

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Access to Pasture Rule:

Win, Lose or Draw for Producers?

By Ed Maltby

The USDA National Organic Program (NOP) released the Proposed Access to Pasture Rule that would tighten the pasture requirements for organic livestock on Friday October 24, 2008. It was everything we had asked for and a lot more that we didn't ask for; responding to areas where the NOP had experienced difficulty in prosecuting non-compliance and adding text suggested in comments and presentations to the NOP.

As expected, the emotional issue of creating rulemaking to define "cows need to be on grass" brought many responses. They came from those that thought the existing rule was good enough if enforced; that continuous improvement should be the guiding principle, not prescriptive language. It came from others that feel that one universal measurement to quantify the consumption of pasture is not possible. There were also many responses supporting the requirements in the proposed rule for quantifiable measurement of consumption of pasture and illustrating how the 30% consumption is already being measured by many producers.

We saw battling action alerts, mass mailings, form letters and media placements that

argued the pasture rule, as written, would be the end of organic dairy family farms, would bankrupt organic dairy pioneers in northern California or, alternatively, was a proposed rule that needed to be improved.

Through the confusion and concerns of overly prescriptive language, unrealistic expectations, lack of time to make considered comments, too much "non pasture" related material and fear of uninformed federal mandates authorized by political appointees, NODPA and FOOD Farmers were successful in providing a thoughtful and interactive process that resulted in a 240 page

document on recommendations for a Final Rule, complete with supporting data.

Background

Fixing the Access to Pasture Rule has been a priority for NODPA since its formation in 2001. We have been advocating for change since 2004 with detailed comments in 2006 in response to the Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR), our formal and unofficial participation at the Pasture Symposium at Penn State in April, 2006, numerous National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meetings and letters to the

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NODPA and FOOD Farmers were successful in providing a thoughtful and interactive process that resulted in a 240 page document on recommendations for a Final Rule, complete with supporting data.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From The NODPA President

Hello everyone,

There's been a lot going on since the annual NODPA meeting last October. The proposed "pasture rule" was introduced, followed by several listening sessions held around the country during the 60 day comment period. Many individuals and various groups have now had their chance to give their opinion about what was proposed by the NOP.

This process has taken up a lot of time from a lot of people. If my memory serves me right, the consensus when this movement started was; 1) that it would be too difficult to monkey with the rule; 2) we should somehow make it clear by putting stronger language in the "guidance document" that goes along with the rule, 3) that this is a pasture based method of production, and was about all we could hope for. Somewhere along the way, due to the determination of people like Kathie Arnold, "the rule" became the target. Well what do you know, now we have a proposed rule sitting in front of us to chew on.

I remember what Richard Mathews said early on: "Be careful what you ask for". I also remember what Kevin Englebert said,, "This is all you asked for,

and more". I didn't realize at the time how right they were.

I talked to Dr. Karreman briefly at the NODPA Annual Meeting, and his comment was "Everybody ought to be happy now". After listening to the comments made at some of the "listening sessions", it didn't seem like ANYONE was happy.

Most people that commented seemed that they were in favor of a rule clarification, but wanted to have it tailor-made to fit their own particular situation. Doesn't really work that way I guess. Also, the way it was explained to me was, that it is possible to have the wording weakened, but it could not be made any stricter after the comment period. Lots of us are going to have to make some adjustments, even after the rule is modified and made more practical. No doubt, there will be some who will decide to exit the program.

Now, when this process is all over, and the rule becomes final, will the processors see fit to compensate their producers appropriately for the added burden that no doubt will be imposed on us producers if we are to follow the new standards?

*Henry Perkins, NODPA President
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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From The NODPA Desk: January 2009

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Happy New Year, may 2009 be more prosperous and less stressful than 2008.

During the last four months, NODPA staff, Board and Representatives have been busy not only with Field Days and the usual NODPA work but also with the long awaited Access to Pasture Rule. A large amount of my time and limited resources have been directed towards shepherding this rule to its publication; ensuring that we facilitated widespread comment from all those that it could affect.

The tightening of the standards around 'access to pasture' has been a priority for my work with NODPA for the last four years. I knew from previous experience that Federal rulemaking is a slow and torturous process, reliant more on who you know than on the value of your ideas. But when rulemaking and organic integrity clash over something as simple, yet complex, as measuring how much pasture organic ruminant livestock need to consume, a timeline for publication seemed to be a constantly moving target.

NODPA had been preparing for the publication of this proposed rule for many years; conducting surveys, organizing conference calls, and facilitating in-person meetings

to ensure that we were representing what producers wanted. As WODPA and MODPA became more active, NODPA facilitated discussions that assisted the formation of FOOD Farmers. This included providing the administrative support needed to ensure that FOOD Farmers was the voice of producers in Washington DC, was involved with consumer and sustainable agricultural groups, and was the point of contact for the media regarding questions about organic dairy.

NODPA's work in building relationships and participating in industry-wide discussions on organic dairy issues ensured that we were able to respond immediately to the NOP's request to hold the first of five Proposed Pasture Rule Listening Sessions at the 2008 NODPA Field Days.

Thanks to the good work of Lisa McCrory, Sarah Flack, Pat Kane, Emily Brown Rosen and Kathie Arnold, we provided a comparison between existing and new language for the NODPA meeting, and that document became the basis for the FOOD Farmers recommendations and comments. While we were prepared for some of the recommendations in the proposed rule, we were surprised by others. But I was prepared to follow up on in-person meetings and immediately hold regular cross-country conference calls with producers to assess the

implications of different recommendations.

NODPA's leadership and commitment to administering a transparent and inclusive process, to sharing all of the drafts of our recommendations with other organizations like Organic Trade Association (OTA), Accredited Certifier Association and the Cornucopia Institute, encouraged others to use the broad strokes of our recommendations while introducing their own particular perspective. While some saw the 60-day comment period as a barrier to participation, we saw it as an opportunity for intensive work on an issue that had

been a prominent part of discussions within the organic community for over four years.

My long days working on organizing a coherent yet practical national response reminded me of the lambing seasons when we had 500 ewes lambing in 60 days; sorting the twins and triplets into separate "jugs," and assisting the ewe to give birth to multiple lambs when all I could feel with my hands were eight legs. Teamwork, common sense, hard work and compartmentalizing each challenge so it didn't slow progress usually gave us the result we needed.

The process mostly showed the power of an organic community working together, without resorting to emotional media outbursts, although there were some organizations and farm groups that could not break the habit! The willingness of Barbara Robinson to allocate time and resources for Richard Mathews to hold the Listening Sessions across the country, and Richard's willingness to extend his stay to meet with producers and others was unprecedented and, hopefully, set a

good precedent for the future. The open and inclusive meetings sponsored by OTA, National Organic Coalition and the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture (now merged with the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition) allowed many to voice their perspectives and long held views. Our many FOOD Farmers conference calls, with at least 20 producers from all parts of the country on any one call, brought to the table a high level of commitment, production knowledge and ability to examine the farming details that only producers have to contend with. The email and telephone work done (in between the late evening conference calls) by Kathie Arnold, Arden Nelson, Ward Burroughs, Cindy Daley, Bruce Drinkman, Emily Brown-Rosen and many others reviewing the 30 plus different drafts was intense. I found that I had received another title, "policy wonk" for my knowledge of the rule and attention to the minute details! This type of collaborative work does not lend itself to identifying any one person, but Kathie Arnold yet again rose to the occasion with her hard work, knowledgeable insights, wonderful editor's eye and quest for more knowledge.

Producers need to have a national, independent and effective voice on the future integrity and sustainability of organic dairy. NODPA's work on this Proposed Pasture Rule has demonstrated its future potential as a steadfast, respected and representative voice for organic dairy producers. ♦

Thank you for supporting our efforts with your contributions and membership subscriptions. Newsletter/membership subscription renewals and a request for donations will be mailed out in the next few weeks; later than planned but we have been busy!! We are not a 501C3 charity so the deduction is not allowed against tax, but as a trade organization any subscription or donation can be a business expense (and we all have plenty of those).

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Raising Calves The Old, Modern Way

Learning from the “old” as we go into the future

By Steffen Schneider

All boundaries are arbitrary, We invent them, and then ironically, we find ourselves trapped within them. (Peter Senge)

For many years, visitors to Hawthorne Valley Farm have seen our bull and herd of sixty cows peacefully grazing or ruminating on one of the many pastures. Last summer, though, they also saw a number of little calves nursing and playing among the cows. The image was certainly idyllic, as visitors, residents, and customers acknowledged with their remarks and questions. But it belied a dramatic shift in our calf-rearing practices. For the first time in twenty years, we had decided to raise our calves on their mothers. I'd like to tell you why.

It is with a certain sense of trepidation that I record these thoughts and experiences. It is, well, a bit unpleasant to admit that we now regarded our calf-raising techniques of the past twenty-plus years as fundamentally flawed. And, honestly, it is a bit embarrassing that the “new” system we chose to adopt is as old as Nature herself. However, I'll let my pride take a back seat to the truth and to the enhanced quality of life for our animals this new practice has brought.

Under current and common practices, calves on most dairy farms are taken away from their mothers when they are very young, often at the age of just one day. This is generally true whether the farm is a biodynamic, organic, or conventional dairy system. The primary differences amongst the three are that biodynamic and organic calves are fed with organic milk, either fresh or in the form of organic milk replacer (conventional cows are fed non-organically), and pasture plays a much bigger role on biodynamic and organic farms once the calves reach a certain age. Still, despite

the patently obvious fact that while cows produce milk for the same reason that humans do—to nourish their young—most calves in this country never actually enjoy that nourishment directly from their mothers.

The reasons are plentiful and are at once economic, logistical, and social. Economically, modern farmers face intense economic pressures, so they are reluctant to lose any of the milk produced by the lactating cow, since that is the saleable commodity. To put it bluntly, it makes economic sense to feed calves replacer instead of whole milk from their mothers. Logistically, cows on many modern farms are intensively confined in large numbers, leaving them unable to fulfill their most basic desires, such as caring for and nursing of their own calves. Further, there are certain widespread preconceptions that can discourage farmers from raising calves on their mother: that it will lead to chaotic scenes of calves running amok, cows not letting down their milk, and undue stress on the udder. Socially, it could be that most decision makers are men, who may not necessarily possess a strong intuitive understanding of or respect for the natural, maternal processes in nature. Still, while these are perfectly understandable reasons for separating calves from their mothers, they completely disregard the fact that the only reason the milk is produced in the first place is to feed the young calf.

Two researchers were instrumental in influencing our decision to raise our calves on their mother: Darrell Emmick (NYS Grazing Land Management Specialist, NRCS), who presented at a workshop I attended, and Fred Provenza, an animal behavior specialist at Utah State, where Emmick just finished his Ph.D. work. Provenza is a range scientist who has been researching and teaching animal behavior for a quarter of a century. (For more details on his work, please refer to www.behave.org).

What resonated most from Emmick's presentation was his conclusion that young ruminants' behavior is very much influenced by their experiences alongside their mothers, especially during the first six to eight weeks of their lives. This was of particular interest because, in an intensive grazing system like ours, the animals have much more freedom of choice. Many of our pastures are either

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

What Obama Means for Organic

By Samuel Fromartz

In the weeks during the transition, President-Elect Obama has made it clear he will govern from the “pragmatic” center.

Despite rumblings on the progressive front that his “change” mantra is falling short, he seems to be set on building coalitions so that policy changes will be achievable.

In the agricultural realm, there is no reason to believe this measured approach will differ.

As Kim Severson of the New York Times wrote this past December: “Although Mr. Obama has proposed changes in the nation's farm and rural policies and emphasizes the connection between diet and health, there is nothing to indicate he has a special interest in a radical makeover of the way food is grown and sold.”

This was clear in his appointment Tom Vilsack, the former governor of Iowa, as agriculture secretary. Vilsack has been supportive of genetic engineering and a proponent of ethanol fuels – two issues that raised red flags with sustainable advocates, organic farmers and even hunger activists worried about what rising corn demand would do to the price of food.

Still, it would be virtually impossible to imagine that a governor from Iowa would clamp down on GMO seed or ethanol fuels, given how central they are to the state's conventional farmers.

Still, there were hints among those who have worked with Vilsack that he has an open mind to alternative viewpoints.

Denise O'Brien, an organic farmer who ran for secretary of agriculture in Iowa in 2006, bested her Democratic opponent in the primary. As a result, Vilsack backed her in the election.

Sadly, she lost, but in public comments she had this to say about Vilsack.

“Over the years the Governor's office was open for a number of meetings relating to trade, prior to the Seattle WTO meeting; for meetings to solve the farm financial crisis that emerges every few years; and for meetings developing food policy,” she wrote. “During Vilsack's administration we were in his office more than all of the past twenty years of farm activism.”

She went on to describe him as a centrist in the mold of Bill Clinton (and perhaps Obama, too).

“The best thing to do was to keep talking and to keep exposing the governor to a more progressive line of thinking,” she wrote. “We resigned ourselves to the fact that our expectations of a

Democratic Governor were exactly that, expectations and that there was still a lot of work to do.”

The approach might be applied to Obama, who clearly has an open mind on food and farming issues. He is well-versed in the arguments writers like Michael Pollan has made on the connection between farm subsidies, corn and soybean production, cheap processed food and obesity.

But coming from Illinois, where he was also a strong supporter of ethanol, he has shown few signs that he is willing to bring his “change mantra” to these central pillars of industrial agriculture.

One area that could effect agriculture is Obama's global warming policy, if carbon emissions are taxed or if they must be offset.

Farmers, especially organic farmers, are a source of carbon sequestration, since plants soak up carbon dioxide and turn it into organic matter.

But given the uncertainty over a carbon emissions laws, it's impossible to say how that will play out in agricultural policy.

As for organic food, it's hard to see any immediate and substantive change in policy.

Although sustainable advocates are pushing for a symbolic organic garden on the White House lawn, it's unlikely that will loosen purse strings or ease regulatory battles over at the USDA.

If there is one thing the organic community has learned, the regulatory process is a slow one that takes an extreme commitment of time and resources to get things done.

As in the past, the strongest driver of organic farm policy will continue to be the market itself. If more people buy organic food, as they have been, the profile and political importance of the sector will grow in Washington (and perhaps a White House garden would further that cause).

In short, the market will be the carrot that leads the political horse, not the other way around.

As sales of organic food grow, then policy makers like Vilsack will pay increasing attention – and perhaps, the especially tough regulatory issues will get the attention they deserve.

And one way to make that happen would be to have an organic adviser in the secretary's office, serving as a liaison to the National Organic Standards Board, the National Organic Program, the organic food industry – and yes, to farmers, too.

Samuel Fromartz is the author of Organic Inc.; Natural Foods and How They Grew (Harcourt 2006). His web-site is at www.fromartz.com and he blogs at www.chewswise.com



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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Access to Pasture: Win, Lose or Draw?

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USDA, plus teaming up with the National Organic Coalition and Horizon Organic to advocate directly to the USDA and different federal agencies during 2008.

In March 2007, the Federation Of Organic Dairy Farmers (FOOD Farmers) was formed and rapidly became the national voice for organic dairy producers with members in the midwest and on the western, and eastern seaboard agreeing on joint recommendations in a fair and equitable way to solve the massive inequities that the existing interpretation was causing for organic dairies nationwide. [Food Farmers, The Federation Of Organic Dairy Farmers, is an umbrella group for the three regional organic dairy farmer organizations: Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA), Midwest Organic Dairy Producers Association (MODPA), and Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA).]

When the Proposed Pasture Rule was published, NODPA and FOOD Farmers were prepared to organize not only a response by organic dairy producers, but also to work with the National Organic Coalition, Organic Trade Association, Accredited Certifiers Association and many other organizations and individuals to share ideas and concerns as well as coordinate wherever possible on the recommendations to the NOP. We were able to provide the leadership and coordination to move forward with a positive, timely, and inclusive process.

Part of the success of this process was the willingness of the USDA NOP to respond to requests from FOOD Farmers, processors and others to hold listening sessions across the country. At these listening sessions, the USDA NOP gathered comments and explained the rationale behind the proposed rule.

When you add direct mailings to producers; localized meetings
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Commentary from around the country on the pasture rule

What Legacy Do You Want To Leave?

As I look back over the past two months of working on the proposed pasture rule, I see how a very diverse group of people and farmers can truly make progress working together for a common cause for the betterment of all of us. When we put our minds to it, we can be at the top of our game in whatever we want to accomplish.

I feel that we need to continue to this action as a group to push forward in other areas that will affect our future, not just tomorrow but for years to come. We as farmers have a voice that needs to be heard and I for one am going to use mine. Looking to the future, I see several things that we as farmers need to address. Among them is the need for a fair and sustainable price. If we do not step up to the plate now, I doubt that we will have a long-term future for ourselves let alone the future generations of farmers.

This is a frightening thought to me that we may be setting ourselves up as the last generation of truly family farmers to work the land. I believe that the only chance we have for the future generations of farmers is going to be through organic agriculture. The organic community is the one community that is receptive to seeing a farmer make a living at working the land.

As I look around the area that I live in, I do not see any young people that are interested in making a living from farming. None of my children are interested, and who can blame them when all they see is working seven days a week for little to no pay. I know I am not alone in having all of the children leave the farm, from talking to other farmers that I know and deal with. Presently there is no incentive for a young person to want to get

involved in farming for a career and I think it is going to take more than throwing some money at them to get them back.

We all know there is more to life than money, although it is a good place to start. Do we want to be known as the last generation of farmers or do we want to be known as the generation that finally stood up and said that it is time for the farmer to get the respect and credit he or she deserves. I for one think it is time for all of us to stand up and demand what we as farmers are entitled to: 1) A fair and decent price for our milk and 2) the ability to help tomorrows farmers have the opportunity to succeed in this world, not just as farmers but also people to be respected and appreciated for what they do - after all we do help to feed a growing world.

Public opinion in this day and age wants to belittle farming, but we need to be proud of what we do. One of the surest ways I know of to make this happen is through your local ODP and through the FOOD Farmers group. Please take the time to support these organizations if at all possible. At the very least make sure that you use the voice that you have to let others know that you are going to take responsibility for seeing to it that tomorrow is a better day for the future farmers. I for one am going to use mine. We owe it to the next generation.

Which brings me back to my question : What Will Our Legacy Be?

Bruce Drinkman

Organic Dairy Producer
MODPA Board Member
Glenwood City, WI

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Raising Calves The Old, Modern Way

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natural landscapes or, at least, unique plant communities with a broad spectrum of plant matter. As such, they are simultaneously nutrition centers and pharmacies, with vast arrays of primary (nutrient) and secondary (pharmaceutical) compounds vital in the nutrition and health of plants, herbivores, and people. While all plants contain secondary compounds, such as alkaloids, glycosides, or phyto-estrogens, in a diverse environment like ours, it is more crucial for the animal to make the right choices about what they eat. Calves being with their mothers helps cultivate this, as they inherit this wisdom from the cows. As Paracelsus said, "All substances are poisons: there is none which is not a poison. The right dose differentiates a poison and a remedy."

In addition to allowing our calves to receive the nourishment their mothers created for them, we also saw the obvious practical benefit of the calves being able to learn responsible and sound grazing habits directly from their mothers.

Heretofore, the mother and calf were left together for three days. After separation, the calves were put in groups of three or four and were fed whole milk twice daily, up to about one gallon per calf per feeding. Their diet also included hay and a bit of grain, as well as access to fresh water. The young stock were weaned at eight to ten weeks old. Now let me describe the changes we implemented at Hawthorne Valley from a practical point of view. The new system that has been in place since May of 2007 looks as follows:

After the cow gives birth, the calf stays with her for the first five days. The pair spends the days on a specific "maternity pasture," alone or with other mother/calf pairs, and these pairs spend the nights together in a pen. The nursing cow enters the milking string as usual. Once calf and mother have bonded well (three to five days), the mothers and their babies join the rest of the herd when it is out in the day pasture. When the herd returns for the evening

milking, the nursing calves are separated out (they learn amazingly quickly) and contentedly spend the night together in a bedded pen with hay and water. The cows, including all the new mothers, spend the night out to pasture (without the little ones) after the evening milking. After the subsequent morning milking, the babies rejoin their mothers and the herd and the cycle repeats itself. Calves are weaned between eight and ten weeks of age. We usually have between fifty-four and sixty adult animals grazing, and so far the maximum number of calves has been eight. It is important to note here that our cows calve year round.

Cows, like all animals, have a strong social structure in which individual animals assume certain roles. There have been no problems with introducing the calves into this order. To the contrary, this is much more a natural social structure.

... [A]n animal that has never had the opportunity to be outdoors, will be very different from an animal that can roam freely and use its senses—its sense of smell for instance—to seek out the cosmic forces.

—Rudolf Steiner Eighth lecture, Agriculture Course

Here now are our observations since we moved to the new system. By and large they have all been positive:

- The calves grow at an astonishing rate, seemingly twice as fast as in the old system. Their body/pheno type is quite different from what we saw before. Their limbs are very developed, and they have extraordinary strength and awake senses. They generally stay close to their mothers, but after they're done feeding, they join the other young ones and usually form a kind of kindergarten in the center of the herd. It is a wonderful sight to see the calves play and run among the more sedentary cows.
- Health concerns have been a non-issue so far. This certainly seems logical, especially if we take into account the importance of the senses in general, development and nutrition in particular. The calves love to use their limbs to the fullest and

continued on page 15

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A message from the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Dehorning Dairy Cattle With Genetics

by Fred Hendricks

Looking at the economic advantages with polled dairy cattle

Incorporating polled genetics in your breeding program results in fewer calves that require dehorning. While this fact may seem elementary, few dairy farmers contemplate the economic advantages. Most often farmers respond with "dehorning is part of our routine operation so it's not an important factor."

Breeding a typical dairy herd to polled bulls results in a minimum 50% hornless calves. In just one generation an entire herd can become half polled. The polled gene is dominant and needs to be present in only one parent.

While dehorning may be a routine operation on most dairy farms, there are significant costs associated with dehorning. These costs vary a great deal depending on the size of dairy,

personnel employed to do the dehorning and equipment utilized. The most difficult cost to ascertain is the setback a calf goes through resulting from dehorning.

Reid Hoover, Hoover Farms, Lebanon, Pennsylvania indicates his dehorning costs to be \$10.00 per head on young calves and up to \$20.00 per head on older calves. "Equipment and labor are the costs involved. When they are older it sets them back and you lose growth and efficiency," Hoover stated.

Hoover further states, "These costs and the time factor to do this job well have made me think about using polled bulls. We have used a few and have liked the results with polled calves."

Enhanced Efficiency - Unpleasant Job

Lonny Ward, with Brigham Creek Dairy, Elberta, Utah tags their dehorning costs at about \$2.00 per head. "This figure does not calculate a cost for the setback losses because there is too much variation in those costs"

Ward points out that polled cattle enhance their dairy's efficiency. "To survive in the dairy industry today you have to be as efficient as possible. Any time you can eliminate a cost without a negative consequence you are better off. Dehorning is an area where improvements can be made genetically to eliminate labor cost, as well as stress on the animal. If we can integrate the polled gene into the Holsteins without losing in other areas, we will have taken a step forward."

Iv-Ann Holsteins, Minister, Ohio indicates the setback to their calves is their biggest cost. "In our opinion the cost of dehorning

is very hard to quantify since we do our own work. However, we think our biggest cost is the setback in the growth of the animal caused by the dehorning trauma."

Ivo Osterloh, owner of Iv-Ann Holsteins states "The cost is not the only factor we consider in our use of polled bulls. Dehorning is not a very pleasant job - and very often it is delayed too long."

Origin of Polled Dairy Cattle

Polled Holstein Historian, Dr. Larry Specht, Professor Emeritus of Penn State University reports "The history books tell us that the ancestors of our modern cattle did not have horns and that mutations must have occurred that gave rise to horns. Horned cattle proliferated and it is now thought that the occurrence of polled animals in modern times is the result of another mutation back to the hornless condition." Horns served a useful purpose prior to cattle being domesticated. They were a defense mechanism and served to survive the species. In some countries farmers tether their cattle by the horns. In modern dairy farm operations, horns have no purpose, therefore the practice of dehorning.

While it is not clear when polled cattle began appearing in U.S. dairy cattle, Dr. Specht found the earliest recorded polled bull in the Holstein Association herdbook to be born 04/22/1889. Various breeders propagated the polled gene over time to where the polled gene now occurs far more frequently in today's dairy cattle herds.

Current Polled Holsteins

In his Bouic Polled Holstein Newsletter, Frank Bouic reports "There are over numerous polled Holstein bulls in A.I., including proven bulls, sires-in-waiting and sample sires." Mr. Bouic further reports, "The genetics available in the polled segment of the Holstein breed is improving rapidly, in some cases approaching the best of the Holstein breed. The Burket-Falls, East Freedom, Pennsylvania (Dave Burket Family) and Hickorymea, Airville, Pennsylvania (T. Edwin Johnson Family) herds in particular have contributed to the genetic supply of A.I. bulls."

The polled gene has been present in Red and White dairy cattle for many years; therefore the Red & White population has a significantly larger selection of polled red and red carrier bulls. Currently the most prominent polled Holstein bull in the world is Aggravation Lawn Boy P-Red, bred by Bob Feldwisch of New Knoxville, Ohio.

Lawn Boy is available through Select Sires of Plain City, Ohio.

Genome research is underway to identify whether a polled Holstein animal is heterozygous or homozygous. As this technology becomes available, young bulls progeny tested via A.I. will no doubt increase dramatically.

Second generation polled Jersey breeder, Paul Chittenden, Dutch Hollow Farm, Schodack Landing, New York indicates that his father, Stanley Chittenden, bought his first polled Jersey in 1952. The Chittendens have been leading breeders of polled Jersey cattle ever since. The Dutch Hollow prefix can be found on several proven sires in A.I. The polled gene is also well documented in the Ayrshire, Brown Swiss and Milking Shorthorn breeds.

Polled gene action

The following exhibits demonstrate two examples of the polled gene action (P = polled or dominant / h = horned or recessive).

Exhibit A

Homozygous polled parent

		P	P	
	P	Pp	Pp	Results: 100% polled offspring (Pp heterozygous)
Homozygous horned parent	P	Pp	Pp	

Exhibit B

Heterozygous polled parent

		P	p	
	P	Pp	Pp	Results: 50% polled offspring (Pp heterozygous) 50% horned offspring (pp homozygous)
Homozygous horned parent	P	Pp	Pp	

Exhibit A shows one parent with two polled genes (homozygous)

continued on page 37



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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

MILK FEVER

"It's all about internal mineral balance!"

By Dr. Richard Holliday

One of your best cows calved a couple of days ago and now she's down, laying on her sternum, head laying along her side with a kink in her neck. Her eyes are glazed over, pupils dilated and she can't get up. If observed earlier she may have been off feed and exhibiting muscle tremors and unsteady gait. This is an easy diagnosis for most dairymen to make ... milk fever, parturient paresis (calving paralysis) or hypocalcemia (hypo (low) calcemia (calcium)). Whatever term you use, if untreated this condition can result in death in a few hours.

I believe that almost all dairy cows suffer from some degree of low blood calcium at calving time. Most are subclinical in nature and do not show the classical signs described above. Calcium is necessary for all muscle function. Even moderately low blood calcium can predispose to calving problems, retained placentas, uterine prolapse and reduced reproductive performance as well as digestive and metabolic disorders such as displaced abomasum and ketosis. Low blood calcium affects the immune response and may be a factor in mastitis, metritis and other infections.

Incidences of this condition may vary from 3% to as high as 30% in some herds. Estimated profit loss from lost production, death loss, and veterinary costs associated with clinical cases of milk fever range as high as \$225.00 for each episode and the losses from subclinical milk fever may be even higher but more difficult to measure. Some old-timers say that if a cow 'yawns' when you pinch her withers it indicates low blood calcium. Hmmm?

The standard treatment for this emergency is an electrolyte solution containing calcium and administered intravenously, subcutaneously or intraperitoneally. If the animal does not respond, a solution containing magnesium and phosphorus along with calcium may be indicated. In early cases or as a preventative in high risk cows, liquid calcium or calcium chloride gels given orally may be beneficial. (Always check with your certifier.)

Different authorities cite different causes for milk fever. In the past, excess calcium was considered the culprit and limiting calcium levels in the dry cow ration was the standard recommendation. Some blame the high potassium in legumes and some grasses caused by inappropriate fertilizer practices. Low calcium, high calcium, high potassium, low phosphorus, low or high Vitamin D, low magnesium, reduced mineral adsorption if rumen pH is over 6.8 to 7.2, water pH over 8.5 have all been implicated at one time or another. I guess you can just take your pick. In truth, all these factors play a part and the common denominator is a "mineral imbalance". While mineral balance is important to animal health at any time it is especially critical for the dairy cow at calving time.

During the dry cow period and especially in the last 3 weeks before calving, if the Ca/P ration is 1:1 or even higher in Ca there is a relative deficiency of phosphorus. To compensate for this the body

sets-up to reject calcium and to absorb phosphorus. After calving, it takes 72 hours for the metabolism to readjust to absorb adequate amounts of Calcium.

As the cow approaches calving large amounts of calcium are drained from the blood reserve to form colostrum (high in calcium) and to begin milk production. At calving, the sudden increased demand for calcium by the mammary gland depletes blood calcium faster than it can be replenished from other body reserves and thus sets the stage for hypocalcemia.

The key to prevention of milk fever is management of the close-up dry cow.

1. All health begins in the soil. Strive for crops grown on highly mineralized, high organic matter soils that are free from residues of insecticides, herbicides and GMO sources.
2. Feed a high forage-low grain ration. A cow is a ruminant, don't feed her like a hog. Avoid alfalfa and other feeds or forages that are high in calcium and potassium.
3. Feed an enzyme product with good levels of phytase to release the naturally chelated minerals already present in your feeds. Minerals from this source are much more available than minerals from ground up rocks added to the ration. This not only benefits the health of your animals but also saves money by the more efficient utilization of home grown feedstuffs.
4. Allow your animals to adjust their own mineral needs by providing individually and free choice a highly available source of phosphorus (monosodium phosphate) along with sources of calcium, magnesium, potassium and trace minerals. Dicalcium phosphate is not suitable for this purpose because of its high ratio of calcium to phosphorus. Monosodium phosphate is the most expensive source and not generally used in the feed industry. The quality of ingredients used can vary greatly. Check labels, all minerals are not the same. Organically certified commercial products that meet these criteria are available.

Milk fever is not a disease but only the clinical expression of a mineral imbalance at a period of physiological stress. While the final expression of milk fever is caused by low blood calcium the predisposing cause is either low phosphorus in the ration or sources of phosphorus that are relatively unavailable. What an animal actually absorbs into its system is the only thing that counts.

It's all about internal mineral balance!

DISCLAIMER: The information provided herein is for educational purposes only. The author and publisher have no control over the use, misuse of applicability of this information to your situation and thus assume no liability. Always consult your veterinarian or other licensed health professional before making any changes in animal health management. If applicable, always obtain prior approval from your organic certifier before using any products or procedures discussed or recommended on this site.

Dr Holliday received his DVM degree from the University of Missouri in 1959 and conducted a private mixed practice in NW Missouri for 25 years. He is currently the Senior Veterinary Consultant for Helfter Feeds, Inc, of Osco, Illinois.

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RESEARCH & EDUCATION

GRANT REVIEWERS NEEDED!

What sustainable agriculture programs need grant reviewers with sustainable agriculture expertise?

- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) (2008 Farm Bill successor to NRI and IFAFS)
- Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)
- Farmer's Market Promotion Program (FMPP)
- Integrated Organic Program (IOP) (Includes the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative and the Organic Transitions Research Program)
- Value-added Agricultural Market Development Program (VAPG)

Why be a grant reviewer?

- Bring sustainable agriculture expertise to the review process: Given the highly technical nature of many of the applications, the quality of the peer review greatly depends on the appropriate matching of the subject matter of an application with the technical expertise of a potential reviewer. Without grant reviewers with specific expertise in sustainable agriculture, some of the proposals may not be recognized for their worth.
- Ensure the most critical and important projects are funded: Each program receives far more applications than there is funding for. Grant reviewers can see to it that the most important projects are prioritized for funding.
- Ensure the integrity and future success of the program: Competitive grant programs that fund projects that have a high degree of success and impact are more likely to be supported by Congress and the public in the future. As a result, the continued success of each competitive grant program is dependent upon grant reviewers who can recognize and recommend the highest quality projects with the most potential for success.

What is required of a grant reviewer?

Reviewers must be active/have expertise in research, education or extension/outreach relevant to the program. If selected as a grant reviewer s/he must participate in the following:

1. Read and submit written comments on grant proposals – A grant reviewer is typically assigned 12 to 20 proposals for which they must submit written reviews electronically.
2. Participate in a panel review meeting – Grant reviewers for AFRI, BFRDP, and IOP must attend a 2-4 day meeting (usually held in Washington, DC) with other grant review panelists to rank and recommend which proposals receive

funding. Expenses for traveling to DC are reimbursed. At the meeting, the grant reviewer provides an oral review of the proposals s/he was assigned to review. Panel review meetings are not held for VAPG and it is unknown whether one will be held for FMPP. Ad hoc reviewers selected to review 2 or 3 proposals do not need to attend a panel review meeting.

Note: Typically grant reviewers cannot submit an application to the program in which they've agreed to serve. If this is cause for concern, check with the respective National Program Leader.

How does one sign-up to be a Grant Reviewer?

New, past, or current grant reviewers should contact the National Program Leader for the program of interest. Contact information for the National Program Leaders is provided on the following page.

NATIONAL PROGRAM LEADER CONTACT INFORMATION

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)

Each AFRI national program area has its own program leader. The program leaders and their contact information will be available in each year's RFA. Below is contact information for some of the national programs:

The contact for the Managed Ecosystems program is Diana Jerkins, djerkins@csrees.usda.gov, 202-401-6996.

The contact for the Markets and Trade, Small and Medium Sized Farm Prosperity, and Rural Development programs is Siva Sureshwaran, ssureshwaran@csrees.usda.gov, 202-720-7536.

The contact for the Water and Watersheds program is Mary Ann Rozum, mrozum@csrees.usda.gov, 202-401-4533.

The contact for the Global Change programs and for the Soil Processes program is Nancy Cavallaro, ncavallaro@csrees.usda.gov, 202-401-5176.

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Raising Calves the Old, Modern Way

continued from page 8

- and must rely on their senses early on. They also begin learning from their mothers immediately. They imitate their mother and can be observed nibbling on plants very early on. All these factors most certainly will contribute to a healthier animal.
- There are also real time savings in not having to bottle or bucket feed the calves. Some of that saved time is off-set by separating the nurse calves in the afternoon.
- Particularly notable have been the positive changes to herd dynamics, which is of greater import on a biodynamic farm, where the herd serves as the heart organ, than on a conventional farm. Only now, with the calves being part of it, does the herd seem to be complete and fully rounded. Maternal behavior is increased, as several cows, not only the mothers, keep an active eye on the calves. A lot more care-taking behavior can be observed. (This happens in the wild as well: wolves, coyotes, and elephants are well known for the packs' females watching over the young.) The whole herd seems more settled. Amazingly, we also saw our herd sire discipline a young one as it was holding up traffic in a lane. In the future, the herd being with all its rhythms and dynamics might also benefit from the fact that the calves were part of it early on.

On the other side of the ledger, here are some challenges that arise, and recommendations for overcoming these obstacles:



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- The calves are getting more wily. While they are not exceedingly wild, they definitely are more wary. It is a little harder to collect them (it has been very helpful to us to issue a neck collar to all the nursing calves), but they still are approachable. It is certainly easier to catch bottle-fed calves. However, with the right setup and consistent handling, the suckling calves are quite manageable. In terms of fencing needs, I would recommend two- or three-strand high-tensile wire as perimeter fencing.
- The weaning process can be more of a challenge, as the much tighter mother/calf bond needs to be severed. In our experience to date, though, the stressful period lasts only one to two days. The weaning would be easier if mother and calf could be out of eye- and ear-shot from one another. Once the animals are weaned, it might be a good practice to consciously establish the relationship to humans, since that did not happen as much during the nursing phase.
- One main concern is, obviously, the loss of valuable milk production. There certainly will be less milk in the bulk tank, although the exact amount is hard to determine as the calves' needs change with age. For us, the nursing mothers often are quite empty during the afternoon milking, but then in the morning milking, they have full udders. (We milk the mothers out fully.) One interesting consideration is the fact that the milk gland excretes milk continuously, so maybe there is some kind of off-set when the calf empties it frequently. While the loss in milk has an immediate negative economic effect, this could be more than balanced out with positive long-term benefits, such as increased health and better and more efficient grazing behavior, as well as calmer and more content cows.

It is important to remember that this method is still new for us. A more comprehensive evaluation will be possible once these animals enter the milking herd. Outstanding questions include: Do they seem to be more efficient and productive grazers? Are they as tame and calm as other first calf heifers? How is their overall health? How strong is their mothering instinct? How healthy are their calves? How is their milk production?

So far, the benefits have been very encouraging, in line with other farmers who have implemented this system with success, and we will continue this management method. At Hawthorne Valley, the outpouring of support and positive comments from customers, visitors, and passers-by when they see the calves romping out on the pastures, amidst the rest of the herd, have been overwhelming. In the larger context, introducing suckling systems on dairy farms can play an important role in living up to the image that the organic/biodynamic sector has set out for itself: sound, safe, and animal-friendly farming methods resulting in high quality food.

We will keep you posted, but do not hesitate to inquire.

Reprinted with permission from Biodynamic Farming And Gardening Association Newsletter, Winter 2008 issue. www.biodynamics.com, phone:(888) 516-7797.



Hollands Dairy, Klamath Falls, OR

Horizon Organic joins with the Federation of Organic Dairy Farmers in support of regulatory changes to require all dairy cows be raised organically from the last third of gestation.

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Get Step-by-Step Organic Farm Plan Help in New Workbook

Ohio Ag Connection - 12/18/2008

Transitioning to organic farming? Already switched, but needing to update your farm plan? Get step-by-step help in the Organic Whole Farm Planning Workbook (8.5 by 11 in., 108 pp., coil-bound), just released by Ohio State University's Organic Food and Farming Education and Research (OFFER) Program.

The new book serves as a companion volume to OFFER's A Transition Guide to Certified Organic Crop Management (8.5 by 11 in., 74 pp., paperback), which came out earlier this year.

Deb Stinner, an OFFER scientist and the program's administrative coordinator, said the workbook further supports the transition process by guiding the user through developing a holistic transition plan and producing a completed organic farm plan as required by certifying agencies.

"Evaluating Your Current Farm Operation" (history, mapping, climate, soil), "Defining Your Goal" (based on Alan Savory's "Holistic Management" approach), "Writing Your Transition

Plan" and "Pulling It All Together" (the importance of integration, monitoring and record-keeping) are the book's four chapters.

There are questions to answer, conditions to describe, factors to rate and records to start keeping -- all with plenty of space provided to do it -- plus sample certification forms, neighbor notification letters and more.

The author is Margaret Frericks Huelsman, who also wrote the Transition Guide. She formerly was program manager of Ohio State's Integrated Pest Management Program and holds a doctorate in environmental science from Ohio State.

"The workbook is designed to be user-friendly," Stinner said. "It's coil-bound so it's easy to write in. There's an extensive list of resources at the end.

"(The workbook is) targeted at transitional farmers," she noted. "But it can also be a valuable tool for existing organic farmers who are considering adding a new enterprise to their operation or who need to submit an updated farm plan."

Order Organic Whole Farm Planning Workbook, \$20, and Transition Guide to Certified Organic Crop Management, \$15, from OFFER, 201 Thorne Hall, OSU/OARDC, 1680 Madison Ave., Wooster, OH 44691. Make checks payable to OSU/OFFER

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Access to Pasture

continued from page 6

sponsored by producer, processor, certifier and other groups; articles in both organic and conventional farming newspapers and newsletters; numerous cross country conference calls and web based discussions; there was every opportunity for producers to learn about the proposed rule and to participate in the process. All of these opportunities to digest and comment on the proposed rule resulted in the many recommendations submitted by organizations and individuals.

For most consumer groups there was no need for in depth discussion as they have been advocating for 'access to pasture' standards for many years. They welcomed the proposed rule and were very willing to adopt the FOOD Farmers recommendations for changes so long as the quantifiable measurement for consumption of pasture was not diluted and there was no chance of allowing organic feedlots or CAFO's. The terms 'feedlot' and 'CAFO' have become emotional touchstones for consumer groups who naturally oppose any long term confinement of organic livestock during the grazing season.

The Result

The last issue of the NODPA News covered the proposed rule in detail, highlighting the proposed changes and giving our initial opinion on where changes were needed. As a result of many conference calls across the country and coordination with numerous certifiers, producer, trade and consumer organizations, we developed clear and concise rulemaking language, comments and data, reflecting the input from this extremely broad cross section of the organic community.

[These organizations include: National Organic Coalition (Beyond Pesticides, Center for Food Safety, Equal Exchange, Food & Water Watch, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners

Association, Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services, National Cooperative Grocers Association, Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance, Northeast Organic Farming Association Interstate Council, Rural Advancement Foundation International –USA, Union of Concerned Scientists), Accredited Certifiers Association, Organic Trade Association, Consumers Union, National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture, Midwest Organic Services Association, Inc., Penn Dutch Cow Care, Organic Farming Research Foundation, Cornucopia Institute, Sustainable Ag Coalition, Organic Consumers Association, all major organic dairy processors, individual certifiers and numerous individuals and organizations who offered their suggestions and ideas.]

The proposed rule needs to be improved to remove overly prescriptive language that would cause problems for the health and safety of animals; could have negative impacts on the environment; and place extensive record keeping burdens on farmers. Below is a summary of the changes and recommendations that FOOD Farmers submitted as comment to the NOP on December 22nd:

1. **We thanked the NOP for including the requirement for a minimum 30% dry matter intake (DMI) from pasture,** averaged over the full growing season, with the growing season ranging from 120 to 365 days. We added many comments as to how this could be easily calculated in a variety of ways without an undue burden on producers. We suggested that "grazing season" be substituted for "growing season," as that can be better defined to take into account the reality of organic dairying in different areas. Our definition of the grazing season took into account many different production practices from all areas of the country and suggested an increased reliance on the organic system plan worked out between producer and certifier. Our suggested wording for grazing season is: The period of time when pasture is available for grazing, due to natural precipitation or irrigation. Grazing season dates may vary because of

hard to find a workable consensus on the proposed reg. I am incredibly impressed at tenacity of the group to put clear and verifiable wording into the proposed rule.

My comments to the NOP mostly referenced your comments as the best solution for a variety of issues, thanks for making my comment writing easier! Say thanks to Kathie Arnold and everyone else; you all deserve a relaxing and joyous holiday.

Harriet Behar, Outreach Specialist
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES)

Thanks from around the country for FOOD Farmers' work on the pasture rule

Hello Ed,

PLEASE extend my congratulations to the entire FOOD farmers group for submitting a document that, it appears to me, represents the consensus of organic and beef farmers from all corners of the USA. While I haven't read every addendum document word for word, I can see that you have submitted documentation that backs up the greatly improved wording the rule, with clear data.

I am very impressed with and proud of FOOD Farmers for the way they brought all stakeholders to the table and worked very

Access to Pasture Timeline for Change

June 2000 NOSB recommended that: the allowance for temporary confinement should be restricted to short-term events such as birthing of newborn or finish feeding for slaughter stock and should specifically exclude lactating dairy animals.

October 2001, the NOSB recommended that ruminant livestock must have access to graze pasture during the months of the year when pasture can provide edible forage, and the grazed feed must provide a significant portion of the total feed requirements and that the Farm Plan must include a timeline showing how the producer will work to maximize the pasture component of total feed used in the farm system.

2/1/ 2005 NODPA advocates for 120 days - 30% DM

3/2/ 2005, the NOSB recommended that the phrase "access to pasture for ruminants" be changed to "ruminant animals grazing pasture during the growing season," and that "stage of production" be changed to "stage of life"

8/16/2005, the NOSB recommended clarifying the types of information to be included in a livestock operation's Organic System Plan with a minimum of 120 days as a rule and consumption of 30% DM as guidance.

4/13/06 ANPR on Access to Pasture with 60 day comment period. NODPA provides comment supporting the 120 day/30% DM recommendation.

4/17/06 NOSB Pasture Symposium

August 2006 USDA NOP promises Proposed Rule in the Fall 2006

March 2007 FOOD Farmers formed

June 2007 FOOD Farmers sponsors meeting between processors and producers.

December 2007 NOC makes Access to Pasture rule a priority

January — October 2008 NOC, NODPA, FOOD Farmers, and Horizon Organic advocate in DC for publication of a Proposed Rule

October 24 2008 publication of a Proposed Rule

October 28 2008 First listening session at NODPA annual meeting

NODPA News November 2008 explains changes and implications of the Proposed Rule

11/16/08 NCSA / NOC open meeting at NOSB

11/18/08 OTA sponsored open meeting at NOSB

12/1/08 Listening session in La Farge, WI

12/4/08 Listening session in Chico, CA

12/8/08 Listening session in Amarillo, TX

12/11/08 Listening session in Gap, PA

12/23/08 Comments close on Proposed Rule

Acronyms: NOSB – National Organic Standards Board
ANPR - Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking
NOC - National Organic Coalition
NCSA - National Campaign for Sustainable Ag
OTA – Organic Trade Association

mid-summer heat/humidity, significant precipitation events, floods, hurricanes, droughts or winter weather events. Grazing season may be extended by the grazing of residual pasture as agreed in the operation's organic systems plan. Due to weather, season, and/or climate, the grazing season may or may not be continuous. Grazing season may range from 120 days to 365 days.

2. **We recommend changing the requirement that organic livestock be managed on pasture year round** to a requirement that they must be managed on pasture only during the grazing season, still requiring access to the outdoors year round. This change will take into account the different farming conditions and will protect pastures from permanent damage that could result from use during the non-grazing season. It will also prevent manure runoff contamination of waterways, and will not cause any risks to the health and safety of the livestock from winter weather conditions. While acknowledging that sacrificial pasture can be an acceptable use of pasture and is used by some graziers, we do not want the use mandated as the practice may be detrimental to the environment, including to soil and water quality and to animal health when operations do not have well drained land that is accessible for livestock or during winter weather or excessive rain conditions. We recommended that the definition remain in the Final Rule as it correctly draws the distinction between a sacrificial pasture and a feed lot specifically with the words "restored to active pasture management."
3. **We advocated for the reinstatement of needed exemptions for livestock to be on pasture** and have outdoor access during periods of inclement weather in order to protect soil and water quality. We also suggested changes to the definition of inclement weather to take into account conditions that could cause temporary rather than just permanent physical harm to livestock.
4. **We recommended that parts of the proposed Pasture Practice Standard and Livestock Living Conditions** remain in the

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

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rule to ensure that there is a comprehensive pasture plan in every livestock operation's organic system plan. We recommended moving some of the very prescriptive proposed text to guidance for certifiers and producers, as production practices vary with location and climate and from operation to operation. We also suggested changes to create minimal new record keeping requirements.

- One area of discussion that took many of us by surprise was the use of non-certified bedding** that many certifiers were allowing if it wasn't part of the operations prescribed ration. While acknowledging that there might be some economic hardship for producers who are currently using non-certified bedding, we felt it important that everybody compete on a level playing field and recommended that crop material bedding must be organically certified when it is typically consumed by livestock, even if it's not a typical feed for the certified operation using the bedding. Some advocated for a "commercially available" clause, which we rejected as unnecessary and easy to abuse. We hope that a requirement for organically certified bedding will provide a steady demand for organic straw and other cropping material which will lead to an increase in the profitability and interest in organic small grain production.
- We strongly recommended the removal of any consideration of origin of livestock from this rule change** and urged the NOP to work diligently to get a proposed rule on origin of livestock published, as soon as possible, that will stop the continuous transition of conventional animals as dairy replacements. Some have advocated for transitioned cows and heifers to be sold as organic. Allowing transitioned animals to be sold as certified organic creates a loophole that will be exploited. Transitioned animals are, technically, not organic. A transitioned animal is certified to produce organic milk, but cannot be sold for organic slaughter, and shouldn't be allowed to be sold as an organic dairy animal. If culled from the herd, a transitioned animal should be sold into the conventional market. To equate transitioned dairy animals to last third organic animals devalues those animals raised organic from the last third of gestation. It discriminates against the producers who had to invest more money in the raising of the last third of gestation dairy animals and unfairly rewards the producer of transitioned animals. We suggest the following language: "Once an operation has been certified for organic production, all dairy animals born or brought onto the operation shall be under organic management from the last third of gestation."
- We suggested adding an exemption from meeting the 30% dry matter intake** from pasture during the grazing season, not to exceed 120 days, for organic beef to accommodate the

More Letters of Thanks

Hi Ed and Kathie,

Thanks for your excellent leadership in putting together a consensus of comments on the proposed pasture rule. I very much appreciate all the work you both put into it.

Thanks again.

Francis Thicke
Organic Dairy Farmer,
OFRF Board Member

Ed, thank you for this!

I was amazed, watching you and others through this entire process [at the November NOSB Meeting]. I learned so much about livestock as well as about how diverse our regional agriculture is in this country. Despite major (or minor) differences between players, everyone really was passionate about organic and wanted to be helpful to each other, which is a value I treasure. I like the way we in the industry can disagree civilly and keep focused on what's really important – organic integrity!

Claudia Reid
Policy Director
CCOF -- Organic Certification

Hi Ed,

At the conclusion of this process, and after reading the FOOD Farmers impressive and comprehensive submission, I want to congratulate you and everyone involved for all the incredible work, inclusiveness and comprehensiveness that characterized this effort over many weeks. The FOOD Farmers comments have set a very high mark indeed for quality and completeness. A great many individuals and organizations have benefited and learned from your work -- myself, VOF and NOFA-VT among them. Our thanks and appreciation..

Dave Rogers, Policy Advisor
NOFA Vermont

Hi Ed and Kathie:

Wow! What a comprehensive document! Thank you both for the hard work and long hours you have put into NODPA/FOOD Farmers' comments on the pasture rule. I hope you now have time to enjoy the holidays and RELAX with your families!

Lisa Engelbert
Organic Dairy Farmer, Nichols, NY
NOFA NY Certified Organic, LLC
Dairy Program Administrator

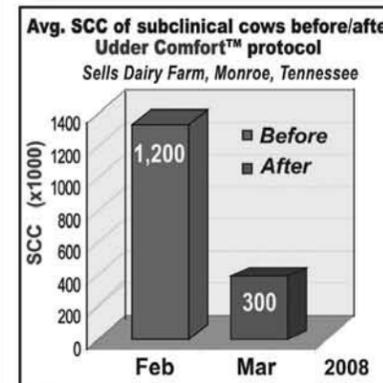
consumer's desire for grain finished meat. This language, which would still require access to pasture, recognizes the requirements of the market and the producer's need to maximize their profit by receiving top dollar for their meat while not creating a beef finishing lot which the US consumer believes is something that is bad for livestock and the environment.

continued on page 22

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INDUSTRY NEWS

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Next Steps

We look forward to the publication of a Final Rule in spring 2009 with the hopes that the NOP will allow not more than one season to implement the new rule. While the new administration has exceeded all expectations with the speed they have made appointees, there are still many appointments that need to be made, including the Under Secretary and Administrator level in the USDA. Until those appointments have been made it will be difficult to make any progress forward. While the Final Rule is being shepherded through the Federal review process prior to being published and implemented, we need the NOP to enforce the current pasture regulation. We are committed to working with the NOP to carefully monitor the enforcement of the new regulation to ensure that it is applied fairly and consistently to all producers by the spring of 2010.

With the rapid growth of organic livestock, especially dairy, we see a great need to educate inspectors and certifiers about their role in determining the validity of the producer's organic systems plan and the actual working of the plan. With well educated certifiers and inspectors, the interpretation of the rule within the context of different operations will be much more uniform and fair. At a recent NOSB

meeting Barbara Robinson announced the NOP's priority to provide educational resources to certifiers and their inspectors. We share Ms. Robinson's commitment to this priority and pledge to work with the NOP to assist in any way possible.

Rumor has it that Richard Mathews will be continuing his work at the NOP to help shepherd the final Access to Pasture rule to publication which will ensure that we have someone with experience, skill and knowledge working on the rule from beginning to end. We will, of course, continue to advocate the FOOD Farmers position to NOP employees and new appointees to ensure they continue to understand the importance of this rulemaking.

One of the benefits of the transparent and inclusive discussion of the proposed rule was the heightened awareness of the many different interpretations of the USDA standards by different certifiers and producers. While we hope that the Final Access to Pasture rule will provide clear parameters and requirements for certifiers to enforce, leveling the economic and production playing field across the country, we also recognize that some producers will have to adapt their production practices to meet the new standards. An interesting observation is that it is certifiers, not producers, who have expressed more concern about the cost and difficulty of making changes. The most common reaction from producers has been that they know they may have to make some changes, but it is required to maintain the integrity of the organic seal.

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Comment from around the country on the pasture rule

Richard H. Mathews, USDA-AMS-TMP-NOP

I am writing to you to comment on the recently proposed NOP pasture ruling. We are the oldest and longest standing organic dairy in the United States. We have always been very serious about pasturing our 100 Jersey cows. I journeyed to Washington DC several years ago to comment on the importance of pasture in an organic dairy program. Our grazing season is a bit shorter here along the Canadian border here in northern Vermont, but our cows receive at least 75% of their dry matter intake from pasture between the middle of May to the middle of October. I applaud you for including the 30% dry matter/120day provision in your rewritten pasture proposal.

I would like to suggest a few changes to the ruling, which will make it more workable for farmers who live in regions where winter is long, cold, harsh, and windy. It is five degrees out right now, and the wind is blowing with great intensity. When a human being walks between the house and the barn, your face begins to freeze in less than a minute. Our cows run free in a bedded pack hoop barn. They can go out into a yard anytime they want. However, on a day like today, we close the big door at the south end of our solar barn in order to keep our cows from freezing. Severe cold and exposure can undermine the wellbeing of a dairy cow in very short order.

I am asking you to take a more common sense approach to the keeping of cattle in parts of the country where winter is a reality. All this business about having the cows outside all the time on some sort of a "sacrifice

pasture" is an unsound agronomic practice. It is far better to house dairy cows in a bedded structure so that manure and urine can be absorbed into the bedding. In this manner, nutrients can be captured and preserved in carbonaceous material (straw, hay or wood products) to be applied to the earth when the warmer weather returns. If cows were simply outside most of the time, most of their waste would be deposited on frozen ground and washed into the nearest water course at the time of spring melt and runoff.

Since we are one of America's first organic dairies, we are very interested in preserving the integrity of the system. For the health of our cows and our land, please adopt a very simple pasture rule. A grazing season of 120 days with a 30% minimum of dry matter intake works in all parts of the country. Please ensure that all farms, large and small, employ pasture in their management systems. I also hope that the ruling will insist that already transitioned organic dairies must only import organic replacements.

Thank you very much for the work you have done trying to craft a very complex ruling that needs to work for many different types of farms in very different geographic regions. In the wintry Northeast, we need to be able to house our cattle indoors out of severe weather. Daily access to the outdoors is necessary, but our cows don't need to live outside.

**Sincerely yours,
Jack and Anne Lazor
Butterworks Farm, Westfield, Vermont**

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INDUSTRY NEWS

Access to Pasture

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As producers, we know that organic livestock production is determined by experience and knowledge of working with animals, their care and welfare; not by a rule book. Producers are also concerned about the inequality of interpretation of the standards and the protection of the integrity of the USDA organic seal that ensures the continued marketing premium essential to the economic future of their family farms. While some organic

dairy pioneers have suggested that the NOP is neglecting organic certification's premise of continual improvement through the organic systems plan by becoming increasingly prescriptive, there is the more basic need that caused the organic community to originally support legislation for an organic program through the USDA; fair and consistent standards applied equally to all. Too often this difference of opinion has been exaggerated to heighten disagreement. The reality is that we need to set the bar at the level practiced by the vast majority of organic dairy producers and supported by the NOSB which stated **"The management practices must make clear that these additional exemptions in no way change the intent that ruminant organic livestock systems be pasture based."** ♦

have nutrient management plans and water quality plans mandated by the State Regional Water Quality Control Board, a governmental agency, as well as Air Quality Plans mandated by the Air Quality Board, another governmental agency. For our dairies, most sacrificial pasture and required access to outdoors during inclement weather would certainly violate the state water control board's mandates. It is also important that the NOP does not put California or any other organic dairymen in a position that they would have two or more "masters" regarding these kinds of environmental matters.

Finally the October 24, 2008 proposed pasture rule as is written will destroy our organic dairy industry. The Food Farmers revisions correct the unworkable aspects of the proposed pasture rule. I urge the NOP to adopt the Food Farmers revisions to this new pasture rule and move forward quickly to an Access to Pasture final rule.

In conclusion, we look forward to the publication of a new, separate, simple proposed rule for the Origin of Livestock that eliminates the existing two track replacement system and establishes one criterion for organic replacement animals, in other words – to level the "replacement" playing field so that all organic dairy farmers operate under the same set of replacement rules.

Thank You. Ward N. Burroughs, Denair, CA

Commentary/support from around the country for FOOD Farmers' work on the pasture rule

Docket Number AMS-TM-06-0198

Richard H. Mathews, NOP

My name is Ward Burroughs, from Full Circle Dairy and California Cloverleaf Farms, Denair, Ca. in the northern San Joaquin Valley. We seasonally milk 500 cows at each dairy. We thank the NOP for publishing this proposed pasture rule regarding access to pasture and for giving all of us the opportunity to comment on the rule.

I thank the NOP for ensuring that grazing is a major enforceable criterion of the NOP's new pasture rule.

I urge the NOP to adopt the revisions put forth and recommended by the FOOD Farmers with others in order that this pasture rule will be doable for organic dairymen and livestock farmers and enforceable by certifiers and the NOP. This FOOD Farmers revised rule will become a rule that to which all of us will adjust and that with these revisions will level the playing field across the country for the organic dairy industry. This revised rule will ensure the integrity of the organic seal for both producers and consumers of organic livestock products and thus, will ensure long term sustainability for my family's organic dairy farms.

I am sure that my families's two dairies are meeting these new standards of a minimum of 120 days grazing and 30% DM intake from that grazing during our grazing season. On our dairies, in a grazing season that averages around 200 days, milking cows graze for 100% of their forage needs for 180 days and for 50% of their forage needs for another 90 days. Both of these scenarios far exceed the 120 day/ 30% requirement. In our minds, it is important that grazing season, not growing season, become one of the foundations for this proposed rule because it is during a grazing season, when animals can actually graze and receive dry matter intake from that grazing, that dry matter intakes can be measured and documented for our Organic Systems Plan.

It is important for the NOP, a government agency, to understand that California organic dairy producers already

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RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Morris WCROC Has Unique Dairy Research Effort

By Carol Stender

The West Central Research and Outreach Center will be the only research facility in the country to compare both organic and conventional herds at its research site.

WCROC is transitioning 70 to 80 cows to organic production, said center dairy specialist Dennis Johnson. The center has about 100 cows in its conventional low-input herd.

"We will have two separate herds and two separate bulk tanks," he said.

It takes one year to transition a dairy herd to organic, Johnson said. The transition includes lactating cows and heifers.

"There is an active organic community in Minnesota that has been encouraging this," Johnson said. "We've been talking about this for some time."

The Legislature and University of Minnesota developed the financial support and with encouragement by College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resource Sciences Dean Al Levine and Extension director Bev Durgan. A program for organic research, teaching and outreach was developed.

WCROC, in response to the organic community's call for more research, applied for grants a few years ago and began developing its program.

Most of the herd's organic forage will come from Stevens County organic producers Craig Murphy, Mark Fitzgerald and Mark Lampert and from Moorhead-area organic producer Lynne Brekke. Grain will be purchased from the Buckwheat Growers in Wadena.

Organic alfalfa and six pounds of organic grain, kelp and a mineral mix makes up the lactating transition herd's diet.

The center will transition a quarter section of land to organic crops over the next three years.

Research of the two systems will include monitoring inputs and studying udder health. Milk samples have been taken every three months on the entire herd by Timna Wykoff, biology professor at the University of Minnesota-Morris. The samples will determine the presence of mastitis causing micro-organisms.

"If there's a change in the profile with the number of clinical cases of

mastitis, we will know," he said.

Holstein and Montbeliarde, Jersey and Holstein crosses make up the low-input conventional grazing herd managed under conventional nutrition and health care. The breeding program is changing to replace the Jersey genetics with Scandinavian Red, a mix of Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian and Danish breeding.

Antibiotics are no longer used in the transitioning herd except to alleviate pain and suffering. Once a cow has been treated with antibiotics, it must be removed from the organic herd, Johnson said.

Before the program can become certified organic, it must be inspected and meet organic production criteria, Johnson said.

The University of New Hampshire and California's Chico State University each have organic herds, but no university has both conventional and organic animals at the same facility.

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Grant Reviewers Needed!

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Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)

Janie Hipp and S. Sureshwaran, National Program Leaders, CSREES, USDA, jhipp@csrees.usda.gov, 202-720-3605, ssureshwaran@csrees.usda.gov, 202-720-7536

Farmers' Market Promotion Program (FMPP)

Carmen Humphrey, Program Leader for FMPP, Marketing Services Division, USDA-AMS, Carmen.humphrey@usda.gov, 202-720-8317.

Errol Bragg, Director of Marketing Services Division, USDA-AMS, errol.bragg@usda.gov, 202-720-8317.

Debra Tropp, Branch Chief of Farmers Market and Direct Marketing Research, Marketing Service Division, USDA-AMS, debra.tropp@usda.gov, 202-720-8326.

Integrated Organic Program (IOP)

Tom Bewick, National Program Leader – Horticulture, tbewick@csrees.usda.gov, 202-401-3356

Value-added Agricultural Market Development Program (VAPG)

Gail Thuner, USDA VAPG Program Manager, gail.thuner@wdc.usda.gov, 202-690-2426.



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ORGANIC PRODUCTION: FEATURED FARM

Raindance Farm: High forage, Low Grain Diet Keeps 87 Cow Operation Running Smoothly

Siobhan Griffin, along with children Keira & Dale, & partner Rob Grassi, put the focus on their 250 acre pasture system.

By Lisa McCrory

A devoted grazer for 19 years, and an organic farmer since 1997, Siobhan has farmed in Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island and, in her present location, central New York. An exceptional herdsman, Siobhan was recently recognized by the National Mastitis Council as one of the 'Very Best Dairy Producers for Quality Milk Production' (See the March 08 NODPA News for full press release). She credits the high quality milk to her grazing program, the high forage, low grain diet and her exceptional team of people who keep the 87-cow, 400-acre operation running smoothly.

Siobhan was not raised on a farm but she started working on farms in 1983 while she was still in school and started her first herd (10 heifers) in Derby, Vermont back in 1991. Today she farms full time with her boyfriend Rob Grassi, her son Dale, her daughter Keira, plus 1.5 additional employees.

Siobhan was inspired by pasture walks and visits to Jack and Anne Lazor's Farm (Butterworks Farm, Westfield, VT) where they saw first hand that excellent crops can be grown organically, contrary to what many conventional farm experts were saying.

In 1997 they purchased a farm in New York that was organic 'by neglect', transitioned their herd and were shipping organic milk before the year was through. Back in those days, the whole herd transition period was 3 months (organic management and 100% organic feed), which may sound like it was easy compared to today, but they had to sell their pickup truck and took out an \$8,000 no interest loan from Elmhurst Creamery in order to finance their transition. There were no transition packages back then and few certified dairies to turn to if they had



questions. Since then Elmhurst Creamery's organic business was sold to Horizon Organic and in December, 2004 Siobhan started shipping her milk to Organic Valley.

Raindance Farm has been certified by NOFA-New York and has been purchasing grain and seed from Lakeview Organic Grain for the past 11 years. Siobhan likes the fact that much of the grain she purchases comes locally from New York and that it is available to her as whole grains. She speaks highly of Klaas and Mary-Howell as they have also been mentors in crop management.

Breeds, Breeding and Calving Windows

The cows are a mix of Jersey, Normande, Milking Shorthorn, Holstein, and Swedish Reds. This year, everything was bred to Jersey or Short Horn, using only NZ semen or her one herd bull who descended from one of Siobhan's most fertile cows (an heirloom American Jersey cross). When breeding cows this year, Siobhan heat-bred (bull bred) her cows and then followed with AI-breeding 6-12 hours later. Out of 86 cows and 19

heifers, only 2 were open at their once a year vet check in November. She used 137 units of semen and kept record of when the bull was in with the heifers only or with cows only to help decide which calves to raise in the spring. Sixty two head are due in April.

Getting cows bred on time is more important than ever before. Raindance farm has calved heavy in the spring for many years, but this is

the first year that the milking herd is truly seasonal. Last year the cows were milked once a day through the winter. This year they will all be dry for at least 6 weeks starting early February and will freshen from late March to May.



Pasture Reclamation and Grazing Management

Activities on Raindance Farm revolve around the pasture system; 250 acres of the farm is managed as pasture first while surplus feed is harvested as dry hay, round bales or haylage. An additional 140 acres is used exclusively for hay as it is not fenced yet. When Siobhan purchased her farm 11 years ago, it was pretty exhausted and the native pastures were not producing a lot of feed. Building soil fertility and biological activity in the hay fields and pastures is still a work in progress, but a significant amount of improvement has been gained over the past decade by the Management Intensive Grazing system (MIG) and judicious additions of lime.

Another way that they have been improving their pastures and gaining forage production in early spring and during the hot summer months is to reseed 15-20 acres each year. They start by planting 15-20 acres of Sorghum after first grazing or first cutting. This is a great feed during the hot, dry summer months, and 'the cows milk like crazy'. In the fall, the stand is then planted to a winter annual, which is grazed early the following spring, then turned under as a green manure and seeded to a perennial pasture stand with oats for a nurse crop.

Siobhan often turns to Klaas Martens (Lakeview Organic Grain) for suggestions and feedback on new varieties to try. This year

they planted Triticale with Austrian peas as a green manure crop. A typical pasture mix consists of BG 34 (Barenburg Perennial Rye grass), white clover, and a few other perennial plants to create a healthy diversified pasture stand. Not a fan of sitting on a tractor, Siobhan is hoping that the new-seeded pastures will remain productive. "I am looking for a more sustainable pasture that I don't have to seed down every 10 years", she says. They frost seed 300 - 500 lbs of organic red clover on alternating hay fields every year at 8 lbs per acre. No red clover for pastures because their grazing management favors the white clover. All pastures and forage stands are heavy in clovers.

During the grazing months, the cows get a fresh paddock every 12 hours and come into the barn twice a day to get milked in a double six parlor. While they are in the barn, they are supplemented with 1 round bale of high quality dry hay (for 87 cows) plus 4 lbs of ground shell corn, and 1 lb of molasses per cow per day (9:1 milk to grain ratio). Next year they will probably increase the grain intake to 6 lbs (7:1 grain to milk ratio) if prices are favorable because Siobhan felt the

cows lost too much condition this year. The cows are out on pasture by the last week in April, grazing the annual rye grass or triticale. They stay on a high pasture diet of clover/perennial ryegrass and native pastures until the end of October.

During the winter months, the cows are fed 4-8 lbs of grain, *continued on page 28*



Siobhan (at right) with Kathie Arnold & Nancy Gardiner at the 2004 Field Days

FEATURED FARM

continued from page 27

1lb molasses, purchased baleage, haylage and dry hay. With this high forage, intensive pasture system Siobhan is able to maintain a 12,500 lb herd average. Grain, minerals and molasses for cows and youngstock totaled \$65,700 for 2008 not including time and electric cost for the grain grinding they do themselves.

Livestock health

Prevention is the key for this farm and included in the prevention strategies is a sound vaccination program using Triangle Nine, Scour Guard, J-Vac and calf hood vaccines. The next is paying close attention to soundness in the cattle. “The root of all evil in cow illness is lameness,” says Siobhan, which in turn is directly related to nutrition. You can almost always take a cow with health issues and trace her back to a history with lameness. Once an animal is lame, her appetite goes down due to the discomfort and then everything else will snowball. If there is a lame cow on Siobhan’s farm, she takes care of her right away by putting her on the ‘Econo Chute’ from Fingerlakes Specialized Equipment (a locally fabricated foot rack) and assesses the situation. If it is hairy heel wart, Hoofmate works great with one, sometimes two treatments. For severe and or foot rot, stone bruises, cow slips are put on the good half of the claw so the sensitive hoof is not getting the weight. They no longer do preventive hoof trimming and never let a privately contracted hoof trimmer on the farm to avoid spreading viruses.

To avoid retained placenta, Siobhan keeps the calf with the cow until she cleans and makes sure to offer unlimited amounts of warm water to the cow post partum. Having strictly committed to these two criteria for the past year instead of the usual “when convenient”, this is the first year they have had 100% of the cows clean after calving.

For mastitis, Siobhan makes a point to never infuse anything into the quarter. She likes to strip the infected quarter often and will often offer aspirin, vitamin C, and different homeopathic remedies depending on the kind of mastitis symptoms. These include Belladonna, Apis mel, Bryonia, Hepar Sulph and Pulsatilla. If a cow comes down with mastitis during the grazing season, she is taken off pasture and grain and put on a dry hay diet and kept in a paddock near the barn so that she can be offered a dry hay and kelp diet, and get the bad quarter

stripped frequently by hand.

For Pink eye, calendula eye spray (non-alcoholic) and homeopathic Hypericum works well. For a down cow, they have had success with lobelia, an herbal remedy. Any cow with a fever or infection gets homemade garlic tincture in small amounts usually orally and Vitamin C IM or IV. Garlic tincture is also useful added to 8 ounces of 3% hydrogen peroxide in a uterine infusion for metritis if needed.

As a result of having a healthy grass-based organic herd, Siobhan has been able to sell 30 animals to other organic dairies this year and 40 surplus dairy animals each year the two years before.

In the past 10 years, pneumonia has occasionally been a problem. If it is early signs of pneumonia, they will sometimes use aloe vera in an electrolyte cocktail with garlic and goldenseal tincture. If the animal has a high fever and they think it is pneumonia, then they call the vet and give an antibiotic. If the cows or calf is treated with antibiotics, then they sell them healthy and get a good price for the animal on the conventional market. Plus, getting that animal out of the herd strengthens the gene pool.

To keep an eye on the udder health of her cows, Siobhan uses the services of

Cornell’s Quality Milk Program to test her whole herd twice a year. With the testing, she will do an individual SCC, and culture each quarter. The cows that have a high SCC count feed the calves and any cow that tests positive for Staph aureus goes out the door. Every time a cow freshens, they use a CMT paddle and her milk does not go into the tank until the CMT test is good. The herd is free of Strep ag.

The record keeping system on Raindance farm is thorough, yet simple; a Microsoft Works spreadsheet is used which includes the cow list and breeding date. When cows are confirmed pregnant, Siobhan just has the program add 283 days to the confirmed date column and puts it in the next column for due date. Then she sorts by the due date column for a calving list. Cows are vaccinated according to that sheet during the dry period with J-Vac and Scour Guard to protect the calves from scours. Each cow also has her individual page for breeding and illness, using Organic Valley’s commercial cow page. Individual cow production is irrelevant to Siobhan because the cows with less milk are often the cows that carry better condition and settle the best because of it. “Our production goal is a calf every 12 months out of all the cows”, says Siobhan.

As a result of having a healthy grass-based organic herd, Siobhan has been able to sell 30 animals to other organic dairies this year and 40 surplus dairy animals each year the two years before. Only 6 cows were actually sold for beef this year; a cull rate of 7%. Siobhan is a grazier before she is an organic

FEATURED FARM

person; “I attribute the herd health to the grazing program. Grazing plays a much larger role than the fact that I am feeding organic grain” she says.

Veterinarian and Nutritionist Needs

Many organic producers say that their vet bill goes down significantly once they switch to organic production. For Siobhan, she did not see a large difference at first; it took about 5 years of being organic until she was happy with her herd health, but some of that could be attributed to the fact that they had just moved to a neglected farm. Last year she only spent \$2200 in vet bills including one emergency visit, vaccinations and one visit to do a pregnancy check on her seasonal herd.

Siobhan is very happy with her veterinarian Mike Powers. He is happy to work with her herd even if he only sees her two or three times a year. He is willing to think out of the box, provides vitamin C and vaccines as needed and is available for the occasional emergency visit.

They use Paris Reidhead for a nutritionist. He will recommend Penny’s mineral mixes to be added to their grains and will occasionally run them a ration. Other services he

provides include testing forages for potassium to reduce the incidence of milk fever.

Calf Program

Calves are on milk from up to 6 or 8 months or more!. They use a quarter milker for high cell count quarters, and segregate that milk to older calves. By the time the calves are 6 months old they may not get a lot of milk, but Siobhan feels that it helps prevent parasite problems. There is a lot of satisfaction seeing calves grow well. For the first week or two of life, Jersey calves get ¾ of a gallon of milk per day and after that, the calves are fed in groups off several ‘megamommies’; otherwise known as a McCarvel Nipples on a recycled 15 gallon soap jug. Each feeder has 7 nipples around the drum.

Hay is offered right away from day one. The calves don’t get grain early on because Siobhan feels it gives them diarrhea. She waits until they are a month old and will start them on small amounts of a 50/50 mix of corn meal and kelp and small grains if they have them on hand.

To avoid Coccidiosis and parasites, the heifer calves are raised in a clean hay shed each winter. There are a number of hay storage bays on the farm and a different bay is used each year. Here, the calves grow nice and strong and are fed the best second cutting hay. During pasture season, the calves are on a

continued on page 30

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Raindance Farm

continued from page 29

rotational grazing program and are usually started on a new seeding to reduce their exposure to parasites.

For episodes of calf scours, Siobhan likes to use an electrolyte recipe: 8 tablespoons honey, 1 tablespoons of baking soda, 1 tablespoon salt, gallon water. She also uses Crystal Creek's Calf Sheild. On the first day of treatment the affected calf is taken off milk and given electrolyte mix 3-4 times a day in smaller amounts. On the 2nd or 3rd day the calf is put back on milk with the calf guard in the milk.

Cheese production?

Just 4 miles down the road from Raindance farm is a cheese outfit called Cooperstown Cheese Company. Siobhan has been talking 'for years' about making a grass-based cheese from her high quality milk and in 2008 she started doing it. This past summer she brought a few batches of their grass-fed milk to Cooperstown Cheese Plant and paid the company to make an Italian cheese called Asiago. Though it was not required, Siobhan stayed each time and helped make the cheese with them, which was a great learning opportunity for her and a way to truly understand the process and what would be required if she wanted to do this someday on her own farm.

The cheese is aged for 5 months and, according to Siobhan, doesn't start to show its flavor until it is 4 months old. The Italian molds create a 30-lb wheel creating a hard aged cheese that gets more valuable over time and can last a couple years. She calls her cheese 'Sun Cheese' as it is made from milk when the cows are on a diet of at least 85% pasture plus a small amount of grain, molasses and dry hay. Siobhan has started to sell her delicious cheese (taste tested at the October 08 NODPA Field Days) at the Greenmarket in New York City and hopes to sell more at a nearby farmers market this winter when her cows are dry.

Out of curiosity, Siobhan sent her cheese away for a nutritional analysis. The CLA (conjugated linoleic acid) was 1.96 mg/gram of fat, more than three times higher than store cheese and significantly greater than certain organic cheeses. Siobhan does not know what the future will bring, but another dream she has is to make cheese on her farm complete with a solar heated hot water heater and a cheese cave. Her high milk quality makes for a unique product.

Resources

Siobhan has gained a lot knowledge and inspiration by attending grazing conferences, subscribing to the Stockman Grassfarmer and Graze Magazine and she considers Hue Karreman's book 'Treating Cows Naturally' to be invaluable. Her first farming and grazing mentor was Michael Dwyer of Holland Patent, NY. In the

late1980's he handed Siobhan a copy of the New Farm magazine and Stockman Grassfarmer and a pack of 20 fiberglass fence posts and some Maxishock fence wire from Wellscroft Farm Supply in New Hampshire. Farming was never the same for her after that. Other farmer mentors that have made lasting impression on Siobhan are Jack Lazor who patiently answered her questions about field crops, grazing and machinery when she first got started in Vermont; Klaas and Mary-Howell Martens, for their advice on improving the soil health and growing nutritious crops; Kevin and Lisa Engbelbert for welcoming her on their farm numerous times and answering questions and Jim and Adele Hayes with their advice on grazing calves and their overall care.

Industry Needs

When asked what needed attention in the world of organic dairy, Siobhan had a few things on her mind. She would like to see Cornell Food Science do research on environmentally friendly soaps for CIP wash systems. Knowing that chlorinated chemicals have been having a negative impact on amphibians, she would like to see research done on efficacy of non-toxic soaps. She would also like to see more funds available for farmers interested in building laneways, fences and water systems for their grass-based farms. In Siobhan's county, she has been having trouble getting approved for cost share funds and finds her county office to be very un-supportive. "Let's spend less money subsidizing corn and turn it over to grass based farms that need to build their fences and laneways." She would also like to see organic farms eclipse the milk quality of conventional milk across the board. The way to go about that, she feels, "is a no-brainer; increase milk quality incentive payments."

NOP Pasture standard

Siobhan will be supporting the recommendations of the FOOD Farmers - and in fact, has been one of the many farmers putting in countless hours on FOOD Farmer conference calls, attending listening sessions, providing verbal and written comment to Richard Mathews, and working on the detailed feedback and documents needed to support the recommended changes to the NOP's Pasture Rule. One of her biggest concerns with the proposed Access to Pasture Rule is the lack of language supporting the use of barns. 'Housing cows in barns in northern climates is a time-tested viable option. It is legitimate, good husbandry.' Furthermore Siobhan feels the rule, as it stands, is too prescriptive. The ultimate goal is for cows to be clean, comfortable, eating pasture during the grazing season and the NOP should leave it up to the farm manager to determine how to do that. "There are reasons that there are beautiful barns dotting our hillsides," Says Siobhan, "It is because the original cows came over here from Europe where the climate is a lot milder. If they were from here, they would have hides like a buffalo. It would be great if the USDA would decide that the 30%/120 days is fine for a bare minimum and not complicate it so much." ♦

**Announcement:
The Strolling of the Heifers
Microloan Fund for New England Farmers**

Two non-profit organizations, Strolling of the Heifers and The Carrot Project, focused on helping to promote and solve the problems of New England's family farms have created the Microloan Fund for New England Farmers. The mission of the fund is to address the difficulty that New England farmers have in obtaining credit for projects that improve their operations and increase their income, as well as for emergency needs. The Microloan Fund for New England Farmers will be accepting applications through February 7, 2009. Loan applications for amounts ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000, for terms up to 5 years, will be accepted.

For this initial pilot round of loans, applications will be limited to farms located in Vermont or in Western Massachusetts (Berkshire, Hampshire, Hampden and Franklin Counties) with a primary focus on small loans to small and mid-sized farms that use sustainable and

organic methods (or are moving toward them), and that are marketing at least a portion of their products to local markets. Eligibility is limited to farms with 250 acres, or less, in active production, and annual gross revenue of \$250,000 or less.

Acceptable purposes for the loans are capital investments and other expenses that help improve efficiency or quality, or that expand production and sales; repairs necessary to maintain farm operations; short term operating needs such as inventory, supplies or labor; and emergency funds to deal with business interruptions from fire, natural disasters, or other unforeseen events. For application information go to www.thecarrotproject.org, e-mail info@thecarrotproject.org, or call Dorothy Suput at 617-666-9637.

An informational workshop for farmers about the Microloan Fund will be held on Thursday, January 15, 2009 at 10 a.m. at the Vermont Agricultural Business Education Center (VABEC) in Brattleboro. Registration is required; farmers may register by e-mailing or phoning Laurie Garland (lgarland@svcable.net; 802-257-1646).



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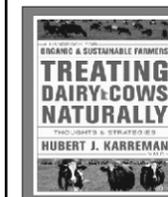
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INDUSTRY NEWS

More Organic Milk Sought in Northeast

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

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CROPP Cooperative ~ Organic Valley ~ Organic Prairie is the nation's largest farmer-owned organic cooperative with members throughout the Northeast and New England. We offer a stable, competitive organic milk pay price to members and a complete year of Transitional Funding for new farmers during the herd's transitional year.

We also offer veterinary support, quality services, organic food, the Organic Trader Newsletter, inclusive communications and ownership of a cooperative with 20 years of organic farming and marketing experience. Our Farm Resources Team can also help source organic feed purchases for your operation. We have recently expanded our cooperative membership to include a Grower Pool; offering long term, stable pricing & marketing opportunities for organic forage/grain producers and our Organic Cull Cow & Dairy Steer Program is also looking to grow into the region. Please contact our Regional Coordinators or Membership Services for further details.

In New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia, contact Peter Miller, (612) 801-3506, peter.miller@organicvalley.coop. In New England contact John Cleary at (612)803-9087, or email at John.cleary@organicvalley.coop. In the Great Lakes Region contact Jake Schmitz, (270)779-1526 or jake.schmitz@organicvalley.coop. In the Southeast contact Gerry Cohn, (919) 537-8447 or gerry.cohn@organicvalley.coop. Membership Services - 1-888-809-9297 Monday through Friday 8-5 PM Central and online at www.farmers.coop.

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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.

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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

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.

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.

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 3 milk plants in Buffalo 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

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 March 2009 issue, please email the desired text to Ed at ednodpa@comcast.net or call 413-772-0444 by February 16th 2009.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Choiniere Family Farm Receives 2008 Sustainable Farm Award Highgate Center dairy farm providing environmental stewardship

The Choiniere Family Farm in Highgate Center has won Vermont's coveted Sustainable Farm Award for 2008. A multigenerational organic dairy farm, the Choiniere Farm is operated by Guy and Beth Choiniere and their parents. Like many dairies around the state, the farm has

increased its financial viability in recent years by transitioning to organic milk and reducing expensive grain imports. The Choinieres have completely eliminated off-farm protein purchases and reduced energy inputs by adopting many innovations to improve soil health and forage quality.

"The Choiniere Family Farm is a great example of Vermont farmers working proactively to care for our land and waters while running a successful farming business," said Roger Allbee Secretary of Agriculture. "They are extremely committed to finding innovative ways and utilizing current programs to protect the environment and providing fresh, wholesome products. I congratulate them on being named the Sustainable Farm of the Year."

The Choiniere family is a true steward of the land. Located on the steepbanks of the Rock River, one of the most impaired watersheds in the state of Vermont, the Choinieres have implemented many projects to aid in the clean-up of the river. The Choinieres' projects include fencing the cows out of the river, enrolling the steep river banks into the Conservation Reserve Program, creating a nutrient management plan, and improving crop rotation to reduce erosion. "We have worked very hard for the past five years to do our part in upgrading the farm.

Sustainability has become a priority for us" said Beth Choiniere. The Choiniere family is committed to education for themselves and for other farms in Vermont. They attend many educational workshops, host field days at their farm and have worked with UVM undergraduates on applied projects.

The award is granted annually by the Vermont Sustainable Agriculture Council to a farm that has demonstrated a significant commitment to environmental stewardship, innovative farming or marketing practices, economic viability, and a commitment to contributing to education and community. Past recipients include Shelburne Orchards of Shelburne; Harlow Farm of Westminster; Intervale Community Farm of Burlington, Butterworks Farm of Westfield, Lilac Ridge Farm of West Brattleboro, Adams Farm of Wilmington, Golden Russet Farm of Shoreham, Blue Spruce Farm of Bridport, Someday Farm of East Dorset and La Platte River Angus of Shelburne.

The Vermont Sustainable Agriculture Council identifies needs, sets goals, selects priorities and makes annual recommendations regarding sustainable agriculture research, demonstration, education and financing for the state. It is co-chaired by the Agency of Agriculture and UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture. ♦

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NET UPDATE

Recent ODairy Discussions

By Liz Bawden

It has certainly been busy on ODairy recently. The discussions began with rat control. Based on one farmer's query on what to use that was effective and allowable on organic farms, several responded with suggestions. One option was a product called Quintox, whose active ingredient is Vitamin D3; it comes in small packages left around as bait. One farmer kept rat bait away from other animals by constructing a large "T" made from PVC pipe -- place the "T" upside-down along and wall, and drop the bait down the vertical pipe. Using 1 1/2 or 2 inch tubing, the rats can get the bait, but not the cats. Some were concerned that the affected rats would poison birds of prey and your own dogs and cats, as they see the wobbly behavior of a poisoned rat as an easy meal. Your free-range chickens may be helping you control rodents as two farmers noted how chickens will eat mice and baby rats. Another suggestion was instant mashed potatoes at a bait. And another farmer raved about his Rat Terrier -- he says cats will kill a rat to eat, rat terriers will kill them all for fun. Another suggestion was the management of an effective cat population - keeping them fixed, wormed, and vaccinated.

A farmer asked what type of insulated work boots people liked best; all those that responded said they preferred the Muckmaster boots!

A 3 week-old calf suddenly off-feed, listless, and coughing was a problem for one farmer. Treatments suggested included: Vitamin C, garlic or other antibacterial tinctures, Immunoboost, Biocel CBT, homeopathic aconite if there is a fever, and to keep her well hydrated.

Several farmers chimed in on their search for the best management practices in feeding young calves. Conventional researchers point out that calves on milk need to be started on grain before hay is introduced. Our veterinarian friends pointed out that these studies (often funded by grain companies) are centered on Holstein calves fed 2 qts of milk twice a day. This only provides enough energy to maintain a 7 to 10 day old calf, so the calf will take to the grain to avoid starving, and to allow it to grow. No studies have been done with calves receiving 1 gallon of milk at a feeding, which is more common on an organic

farm. Recommendations were to introduce hay to very young calves and feed it the ground to avoid contamination. Fiber is important for developing the rumen. Free choice kelp and humates were also recommended from day one.

Farmers were asked to list their favorite reference books. Books that topped the list were "Morrison's Feeds and Feeding", "Treating Cows Naturally" by Dr. Hubert Karreman, "Natural Cattle Care" by Pat Coleby, the Albrecht books, and "Alternative Treatments For Ruminant Animals" by Dr. Paul Detloff.

Other goods references mentioned were "Feeds and Nutrition" by Ensminger et al, The Cornell Dairy Reference Manual, "Quality Pasture" by Allan Nation, "Science in Agriculture" and "Life and Energy In Agriculture" by Arden Anderson, "Nourishment Homegrown" by A. F. Beddoe, "Productive Dairying" by R.M. Washburn, "Fertility, Pastures, and Cover Crops" and "Herdsmanship and Fertility Farming" by Newman Turner, "Biological Farmer" by Gary Zimmer, "Homeopathy for the Herd" by Dr. Edgar Sheaffer, "The Farmers Short Course In Livestock", "Organic Livestock Production" and "Organic Crop Production" by the Canadian Organic Growers, "Prescribed Grazing and Feeding Management For Lactating Dairy Cows" by Darryl Emmick and Karen Hoffman, "Weeds Of the Northeast", and "Organic Dairying" by the Kickapoo Organic Resources Network.

A long discussion on grain feeding took place including the frustrations that many feel. The cost of purchased grain has been so high for long enough that many of us have reduced grain feeding; some have reduced it dramatically or eliminated it entirely. Are we wasting our cow's genetic potential? Is it the best road to feed less grain and accept lower production (that was already significantly lower than when you were conventional)? It was said that you can't grain your way out of problems, if you don't have good forage, without hurting the cows. One good rule of thumb is 1 lb of grain per 100 lb of body weight. Another suggested rule of thumb was based on milk production: no grain to cows giving 20 pounds or less, 1 lb grain for every 3 pounds of milk over 20 pounds (up to a maximum of 16 pounds) plus a soy meal topdress based on individual protein needs.

Some farmers felt that cutting back on grain hurt their bottom line. They felt the production lost was a greater financial loss than the cost of the grain. But it certainly depends on the formu-

lation (no need for high protein rations with good pasture or stored forages) and stage of lactation of individuals. These farmers monitored Milk Urea Nitrogen (MUN) levels, and some could grow at least a portion of their own grain requirements. There were some middle

ground farmers that talked of feeding less grain, and just accepting less production, usually around 40 lbs. One farmer said he just went to a simple mix -- just ground corn and minerals. There were some farmers who fed no grain, but said it was a long transition to acclimate the cows and breed for this ability. Some farmers said crossbreds are able to transition more smoothly to no-grain, but they all had exceptions in their herds. One concern was how to provide the extra minerals to the cows without using the grain as a vehicle.

There were several discussions centered on the Proposed Pasture Rule as farmers began to see some surprise requirements that seemed to have nothing to do with providing pasture. Most of these centered on the requirement that the cows be outside 365/24/7. The farmers that chimed in were outraged and puzzled -- certainly not a good policy to support optimum cow health and comfort. Many were equally puzzled by the sacrifice pasture, workable only on some farms. Outwintering herds was also discussed. Several farmers are trying it for the first time, others freely shared their success and failures in this practice. One farmer successfully outwintered the milking herd in the midwest, but is having far more trouble in Vermont. All agreed that cows must be given an area that is out of the wind. They must have someplace dry to lay down, so it takes a lot of bedding or wasted hay to maintain a bedded pack. Several farmers mentioned that the first year is the hardest, both for the cows and the farmer. One farmer was very open about the downside on their farm, including cows that melt through deep snow and get cast, frozen teats, increased incidence of mastitis in springing heifers, and a bull that frosted himself so he could not breed again. Several farmers spoke of cows lying down in a hole or on a hill, and not being able to rise -- a potentially fatal condition. One farmer seemed to feel that outwintering made the most sense on seasonal herds. One suggestion was to use Crystal Creek Udder Fancy instead of a teat dip in cold weather to prevent teat problems; another suggestion was to wipe off the teat dip before letting them out. One farmer said they felt that cold damage on teats set cows and heifers up for Staph aureus. Others felt that it was the cold, rainy weather with muddy conditions that was the most difficult for the cows. Another point was the increased intake of forage to compensate for increased energy needs; one farmer suggested that you estimate your forage needs will increase by 20% over

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Coming Soon:

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

cows fed in a barn.

The pros and cons of outwintering led to some talk on bedding pack barns and hoop structures to provide the shelter for the times where it is needed. The farmers that used this system all felt it was the best combination

for the good of the cows. It also allowed operations to comply with their state soil and water quality regulations, especially those that are large enough to be considered CAFO's.

There were some folks asking questions about starting farming; and of course received lots of ideas and suggestions. Some of the highlights were: have written holistic goals, have a written business plan, be wary of debt, don't be afraid of debt, size your operation for the income you need, graze as much land as you can, keep your off-farm job for a while until you have a cash flow, be sure you have a market secured before you begin, rent a farm (it's tax-deductible) and buy the cows to get started, some suggested to steer clear of FSA for financing, start your operation in an "ag" area so you'll have support services. It was also mentioned that the NODPA website has links to a variety of helpful information. (www.nodpa.com/resources.shtml)

Treatment of pneumonia in adult dairy cows was discussed, and the following treatment was offered: Dextrose bottle topped off with 90cc herbal anti-bacterial tincture (Phyto-Biotic) given IV, 500cc Vitamin C, 200 to 300cc hyperimmune plasma, 5cc Immunoboost, and calcium if it is an older cow and milking well. Follow up with 15cc Phyto-Biotic tincture given orally 2 to 3 times a day for 3 to 4 days. Add fresh air, clean and dry bedding, and top quality feed.

Cannibalism in cows? One farmer observed a Jersey cow chewing the tail of another cow. The injury required bandaging, and the farmer wondered if this was related to a mineral imbalance. Responses suggested that a magnesium deficiency would cause this type of behavior, and rock phosphate and dolomite limestone should be fed. A vet suggested that this was classic phosphorous deficiency.

The thread on dehorning adult cattle from the previous month continued into the subject of dehorning calves. It certainly is nobody's favorite job, but absolutely necessary to avoid dehorning older animals. Often, very young calves are dehorned quickly with no medication for pain, as they seem to resume normal behaviors. But it was recommended by our veterinarian friends that lidocaine (as a local anesthetic) or xylazine (as a sedative) be used; check with your certifier how they interpret the rule that allows xylazine for medical emergencies. After a bleak morning in the barn dehorning calves, we can all feel very receptive to new ideas on introducing polled genetics into our herds! ♦

Calendar

January 23-25, 2009

NOFA-NY 27th Annual Organic Farming and Gardening Conference:
"Meals Without Wheels! Revitalizing our Local, Organic Foodshed"
The Rochester Riverside Convention Center, Downtown Rochester, NY

Over 80 workshops to choose from and four dynamic keynote speakers. Also, a full-day organic grazing school with Sarah Flack from Vermont on Friday and six organic dairy workshops on Saturday. Visit www.nofanyc.org for agenda and registration information or call 607-652-6632

January 27

Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF) Annual Meeting
10 am – 1 pm, Barre Farm Show

Meeting is open to all certified producers (farmers and processors), and those interested in organic certification standards. Lunch will be provided. Please RSVP by calling the VOF office, 802-434-3821.

January 28-January 29, 2009

35th Annual Southern Dairy Conference
The Westin Atlanta Airport Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia

The 2009 Southern Dairy Conference primarily deals with milk marketing including the present dairy situation and outlook but also includes topics related to dairy sustainability, animal welfare, and milk quality. Visit the Registration Website for additional information and to register for the conference! <http://www.caes.uga.edu/UNIT/ATHENS/events/events.html#SDC>

January 31, 2009

Profits from Pastures: Genetic Selection, Management and Marketing for Grass-fed Beef in the Northeast
8:30 am to 4:30 pm - The Century House, Latham, NY (Albany County)

Speakers include Bill Hodge, Georgia cattleman, grazer, and University of Georgia Extension Beef Specialist, and Kathleen Harris, Director of the Northeast Livestock Processing Service. Also Kit Pharo and Dr. Allen Williams. For more information, contact Tom Gallagher, Cornell Cooperative Extension Albany County at 518-765-3500 or Morgan Hartman at blackqueenangus@yahoo.com.

February 4-7, 2009

PASA's 18th Annual Farming for the Future Conference, State College, PA

The two keynote speakers are Raj Patel, activist and Author of Stuffed and Starved and Bern Sweeney, researcher and Director of the Stroud Water Research Center.

The complete schedule and more information is available at www.pasafarming.org. Call 814-349-9856 to get a conference program.

February 14 – 15, 2009

NOFA-Vermont's 27th Annual Winter Conference
Vermont Technical College, Randolph Ctr, VT

More than 60 workshops for organic farmers, gardeners, homesteaders, and consumers! The Saturday keynote will be given by Andrew Meyer, founder of The Center for Agricultural Economy and Vermont Soy. The Sunday keynote will be given by Eliot Coleman, farmer and author of The New Organic Grower, Four Season Harvest, and The Winter Harvest Manual For More Information: Please contact the office at 802-434-4122 or info@nofavt.org.

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THERE'S STRENGTH IN NUMBERS!

February 19-21, 2009

Wisconsin Grazing Conference, Stevens Point, Wisconsin

"Valuing the Past, Growing Our Future" includes a track for beginning graziers, a rumen track and a general track, as well as keynote speakers Joel McNair and Shannon Hayes. For more information contact Heather Flashinski at 715-289-4896 or Email: grassheather@hotmail.com, www.grassworks.org/ConferencePage.htm

February 25 and 26, 2009 (Wed. – Thurs.)

US National Organic Action Plan Summit 2009

Just prior to MOSES Organic Farming Conference 20th Anniversary!
LaCrosse, Wisconsin

National Organic Action Plan for the United States (NOAP-US) is a project to articulate a vision, goals, and mechanisms to chart the future of U.S. Organic Food and Agriculture for the next decade. For More Information (including Scholarship info) contact: Liana Hoodes: Liana@hvc.rr.com or go to: www.rafiusa.org

February 26-28, 2009

20th Annual Organic Farming Conference - Including Organic University! MOSES, La Crosse, Wisconsin

Celebrating 20 YEARS of sharing knowledge, finding solutions, and moving the organic movement forward together. Contact: Phone: 715-772-3153; Website: www.mosesorganic.org or email: info@mosesorganic.org.

February 26-28, 2009

Organicology, Portland, Oregon

Organicology is a three-day conference that will study a sustainable food

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Advertise With Us!

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Ad rates and sizes listed below;
deadline for advertising in
March issue is February 16, 2009.

Full Page Ad (7.5" W x 10.25" H) = \$450

1/2 Page Ad (7.5" W x 4.5" H) = \$230

1/4 Page Ad (3.5" W x 4.75" H) = \$130

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Classified Ads: Free to Northeast organic farmers. All others \$10 for the first \$30 words; \$.10 per word over 30

For advertising information call Lisa McCrory:
802-234-5524 or email lmccrory@hughes.net

Please email your electronic ad (.eps, .tiff, .jpg, .gif) to chris@chrishillmedia.com or send your ad to: Lisa McCrory, Nodpa Newsletter, 341 Macintosh Hill Rd., Randolph, VT 05060

NOTE: Ads requiring typesetting, size changes or design work will be charged additional fees, according to the service (minimum charge \$30.00).

Please send a check with your ad (made payable to NODPA).

JANUARY 2009

NODPA NEWS

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Grain-fed vs. Grass-fed Beef?

Kids Have No Clear Preference in Oregon State Taste Test

PORTLAND, Ore. – Children can tell the difference between grass- and grain-fed beef, but when it comes to preference, they're evenly split, according to taste tests that Oregon State University conducted at two grade schools in Portland.

Portland Public Schools asked OSU to conduct the surveys as part of its effort to serve more locally produced food. The district had been considering serving hamburger patties made from local grass-fed cattle instead of the grain-fed beef that it now serves and whose origin is unknown to the district.

Before purchasing the costlier grass-fed beef, school officials needed to know if students would even like it and could detect a difference, said Gitta Grether-Sweeney, an assistant director for the school district's nutrition services department. So they consulted someone who understands taste buds: Ann Colonna, the manager of the Sensory and Consumer Program at OSU's Food Innovation Center. Located in northwest Portland, the research center helps develop, test and market edible products made from Northwest commodities.

This fall Colonna asked 96 students in the school named Clark K-8 @ Binnsmead in southeast Portland to taste three similar-looking hamburger patties and identify the one that was different. In some cases, two came from grass-fed beef and the third was from grain-fed cattle. In other instances, it was the other way around. Seventy-three of the students correctly identified the patty that was different.

With a difference detected, Colonna moved to the next level: preference. She asked 91 students at Abernethy Elementary in southeast Portland to taste two hamburger patties made from the two types of beef served in the prior taste test.

The students were not told that one was made from grass-fed cattle and the other was from grain-fed herds. Sitting at tables in the cafeteria, each student received a quarter of a patty in a wheat bun served on a paper plate with the number 372, denoting the grain-fed beef, and a similar-looking serving on another plate with the number 681, the code for the grass-fed one.

After eyeballing, eating, smelling and sometimes even licking the patties, the students then turned to their paper ballots and circled the number of the patty they preferred. Forty-five students preferred the grass-fed while 46 liked the grain-fed best.

"For now, since there was not a strong preference for the grass-fed patty, and it is more expensive, we will not be able to afford to serve the grass-fed patty on a regular basis," Grether-Sweeney said.

The grain-fed beef the district serves costs \$17.11 per case (with 140 patties per case) and the particular brand of grass-fed beef it tested costs \$44.85 a

case (with 75 patties per case), she said.

She added that Portland Public Schools would still dish up the grass-fed beef in all its cafeterias on Jan. 8 as part of its "Local Lunches" program. Under the program, once a month the district serves a meal made entirely of products from Oregon, Washington or northern California.

After the Abernethy students turned in their ballots, Cory Schreiber asked the students to describe why they liked the patties they chose. Schreiber, the founder of Portland's Wildwood Restaurant, manages a program called Farm to School for the Oregon Department of Agriculture that aims to put more locally produced food in schools.

"I liked 681 because it had a tiny bit of salt," a boy said.

One girl said she preferred the grain-fed beef because "it tasted kind of like bacon and the other one was too salty and too dry."

The grass-fed beef the students tasted in the surveys came from Portland-based SP Provisions, which processes a brand of beef called Cascade Natural Beef. It's made from Angus steers in Oregon and Washington that are raised on grass, but for the last four months of their lives are fed grain and corn to fatten them up, said Jim Register, the general manager of the company.

The Portland school district doesn't know where the beef it serves is raised because it comes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's entitlement program, which buys beef from all over the United States.

In the taste tests, which were funded by the USDA, both types of patties were cooked in an oven. Because the grain-fed one is shipped precooked, that meant it was actually cooked twice. The patties looked similar except that the grain-fed one was a little darker because of the double cooking. The burgers contained 80 percent beef and 20 percent fat. The grain-fed patty contained hydrolyzed corn protein, dextrose, salt, flavorings, sodium phosphates and caramel color. Because the grass-fed one didn't use any seasonings, Schreiber sprinkled salt on it for a more equal comparison with the salted grain-fed one.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Dehorning Dairy Cattle With Genetics

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gous polled) and one parent with two horned genes (homozygous horned). With polled being dominant, all resulting offspring are polled as each resulting animal has one polled gene and one horned gene (heterozygous polled).

Exhibit B shows one parent with one polled gene (heterozygous polled) and one parent with two horned genes (homozygous horned). In this gene action, one half of the resulting animals are polled as each one has one polled gene (heterozygous polled). One half of the resulting animals are horned as they have two horned genes (homozygous horned).

In conclusion, utilizing the polled gene is easier than ever before with additional sires available through A.I. The financial savings through labor, time, equipment and sustained growth of the animal can be substantial. And, a herd can be converted to poll in short order with polled being dominant.

Fred Hendricks is the owner of SunShower Acres, Ltd, Longmont, Colorado. SunShower has been involved with the sampling-development of young sires for the A.I. industry for over 25 years. Several polled bulls developed by SunShower are now active through A.I.

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Classified Ads

More extensive classifieds can be found on the NODPA web site at: www.nodpa.com/classifieds.shtml

Livestock

For Sale: Certified Organic Jersey cow and heifers. One cow bred 85 days, two heifers bred 135 days and 65 days, and one heifer open. Also Jersey/Holstein cow bred 140 days. Nice animals from out wintered grazing herd. \$1,200 each or \$5,000 for the group. Email Stonypondfarm@surfglobal.net or call 802-827-3693.

WANTED: Seasonal certified organic herd required (March calving) must be a grazing herd and eat very little to no grain. Cows can be cross-breds and very interested in Normande and NZ genetics. Cows must have had access to the winter environment or outwintered. Please phone Ashley 607 267 2407 or clementsanz@gmail.com.

For Sale: Up to 5 certified organic holsteins, 3 very fresh. Well managed. \$1800.00 each. Contact: Warren Shaw. Email: warren@shawfarm.com Phone: 978-957-0031 Location: Dracut, MA

“Unusual cow offer” - Hi, I'm Colleen Kimball, I have a great opportunity to travel to Europe with the People to People Student Ambassadors Program next Summer but I will need to raise quite a lot of money to make this dream come true. I have had the make a difficult decision to sell one of my favorite 4-H cows to raise money for my trip.

Teardrop is in her third lactation and has been raised on an organic

pasture-based dairy. She has won many awards including 4-H Grand Champion Lineback in 2008 and 2006. For more information about Teardrop, please contact Steve Kimball, Falconer, NY, Phone: 716-267-9272, Email: steve@kimvale.com

Herd Reduction. 40 organic Holsteins. Your choice from springers to older cows. All ages, all stages of lactation. South Western Ontario. Contact Jenny Butcher, phone number:519-503-6852, Email: its_five_o_clock@yahoo.ca .

Forages & Grain

For Sale: Organic Alfalfa Hay or Grass Hay bales located in Avon NY. Scott Stokie Farms. Phone 585-330-3050 for pricing. Email: cori-weav82@yahoo.com Phone: 585-322-4877

Organic hay for sale: 4x5 2nd cut dry round bales and 4x4 1st cut wrapped round bales. Willing to sell or barter! Feed is being tested for nutritional value - results available soon. Located in Ferrisburg, Vermont, certified by VOF. Contact: Tim Barrows 802-475-2273 or 802-349-4861 (cell)

For Sale: Certified organic baleage. Dairy Quality. Northern PA/Central NY area. Rob Moore (607)699-7968. Email: cowpoke2@verizon.net

Organic seed for sale: Spring wheat, Early Riser Corn and Rigadon Oats for sale. Contact Jack Lazor, Butterworks Farm, Westfield, VT. Phone: 802-744-6855 or email: butterworksfarm@pshift.com

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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: _____

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

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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

2008 for us in the Midwest has been a year of extremes, too much rain at a time in the spring resulting in flooding, wet cold spring soils leading to late or unplanted crops, and snow and cold and snow and cold in December. We have seen record fuel prices with all inputs following suit. We have also seen record prices for some feedstuffs. Thankfully most have been blessed with harvests that are adequate to get them through the year.

We have gone from an organic rule that was so lax to promote cheating to a proposed rule that is overly prescriptive. Hopefully we will get a workable final rule that will be understandable and most importantly enforceable and enforced!

A special thank-you to all who have been active in formulating the FOOD Farmers response and to all who participated in the process with either verbal or written comment or both. Be prepared to comment further when the proposed rule for replacement livestock, last 1/3rd comes out. It is with active involvement that we gain influence and the hope for an outcome that is favorable to us.

My hope for all in 2009 is health, profitability and the time and energy to

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.

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1720 Crum Rd,
Shiloh, OH 44878
Phone and Fax: 419-895-1182

enjoy both.

And that you will join us for MODPA'S Annual Meeting on Friday February 27th from 12:30 to 1:30 at the Organic Farming Conference in La Crosse. Come and bring your ideas for our organization. Help formulate our path for 2009 and beyond. We welcome your presence and participation.

Join in the 20th anniversary celebration of the greatest Organic Farming Conference anywhere. If you need more info on the conference you can find it at www.mosesorganic.org/conference. See you there.

Darlene Hoehoorn, MODPA President

Rosendale, Wisconsin

Classified Ads

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Equipment

Looking for: Small scale vegetable operation starting up. Looking for equipment for field planting, harvesting. Especially interested in equipment that could be converted to horse drawn. Contact Tim Barrows, 802-475-2273 or cell phone: 802-349-4861.

Services

Relief Milking/Farm Sitting: recently retired organic dairy farmer willing to farm sit or offer relief milking services. Willing to travel and stay for a few days at a time. Interested in working with small scale organic dairy farms. Willing to barter for services. Contact: Tim Barrows, 802-475-2273 or cell phone: 802-349-4861.

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: Bruce Drinkman, MODPA Treasurer, 3253 150th Ave, Glenwood City, WI 54013

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CALENDAR

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future through in-depth workshops, networking, a trade show, and keynote presentations by the world's foremost organic food and farming experts. For more information call: 503-378-0690 or email: organic@tilth.org

March 4-5, 2009

2009 Northeast Pasture consortium Annual Meeting

Lakeview Golf Resort, Morgantown, WV

Agenda includes Key Note Speaker Dr David Pimental, talking about ecologic and energy saving value of pasture-based livestock production. Other workshop topics will include marketing carbon credits, raw milk opportunities, pasture economics and environmental effects, value added production systems and more. For more information or to register, please call: 304-293-6131 ext 4231 or becky.casteel@mail.wvu.edu.

March 6-7, 2009

2009 Appalachian Grazing Conference, Lakeview Golf Resort, Morgantown, WV

Experts in livestock grazing will be presenting information to help cattle, horse, sheep and goat producers increase profitability. Topics include: Forage Quality; Invasive Species and Their Control; Management Strategies; Soil Sampling and Fertilizer Records; and Multi-Species Grazing. The complete schedule and registration form is available on line at: [HTTP://www.wvca.us/dl/lfu/09_AGC_Brochure_Reprint-09_full.pdf](http://www.wvca.us/dl/lfu/09_AGC_Brochure_Reprint-09_full.pdf).

August 25-28, 2009

First IFOAM Conference on Organic Animal and Plant Breeding-- Breeding Diversity, in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

IFOAM solicits abstracts for papers to be presented as well as seeds to be planted in the Seeds of Change demonstration plot. IFOAM invites farmers and scientists, traders and certifiers, gardeners and animal breeders, professionals and dedicated hobby breeders to submit their papers by February 1, 2009. Topics will be methods, socioeconomic aspects, and legal aspects of both animal and plant breeding. For details on submitting an abstract, please visit IFOAM conference. Visit the IFOAM website: www.ifoam.org or contact Ms Zoe Heuschkel: email: z.heuschkel@ifoam.org



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