulties in complying with the additional requirements with the processor or an attorney, and take advantage of mentoring or other programs to assist producers in meeting additional requirements.
- A producer may agree to meet additional requirements for a variety of reasons—lack of other buyers, philosophical agreement with the requirements, better pay, etc. Regardless of the reason, once the producer signs the contract, the producer is bound to meet the additional requirements.

vague contract requirement, a judge would likely ask whether a “reasonable person” would believe the producer had complied.

May the processor change the additional requirements?

When a producer decides whether to enter into a contract with a processor, the producer should be aware that the processor may wish to change the requirements later.

For example, at the end of the contract term, which is typically one or two years, the processor may offer a new contract that contains new requirements of the producer. In general, this does not violate the law. The processor is bound by the previous contract only during the term of that contract. The producer may accept the new contract, attempt to negotiate, or reject the new contract.

It is more complicated when the processor wants to change the requirements under the contract before the contract period has expired. For example, the processor might wish to change its pasture requirements during the sixth month of a one-year contract. In general, the processor may not change the terms of the contract during the contract period without the producer's agreement. However, the processor might argue that it was only "clarifying" the additional requirements, and was not actually "changing" them. If faced with this kind

of argument, the producer should review the contract carefully and seek the advice of an attorney.

While the processor may not change the contract without agreement, in practice, the contract may allow the processor to cancel the contract, or to give notice and then cancel the contract. A processor might seek to use the threat of termination to coerce the producer to “agree” to changes in the contract requirements.

The opposite problem may arise for producers who plan to end the contract with a processor when the contract period ends. Producers in this situation may assume they no longer have a contract with the first processor because they did not sign a new one with them. But the DMS contracts reviewed include clauses stating that the contract will be renewed unless the producer or processor gives written notice 180 days in advance not to renew the contract.

One final note is that if USDA were to change the NOP regulations, this would be different from a change to the contract by the processor. The regulations may change at any time. In order to maintain organic certification, the producer must comply with NOP regulations after they are changed. USDA has generally allowed time for producers to come into compliance with changes to the NOP regulations. ♦

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Calendar

June 21, 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Transitioning to Organic Dairy / NRCS Resources

Robinson Farm, 42 Jackson Road, Hardwick, MA

Part of the 2008 Grazing Workshop/Pasture Walk Series

For more information on any of the sessions, contact Winton Pitcoff, NOFA/Mass, at winton@nofamass.org or 413-634-5728; Steve Herbert, UMass Extension, at 413-545-2250 or sherbert@pssci.umass.edu; or Tom Akin, NRCS, at 413-253-4365 or thomas.akin@ma.usda.gov.

Website: www.massgrass.org.

July 1, 2008

Polyface Farm Field Day at Joel Salatin's Farm

Swoope VA, sponsored by Acres USA. Visit www.acresusa.com or call 1-800-355-5313 for more information.

July 10, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Organic Dairy Transition

Colrain Dairy Farm, 270 Greenfield Road, Colrain, MA

Part of the 2008 Grazing Workshop/Pasture Walk Series

For more information on any of the sessions, contact Winton Pitcoff, NOFA/Mass, at winton@nofamass.org or 413-634-5728; Steve Herbert, UMass Extension, at 413-545-2250 or sherbert@pssci.umass.edu; or Tom Akin, NRCS, at 413-253-4365 or thomas.akin@ma.usda.gov.

Website: www.massgrass.org.

July 24, 10:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Raising and Marketing Grass-Fed Meat

Wheel-View Farm, 212 Reynolds Road, Shelburne, MA

Part of the 2008 Grazing Workshop/Pasture Walk Series

For more information on any of the sessions, contact Winton Pitcoff, NOFA/Mass, at winton@nofamass.org or 413-634-5728; Steve Herbert, UMass Extension, at 413-545-2250 or sherbert@pssci.umass.edu; or Tom Akin, NRCS, at 413-253-4365 or thomas.akin@ma.usda.gov.

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August 8 - 10, 2008

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University of Massachusetts Amherst, MA (Note the location change).

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August 18, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Small Scale Dairies and Alternative Forages

Bostrom Farm, 95 Green River Road, Greenfield, MA

Part of the 2008 Grazing Workshop/Pasture Walk Series

For more information on any of the sessions, contact Winton Pitcoff, NOFA/Mass, at winton@nofamass.org or 413-634-5728; Steve Herbert, UMass Extension, at 413-545-2250 or sherbert@pssci.umass.edu; or Tom Akin, NRCS, at 413-253-4365 or thomas.akin@ma.usda.gov.

Website: www.massgrass.org.

September 9, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Infrastructure on Mixed-Livestock Farms

Tufts University Farm, North Grafton, MA

Part of the 2008 Grazing Workshop/Pasture Walk Series

For more information on any of the sessions, contact Winton Pitcoff, NOFA/Mass, at winton@nofamass.org or 413-634-5728; Steve Herbert, UMass Extension, at 413-545-2250 or sherbert@pssci.umass.edu; or Tom Akin, NRCS, at 413-253-4365 or thomas.akin@ma.usda.gov.

Website: www.massgrass.org.

September 17, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

UMass Pasture Management Research

UMass Research and Education Center Farm, Deerfield

Part of the 2008 Grazing Workshop/Pasture Walk Series

For more information on any of the sessions, contact Winton Pitcoff, NOFA/Mass, at winton@nofamass.org or 413-634-5728; Steve Herbert, UMass Extension, at 413-545-2250 or sherbert@pssci.umass.edu; or Tom Akin, NRCS, at 413-253-4365 or thomas.akin@ma.usda.gov.

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September 26 – 28, 2008

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Continued on page 40

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MAY 2008

NODPA NEWS

PAGE 37

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

NESARE 2008 awards

To learn more about the 2008 Northeast Sustainable

Research and Education granted projects, go to:

www.uvm.edu/~nesare/news_08awards.html

Use of whole-farm analysis to reduce nutrient losses; improve nutrient cycling, carbon status, and energy use on small dairies in New York State, \$157,822 - Quirine Ketterings, Cornell University, Ithaca NY

Working with four dairy farms, a team of researchers will design indicators for farmers to use in making informed changes that reduce nutrient losses and improve nutrient and farm efficiency. They will work with 75 farms on a mass nutrient balance program and 15 farms will begin implementation of the whole-farm analysis approach.

Increasing farm profitability through agritourism product development and marketing, \$89,563 - Lisa Chase, University of Vermont Extension, Brattleboro VT

140 farmers will receive assistance in deciding whether agritourism is a fit with current farm operations; preparing business and marketing plans; complying with regulations; using media and marketing effectively, and making use of the available technical assistance.

On-farm crop improvement in organic systems and local market partnerships for organic wheat, \$162,845 - Eli Rogosa Kaufman, MOFGA, Unity ME

MOFGA will work with 120 farmers, wheat breeders, extension staff, millers, bakers, and other to consider weed resilience, grain weight per plant, resistance to disease, and ability to thrive under weather extremes.

Beginning farmer business training and education, \$135,630 - Judith Gillan, NESFI, Belchertown MA

Ten service providers will receive a full year of mentoring in “Exploring the Small Farm Dream” to increase their capacity to support entry-level farmers in decision making and farm planning.

Focusing on beginning farmers, \$71,640 - Beth Holtzman, University of Vermont Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Burlington VT

Focus groups will be used to teach 40 agricultural professionals how to respond to the needs of beginning farmers and to train a corps of providers who can develop programming that supports this group.

Sustainable livestock mortality management, \$169,425 - Mark Hutchinson, University of Maine Extension, Waldoboro ME

Extension and NRCS staff will participate in three train-the-

trainer workshops on composting as an alternative for managing dead livestock. The 60 service provider participants will train 500 farmers in composting carcasses.

Production and nutrition of no-till drilling, \$9,315 - Gabe Clark, North New Portland ME

The farmer will provide quantitative and qualitative information about no-till renovation of pastures and hayfields using a pasture plate meter and forage analysis to see what changes in pasture quality can be measured.

Interseeding legume and grain crops with high-oil-content sunflowers, \$9,100 - Dorn Cox, Lee NH

Weed pressure is a problem in high-oil-content sunflower plots that will be used to make biodiesel. The farmer will explore whether yields can be increased by adjusting the seeding dates, and how the costs and performance of buckwheat, hairy vetch, and crimson clover compare in a large-scale application.

Evaluating small grains with silage corn in a double-cropping system on dairy farms, \$4,214 - Bob Foulkes, Claremont NH

The farmer will test a double-cropping system where triticale and spelt are sown in the fall after silage corn is harvested and the grain silage is harvested in the spring. The farmer will evaluate yield and how milking cows respond when small-grain silage is introduced into their diet.

Growing and pressing sunflowers for organic livestock protein supplements, \$9,273 - Mia Morrison, Charleston ME

The farmer will explore whether growing sunflowers, extruding the oil for human consumption, and using the high-protein meal will improve their organic dairy operation through diversification, cost reduction, and improved profits.

Performance of red clover and oilseed radish interseeded into corn, \$9,050 - Ronald Stutzman, Arkport NY

The farmer will test red clover and oilseed radish interseeded in a young corn crop to measure competition with the primary crop, weed control, cover-crop biomass, and corn yield in the year the cover crops are established and the following year.

The viability of growing and grazing high-sugar rye grass in southwestern PA, \$5,215 - George Wherry, Scenery Hill PA

The farmer will evaluate how well high-sugar rye grass germinates and grows in the Northeast, how persistent the stands are, and the grazing preference and performance of sheep pastured on it.

Farmer-built compost turner with hydraulic drive, \$9,472 - Nigel Tudor, Weatherbury Farm, Avella PA

The farmer will develop a cost-effective turner that will use the tractor's remote hydraulics to power hydraulic motors on the turner and achieve the desired ground speed. ♦

Classified Ads

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Looking for organic raw Jersey cow milk for new company based in Newport, R.I. The initial requirement is for 100 gallons a week ramping up to 500 gallons a week in 6 months. The delivery is to one location in Newport. Starting in early Fall 2008. The company will be producing organic dairy products. Contact: Jeff Stewart. Email: jstewart8@sbcglobal.net. Phone: 415 845-4476

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FOR SALE: 1 Guernsey; 2 Holsteins; 1 Jersey cross; 1 Hereford cross. All are from 1st to 3rd lactation. Asking \$1,200 - \$2,000. Animals are being sold because they are unsuitable for hand milking. Contact Rudy Miller, 3700 Chapman Rd, Georgetown, NY 13072.

FOR SALE: 3 bred Jersey heifers from a seasonal dairy; they are outside of our calving window. NOFA certified. Please call for more details 607-591-0562. Jim.

2 certified organic heifer calves. One is 3/4Jersey1/4Normande. One is 1/2 Jersey1/2NormandeXFresian. Born in April. Have had plenty of colostrum and are off to a good start. Out of a closed herd. Asking \$200 each. Located in so. eastern VT on the MA border. email me at maryellen@franklinfarmstore.com or call 802-254-2228.

Certified organic and Demeter certified biodynamic heifer calf. She is 7/8 Jersey, 1/8 Guernsey. Born April 26. Asking \$200 svenstrs@gmail.com or 610-933-1222 David Griffiths, Seven Stars Farm, Inc., 501 West 7 Stars Rd, Phoenixville, PA 19460

NODPA Check-Off Producer Milk Check Assignment Form

I, _____ (please print name on your milk check) request that _____ (name of company that sends your milk check) deduct the sum of : (choose one below)

___ \$0.02/cwt to support the work of NODPA

___ \$0.05/cwt to support the work of NODPA (the amount that has been deducted in the past for national milk marketing but has now been returned to you as an organic producer if you have applied for the exemption.) If you need assistance in applying for the exemption, check here _____

___ \$0.07/cwt (the \$.05 marketing check-off plus \$0.02)

as an assignment from my milk check starting the first day of _____, 200___. The total sum will be paid monthly to NODPA. This agreement may be ended at any time by the producer by sending a written request to their milk buyer with a copy to NODPA. Milk handlers please send payments to:

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA), Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342.

Producer signature: _____ Date: _____

Producer #/member #: _____ # of milking cows: _____

Farm Address: _____

Certified organic Holstein springing heifers for sale. For more details call Bob Smith at Elgin (north of Kingston, ON) : Phone: 613-359-5470.

Nice group of organic dry cows Holstein x Jersey and Holstein. Some springing all due within a month .Price fair need to make room for heifers. Call for more details. Roger Scholten, email: scholtenroger@yahoo.com, phone: 802-545-2522, Middlebury, Vermont

We have young stock, and a few cows for sale, all certified organic by NOFA-NY. Bradley & Kathryn Kent Butterfield Farm Burke, NY 12917 518-483-3542 butterfieldhedgerow@yahoo.com

Certified Organic Heifer & Bull Calves From Well-established, Grass-Intensive Seasonal Dairy. No Grain Genetics, New Zealand Crossbreeds, 12 Year Certified Farm, Closed Herd. Central NY/Northern PA area. Rob Moore, Nichols NY (607)699-7968.

Herd Manager Position

Looking for a herd manager for a pasture based organic dairy farm in the Berkshires, on the border between MA and CT. We milk 250 cows and practice intensive grazing. There is housing available and we are open to the possibility of working with the right applicant to help them to build their own herd of milkingcows or other arrangement that will help someone get started on their own farming business. Enthusiasm and proven desire to work with cows is as important as experience.Please call Morvan at 413-229-6018

Organic Hay For Sale

10 bales 1st cut dry hay 4X4 round bales; 10 bales 2nd cut dry hay; 15 bales 1st cut baleage. Contact Luke Mahoney, Phone: 603-742-4084 or email: mahoney_luke@yahoo.com

100 4x4 bales of 1st cutting dry hay, mix of grass with a some alfalfa and clover. Not tested but probably best for dry cows. Hauling available. Contact me for price and shipping info. Dave Johnson, email: provident@epix.net, phone: 570-324-2285.

Become a Subscribing NODPA Member!

By becoming a subscribing member you will receive NODPA News and help support the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance. NODPA depends on your contributions and donations. If you enjoy this newsletter, visit our web page, and benefit from the education and farmer representation that NODPA has been providing, please show your support by making a generous contribution to our efforts. Note that if you sign up for the NODPA Milk Check- Off, you will be automatically signed up as a NODPA News subscriber.

- ___ \$35 to cover NODPA news
- ___ \$300 to become a Friend
- ___ \$500 to become a Sponsor member
- ___ \$100 to become a supporter of NODPA
- ___ \$1,000 to become a Patron
- ___ \$2,000+ to become a Benefactor

Name: _____
Farm Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

Are you a certified organic dairy producer? Yes No
Number of milking cows: _____
Milk buyer: _____
Are you transitioning to organic? Yes No
If Yes – proposed date of certification _____

Mail this form with a check payable to NODPA to: Ed Maltby, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342. Thank you.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

From the MODPA President

*By Darlene Coehoorn, MODPA President
Rosendale, Wisconsin*

As spring erupts so does the hope in farmers as expectations of the new crop starts to bud. We farm, as always, working thru the days sometimes too focused on the tasks at hand to see past where we are today, yet always remaining optimistic. We go forward at times settling for what we have and struggling to work with it and survive. We feed lower quality feed because it's all that is available and something is better than nothing - always hopeful for better things tomorrow.

As feedstuffs have become tighter and more expensive, we are continuing to struggle and “tighten our belts” as milk prices haven't kept up. We request more and expect better from our processors, but they continue to tell us it can't be done all the while protecting their profit margin. Because we cannot just hold the milk until the market improves, we are forced to continue the struggle or get out. At the same time, when we

About MODPA

The Midwest Organic Dairy Producer Alliance (MODPA) represents organic dairy producers in WI, MN, ND, SD, IA, NE, KS, MO, IL, IN, OH, & MI with the mission “to promote communication and networking for the betterment of all Midwest organic dairy producers and enhance a sustainable farmgate price.” Objectives are:

1. To ensure a fair and sustainable farm gate price.
2. Keep family farms viable for future generations.
3. Promote ethical, ecological and humane farming practices.
4. Networking among producers of all organic commodities.
5. Promote public policy, research and education in support of organic agriculture.

MODPA Board

Wisconsin Darlene Coehoorn President and Treasurer Viewpoint Acres Farm N5878 Hwy C Rosendale, WI 54974 viewpoint@dotnet.com Phone: 920-921-5541	John Kiefer Director S10698 Troy Rd, Sauk City, WI 53583 taofarmer@direcway.com Phone: 608- 544-3702
Jim Greenberg Vice- President EP 3961 Drake Avenue Stratford, WI 54484 greenbfrms@tznet.com Phone: 715-687-8147	Michigan Ed Zimba Zimba Dairy 7995 Mushroom Rd DeFord, MI 48729 zimbadairy@tband.net Phone: 989-872-2680
John Kinsman Secretary E2940 County Road K, La Valle, WI 53941 Phone: 608- 986-3815 Fax: 608-986-2502	Ohio Ernest Martin Director 1720 Crum Rd, Shiloh, OH 44878 Phone and Fax: 419-895-1182

are struggling to source and pay for available feed, our processors are paying transition dollars (taken off our pay price) to convert additional farmers and increase the competition for what little organic feed exists

We really want to see organic grow, but not at the cost of existing farmers – why would one want to transition when those who have gone before cannot afford to continue?

We are at a point in time when we need to have meaningful and measurable organic standards more than ever. We need to work together to ensure we are part of the process to get those standards implemented. We also need to speak with one voice in asking for the dollars necessary to meet production costs plus a reasonable return to the farmer. Those farmers who are fortunate enough to be able to meet their needs at today's prices need to put themselves into the shoes of the young farmer just starting out, or those producers without off-farm income, or the farmer who has experienced crop failure or something else beyond his or her control and is hanging on by the thread. We all know cost of production is a very illusive number and it is unique to each operation, but we can all agree that with today's grain, fuel and input prices we all need more than what we are currently getting paid.

At Viewpoint we hope this spring will bring you crops and prices that go beyond your expectations. ♦

Become a Member of MODPA!

Member dues are \$35 per year, for which you receive our newsletter and become part of our team working for the best interests of all organic dairies.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

Certified Organic Dairy? Yes No # of cows: _____
Transitioning: _____

I wish to support MODPA (check whatever applies):
___ By becoming a state rep or director.
___ By supporting MODPA with a %/cwt check-off.
___ By providing a donation to support the work of MODPA. \$ _____ enclosed.

Please send this form to: Darlene Coehoorn, MODPA Treasurer, N5868, Cty Hwy C, Rosendale, WI 54974

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA)

c/o Ed Maltby
300 Keets Road
Deerfield, MA 01342

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Permit 183
Turners Falls, MA

CALENDAR

Continued from page 36

October 27 & 28, 2008
NODPA's 8th Annual Field Days Event
and Annual Producer Meeting
Holiday Inn, Auburn, NY

Reconnect with friends and find out what is going on in the organic dairy world. The annual producer meeting on Monday evening will be an opportunity for NODPA farmer members to review the previous year's work and set priorities for NODPA work in 2009-2014. Event will also feature a tradeshow, workshops and speakers and lots of opportunity to network and socialize. Contact Ed Maltby, 413-772-0444 or email: emaltby@comcast.net

October 28-30, 2008
Understanding Organics: Livestock Management
and Health Conference
Holiday Inn, Auburn, NY

A continuation of the 2007 Understanding Organics conferences and organized by NOFA-VT and QMPS, this 3-day conference is designed to educate extension personnel, veterinarians, NRCS agents and other professionals working with organic and transitioning livestock producers. For more information, contact Lisa McCrory, lmccrory@together.net, phone: 802-434-4122 or Linda Tikofsky, lg40@cornell.edu, phone: 607-255-8202.



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