NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

MAY 2010 Volume 10, Issue 3 WWW.NODPA.COM

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Organic Industry News

Organic Production

Research/Education

Net Update

Member Info

Feature Farm: The Burroughs Family Farm

The Burroughs family has been farming in the San Joaquin Valley of California since 1896. Today, their ranch features two certified organic dairies, an almond farm, a pastured egg business ... and much more.

By Lisa McCrory

I recently traveled to California to attend the April 2010 NOSB meeting and decided that it would be a shame to travel all that way and not visit some west coast organic dairy farms. So my trip was a mixture of meetings, networking, and driving to farms within a 2-hour radius of Sacramento. One of the farms (actually, a ranch) that I was fortunate to put in my travel plans was that of Ward and Rosie Burroughs, in Denair, California. Their ranch is located in the San Joaquin Valley and is a place of many enterprises owned in partnership by Ward, Rosie and each of their children. Farming goes way back in both Ward and Rosie's family lineage. Ward's side of the family has been on this ranch since 1896,

continued on page 26

Organic Dairy Study Results for the 2008 Production Year

By Bob Parsons

Over the past 5 years a joint project between NOFA and UVM Extension has examined the economics of organic dairy production in Vermont and Maine, with the study looking only at Vermont for the last 2 years. What we have found is an agricultural sector that experienced a surge in profitability and prices in 2006 only to see those profits erode by 2009. The study involved developing balance sheets and accrual income statements from participating farms that were paid for their assistance.

For 2008, the 35 farms in the study averaged 67 cows, producing 13,438 lbs of milk per cow at an average price of $30.90 per cwt. There is quite a contrast of farms in the study, ranging from 257 cows to a low of 20 cows. However several of the smaller herds were the most profitable. There is also a contrast in milk per cow, ranging from 7789 lbs to 19,132 lbs of milk per cow showing a range of management practices and amount of grain being fed. Two herds in the study did not feed any grain, and these farms were not the lowest producing herds in the study.

continued on page 18

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From The NODPA President

By now most of you who read this newsletter must realize that with the newly clarified "pasture rule" there is a sh__load of math and documentation connected with it. That must have been what Richard Mathews meant when he said "be careful what you ask for".

I'm not one of those who is even remotely fond of documentation or recordkeeping. Don't think so, ask my certifier. I have gotten better at it as time goes on and I understand why there is the need for a paper trail and I do accept it. But I don't have to like it.

If I was a consumer who just shelled out extra for something because it's organic and it means enough to me to shell out extra cash, it damn well better have some sort of verification showing that it is indeed produced the way it's supposed to be.

I know there's a lot of bitching about the increase in paperwork, but what's the alternative? A product that's been produced under a cloud of suspicion, easily open to criticism from those who are just waiting for any opportunity to discredit it.

Too bad it had to come to this, Just to make sure that organic dairy animals actually do get to eat grass, probably the most economical way to produce milk there is, instead of the other end of the spectrum, where they never get a chance to.

This is going to be a short piece because I've been up for a long time today, and just came in from planting. Got some phone calls to make, one of them important to me, and I'm tired. That's what I get for procrastinating, but if I don't do this Lisa will hound me until I do. I'm busy, got a lot of things that need tending to. Bitch, bitch, bitch.

Henry Perkins, NODPA President
Albion, Maine

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From The NODPA Desk

By NODPA Executive Director Ed Maltby

May is always a great time of year, full of hope for the summer and plenty of great feed. As usual, the weather has been tempting producers to get out into the fields early, but then comes back with frost and spring snowstorms, all the while daffodils are poking up through 5 inches of wet snow. Lisa McCrory, NODPA News editor and great resource person, took the opportunity to head west just before the snow arrived and spent the week in California reporting on the NOSB and Pasture meetings, plus visiting farms and getting reacquainted with colleagues in the organic community. Thanks for your great work Lisa, and for your exceptional planning to escape the last throes of winter in New England.

> "FOOD Farmers has initiated a supply management committee that is looking at the future for organic dairy and how best we can tie in with any changes in the non-organic market in order to bring supply back into line with demand and avoid a repeat of the suffering imposed on family farms in the last eighteen months."

The organic dairy market is slowly picking up as we are coming back into supply balance in the Northeast and Midwest, while the west is still out of balance. This hasn't happened without losing farms and causing great hardship to many organic family farms, especially those that shipped to Hood/Stonyfield. Hopefully, the attrition in the west will not be too bad, although there will be some Humboldt producers who have fallen victim to the schemes of its ex-CEO and some Clover Stonatta shippers who will exit the organic pool. Horizon is allowing its farms to increase production amid rumors that supply will be short this fall. Rumors are always rife in organic dairy and there are reports that some of the smaller cooperatives/handlers are being squeezed out. Long the subject of rumor, the latest exchange on Aurora Dairy is that since they are no longer exempt from the federal pool as producer handlers, they are looking to contract with other farms to supply milk in order to maximize the production from their state-of-the-art milk plant.

The new pasture regulations are fast becoming christened the new "Paper Regs" as certifiers and the NOP work through the best ways to follow the new requirements. Those certifiers and producers that have been recording pasture use in the past are busy sharing their experiences with others and taking the mystery and fear out of what is acceptable within Organic System Plans. During the next year the NOP will be required to work closely with certifiers, and the certifiers with their inspectors, to problem-solve interpretations and move away from knee jerk over-reactions to what are the normal challenges of implementing a major rule change. There are some initiatives being proposed by educators that would expand opportunities for organic inspectors to earn certification in different areas and to improve their skills at a time when the organic regulations become more specific, enforcement more inclusive and annual inspections more comprehensive.

FOOD Farmers has initiated a supply management committee that is looking at the future for organic dairy and how best we can tie in with any changes in the non-organic market in order to bring supply back into line with demand and avoid a repeat of the suffering imposed on family farms in the last eighteen months. Supply management was identified as a priority by producers at the last NODPA Field Days and will feature prominently in the 2010 Field Days in Maine this October. We need to find better long-term solutions that are reached by producers and processors working together, rather than processors imposing solutions and offering band-aids while in fire-fighting mode. Organic Valley is taking the time, through the various producer committees, to fine tune its quota program in order to set up an equitable system for creating an active base tied to equity investment while still recognizing that for any program to be effective the base needs to reflect actual production.

Change, or fear of change, should not restrict our growth within organic dairy. This past year has dramatically changed producers' expectations on planning and budgeting for the future. The concept of a predictable pay price and steadily increasing demand has been replaced by restrictions on growth and an uncertain pay price. Processors have responded with increased marketing and diversification into new product, with OV ready to launch a new Omega-3-enhanced milk product this summer. The pasture regulations will create more paperwork for producers and initial headaches for certifiers, but we now have a strong reasonably funded NOP that is actively pursuing a policy of transparency, enforcement and pro-active problem-solving. We have an opportunity to move forward together to make our industry stronger while ensuring economic equity for all levels of our supply chain. NODPA's mission is to ensure a sustainable and predictable pay price and we are actively moving forward to achieve that by working with every sector of the organic community. ◆

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Improving Net Profit By Reducing Grain Inputs

C.A. Daley, S. Horton, D.E. Holmes

California State University, Chico - Organic Dairy Farm

This research was made possible by funding from Farmers Advocating for Organics (FAFO) and the California Agriculture Research Initiative (CARI)

Objective:

To study the impact of reducing grain inputs in an intensive grazing system on milk production, milk quality and income over feed costs.

The old adage "less is more" can be applied to grain supplementation under managed intensive grazing systems where pasture quality and quantity are in good supply. In a recent study completed on the Organic Dairy Farm at California State University Chico, cows supplemented with grain at 12% of their dry matter intake (DMI) had a significantly higher economic return (as reflected in income over feed costs), as compared to cows supplemented at 24% of their DMI under an intensive grazing system. All cows were grazed on cool season pasture forages including a mixture of annual and periennial ryegrass, prairie brome grasses, brassicas and white clover.

Data was collected over the course of the four-month trial on seventy-five crossbred Jersey-Holstein cows that averaged sixty days in milk at the onset of the study. All cows were peaked at 14 lbs of grain, and then allotted to one of two treatment groups based on age and milk production. Treatments included Group L: Low supplementation group fed 6 lbs of grain/head/day (n=36 cows), and Group H: High supplementation group fed 12 lbs of grain (n=37 cows). The average cost and composition of the ad libitum and supplementary feeds are illustrated in Figure 1. All cows had ad libitum access to pasture and water and were rotated into a fresh feed every 12 hours. Both treatment groups were fed equal amounts of alfalfa hay (8.9 lb DM) and winter forage mix silage (4.5 lb DM) in a feed bunk once daily in the evening.

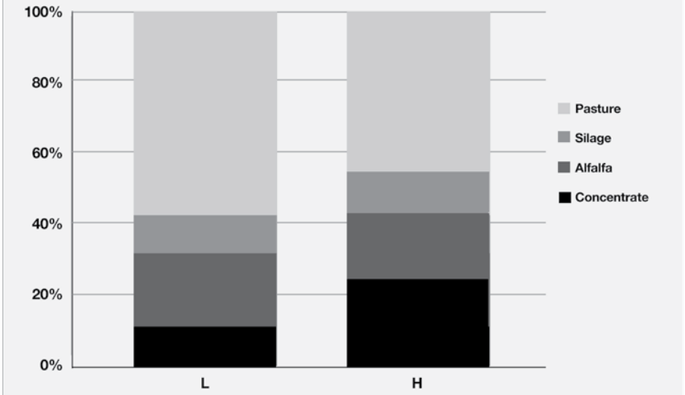
The concentrate used for supplementation was equal parts rolled corn and rolled barley and fed twice daily at the time of milking so that intake could be closely monitored. Daily

DMI estimate was based off 4% of the herd average cow weight (1100 pounds) amounting to an average estimated DMI of 44 pounds per cow per day. The amounts of DMI from the alfalfa, winter mix silage, and concentrate were subtracted from the total estimated DMI to reach the estimated pasture consumption for group L of 25.32 pounds DM (58% of total DMI) and of 20.04 pounds DM (46% of total DMI) for group H. Both groups had a smorgasbord of mineral choices available to them at all times including macrominerals, kelp and trace minerals.

Individual milk yield (Dairy Comp 305) was measured at each milking and recorded as a daily value. Individual milk quality (AgriTech Analysis) measurements consisting of somatic cell count, protein, butterfat, and solids non-fat, were measured monthly.

Feed costs were calculated to determine the cost differential between groups L and H. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA analysis) was applied to the quantity and quality components to establish income per day per cow. Milk yields were collected daily throughout the treatment period, data for quality and components were collected from the monthly DHIA reports and analyzed by cow and by treatment. Each cow was then assessed

Figure 1: Estimated DMI per cow per day by groups L and H.



for Income Over Feed Cost (IOFC) which was measured in dollars per cow per day, as well as establishing Feed Cost/ CWT of milk produced. ANOVA analysis was used to determine treatment effects with respect to IOFC and FC/CWT between groups L and H and will represent our evaluation of overall profitability. Both figures reflect the difference between the price of milk and the cost to produce it (Bailey, 2007). The feed cost differential between groups L and H was calculated at $0.84 per head per

continued on page 29

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Properly Preparing the Fresh Cow

By Dr. Paul Detloff

What determines the health of the calf, the birthing process, colostrum quality and the immune reserve of the cow at the time of parturition? The last trimester and dry period. Calving isn't just having a clean well bedded pen to run some old neglected skag into to see if you get a heifer or a bull, and to see how much milk she has in the udder for you to sell. You are what you eat!

Let's start at dry-off. The cow should be in good body condition at that time. Body condition must be attended to in the last trimester. When you dry a cow off, you must shut down the endocrine system, telling it to stop producing milk. What triggers that? A tight udder. That means you quit milking her cold turkey. You bring her back in and do a strip check at 7 days. If you have a problem with mastitis, you then attack it with your favorite protocol. You have 10-14 days to clean her up. That high somatic cow or one with a history of flair ups, you then pre-milk. Two weeks before calving, start milking her. If you pre-milk at least two weeks before calving, you will have the cleanest colostrum in the country. Don't let anyone tell you that you will ruin the colostrum. That is so wrong. The colostrum is made by the endocrine system at parturition.

All dry cows, no matter what season of the year, need to be on free choice kelp and humates – fed individually. One of kelps many traits is to increase the fluid (mucous) produced to help the calving process. Kelp cows and heifers have few calving problems because of the lubrication at birthing. Kelp will usually be consumed quite heavily at the first 12-14 days. Then they slack off. Humates will be consumed at about 1/5 the amount of kelp. Humates feed the microbes in the rumen. This helps the rumen flora adjust during the feed changes experienced during dry off and the milking ration. Kelp and humates help build a very potent colostrum as they both contain a plethora of trace elements which is vital for the immune system, reproduction and general vitality of both the cow and calf.

Minerals should also be available to the dry cow. You can either use the free choice system which has successfully been developed by various companies or have a mineral fed which balances your calcium/phosphorous ratio according to the forage fed. Legumes are usually higher in calcium and calcium is low in grass. Have a leaf analysis on your dry cow forages to see where the Cal:Phos ratios and the Ca:K ratios are. Ca:Phos should be at 1.8 : 1 and Ca:K should be as close to 1:1 as you can get.

From a veterinarian's point of view, the worst messes that occur are very costly, and are related to these errors:

- The first mistake is to feed a forage that is high in potassium (K); the ratio should be 1:1 for Ca:K. When you get into run-down, dead, low calcium soils, you can see Ca:K at 1:4 up to 1:7. This is a veterinarians dream and a farmer's nightmare. You get huge udder edema (more hidden mastitis), alert downer milk fevers, poor quality colostrum and a higher incidence of left-side displaced abomasums.
- The second problem is when a farmer runs out of forage because of a hayfield freezing out, drought, or a general lack of enough acres of grass and hay. They then decide to stretch it out with corn silage. Thirty heifers put on mostly corn silage, say 30 pounds or more, will give you 30 headaches. They will at first be over-conditioned and you will be pulling calves from fat heifers. Seeds and corn stalks are lowly mineralized so you will have poor quality colostrum for the calf. Also, they go into sub-clinical ketosis rapidly, then ketosis. Then watch the Displaced Abomasums (DA's) come on. They transition poorly and just crash. Mastitis is also a big problem in corn silage fed dry cows and heifers.

Selenium is another mineral that is very necessary, and should be fed at the maximum level. Selenium is so vital for so many functions in the cow and calf that it should always be addressed in the dry cow stage. The free choice system works very well. The theory of overeating it to the point of toxicity doesn't happen. If not included in the free choice system, then make sure it is included in the minerals fed and at the maximum level.

At delivery, make sure the environment is clean, well bedded, dry and ventilated. If in the summer, nothing is better than good clean grass or pasture. If you anticipate a problem, like a heifer standing around with her tail out, don't be afraid to do a vaginal examination to see what is going on. Use a sleeve, which can irritate them sometimes, or just wash your arm up and lubricate it well. Wash her vulva lips, and gently slide your arm in. You will be going in a warm tunnel with a rose at the end. If the rose is open one or two fingers, she is starting the process. The hormones are opening up her cervix (dilating). If you feel a twist and a shelf at 9 o'clock, with the calf laying upside down over the shelf, you have a 180 degree counter clockwise uterine torsion and need help. Uterine torsions caught early will usually have a live calf. If it is coming breech (the calf's tail sticking out – quite often twins) get professional help. I've seen too many farmers deliver breech calves where the top of the uterus is torn off the cervix from too much pressure being applied when correcting the position of the calf. Part of being a good manager is knowing when you need help.

After delivery, if you have access to warm water, get the cow or heifer to drink as much water as she wants. In the last ten years that I practiced, I would put Pulsatilla (Homeopathic) pills into the water. I was always amazed at how often they would pass their placenta. Even after a tough calving. I would often bet the farmers a Diet Coke that I could get her to clean with warm water and Pulsatilla. That was in my other life, before I learned that Aspartame kills brain cells, brain cells, brain cells! In my early years as a veterinarian, I pulled the calf and left the farm. It took time out of my day to take care of the the cow after the calf was on the ground. My last 10 years in practice, I made sure mama cow got warm water and the calf got iodine on the navel.

If you have a Johnes negative herd, I would always want to see the cow licking the calf off. This stimulates the cow and calf more than we know. Then, as soon as possible, all the clean, high brix colostrum you can get into the calf.

When I get calls now on scours in a calf less than 3-4 days old, milk fevers or uterine prolapses, I look at what's happening in the dry cow arena and that's where I find the answer to their problems. The dry cow is SO, SO important. Get that lactation and new born calf off to a good start and you will have things going in the right direction. ◆

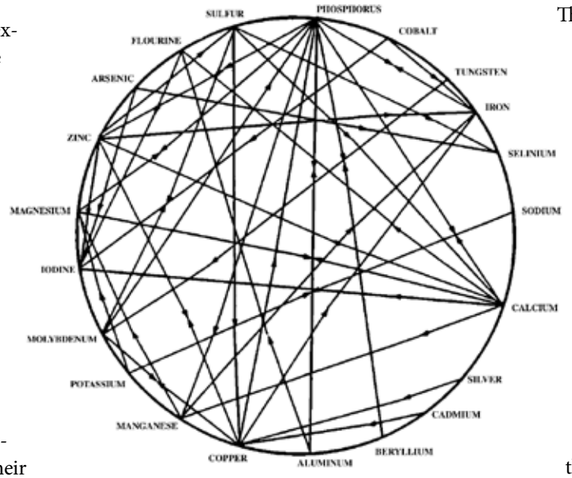
Dr. Paul Dettloff has worked with CROPP Cooperative as a Staff Veterinarian to ensure healthy livestock since 2002. He has dedicated himself to sustainable and organic/biological treatment for dairy and beef cattle, sheep and goats and has researched and developed treatment protocols for many natural remedies, botanicals and homeopathic medicines. Author of 'Alternative Treatments for Ruminant Animals' he has also written several CROPP Cooperative Organic Farming Technical Bulletins, covering topics from stray currents to natural mastitis treatments.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Free Choice Smorgasbord Vitamin and Mineral Supplementation for Livestock

By Susan Beal, DVM

There's been a lot of talk over the years about free choice minerals and supplements. Some say yea, some say nay, some swear by it, some swear at it.



I can only speak from my experience. That experience involves two decades of observing stock of all species, in of all levels of health and in various management situations, as they are allowed to free choice to meet their needs using a smorgasbord of options. Over the years that experience has shown me that animals are capable of determining their needs - if we do not artificially manipulate the carrier and if we provide them choices. Actually, they can still determine their needs in the latter situations - but are unable to express them accurately because they don't have the "ingredients" available to do so.

First, let's define what I'm talking about when I use the words 'free choice'. Some folks describe free choice as allowing stock unlimited access to a limited selection of supplements (say, Redmond salt or kelp or blocks/tubs) or access to supplements that are mixed together (either as a calculated "balanced and complete" supplement for stock or as, say, kelp and salt mixed). From where I stand that's not free choice.

I'm also not talking about training stock to eat certain things, either by association or by aversion therapies.

The type of free choice that I am speaking of provides stock with full access to an assortment of minerals and vitamins (a full smorgasbord, so to speak) so they can make the choices they need to correct their imbalances, be those actual deficiencies, compensations for functional deficiencies or excesses or compensations necessitated by changes in weather, quality of feedstuff and composition and quality of the water source.

The type of free choice about which I am speaking has no attachment to the actual amounts of the minerals and vitamins that are provided – other than to use the pattern of their choices as a means to trouble shoot both within the herd and in the individual. I'll talk more about that in a bit.

If we don't allow stock the broadest choice we can – a choice that represents the individual minerals and vitamins in amounts the individual animal elects, not just the ones we "think" they need (ingredient and amount) - then they do the best they can with what they have in the environment. Sometimes that's eating odd things,

The mineral wheel provided in the illustration at left shows the lovely inter-relationships and influences between minerals and nutrients. One can see how the excess, or lack, be they absolute or functional of any individual mineral greatly influences other minerals in the ecology.

some times it's using a Calcium source as a buffer for their acidosis, sometimes that's eating straw bedding when they have third cut alfalfa in front of them (they do this in an attempt to correct their calcium: phosphorus ratio/balance), sometimes that's drinking urine,..... and sometimes it is going in a pile, be that a small pile (say reduced reproductive efficiency.....) or a real crash and burn pile (say a big metabolic crisis).

We need to let stock eat fiber when they need fiber, salt when they need salt, mineral when they need mineral, plain salt when they need plain salt..... and not marry minerals and vitamins to something such as salt or a total mixed ration (TMR). One can mix a TMR that hits the high spots, but that approach doesn't allow the animal to meet its individual needs of the moment, be that a change in hay or pasture, a run of less than optimal silage, molds or toxins in the feed or water, some cloudy weather, or individual metabolic demands. The only way we can do that is to let the individual animals choose what it is that they need at that moment - allowing them to rebalance their economy.

The mineral wheel provided in the illustration shows the lovely inter-relationships and influences between minerals and nutrients. One can see how the excess or lack, be they absolute or functional (eg "tied up by another mineral"), of any individual mineral greatly influences other minerals in the ecology.

It seems to me that we need to get rid of the idea that man is smarter and knows more about the needs of stock than the individual animals themselves. That concept flies in the face of a whole bunch of things that one may have learned at Ag school or from the extension agent or the feed man – and that's why some folks find that so hard to swallow.

We also need to be really aware of what influence the water has in this whole equation. Oftentimes we forget the amount of water the animals drink in comparison to the amount of food they eat; paying more attention to the quality of the food than of the water. Many a time I've seen herds unable to balance their nutritional needs because of poor quality or limited water. We also need to be aware of the unintended deleterious effects one finds when one uses softened water as a source of drinking water.

Over the years I've fielded all sorts of questions and concerns about feeding animals using a smorgasbord free choice system. I'm not going to try and answer all of them here, but will speak to a couple of the most common things I hear:

1. **Folks are worried that the animals will over-eat the supplement.**

   While they may eat a surprising amount of certain components, there is always a reason for so doing. Sometimes they are simply correcting a deficiency or imbalance – and that consumption should level off after a couple of weeks. If the group won't "balance" then it's incumbent on the herdsman to continue the conversation about what might be occurring in the environment or stewardship that is perpetuating the situation. This could involve water issues, stray voltage, feed quality or contamination issues, types of forage, weather, molds and toxins, medications, or individual animal health issues.

2. **Folks are worried it's going to be expensive.**

   While the cost of high quality, biologically available nutrition may indeed be more than lesser quality components, it's important to remember that the animals will only eat what they need. You are not force-feeding unneeded nutrients. You are also not forcing an imbalanced supplement based on inexpensive (but not biologically active) ingredients.

   One also needs to measure expense across the whole system: cost of supplements, feed efficiency, production, manure composition, health care costs……

continued on page 30

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Resources for Organic Dairy Farmers

1. Updated Small Dairy Resource Book Now Available

SARE Outreach announces the release of its newly updated Small Dairy Resource Book, a thorough collection of resources for farm families interested in capitalizing on value-added dairy products. The Small Dairy Resource Book is available online only.

Download it for free at www.sare.org/publications/dairyresource.htm.

Vicki H. Dunaway, of the Hometown Creamery Revival, evaluates the pros and cons of more than 150 resources, from the most current information in print and online to obscure, out-of-print publications that are useful for their timeless knowledge. Resources formats include books, periodicals, videos, Web sites and others on a wide range of topics related to farmstead dairy processing. Extension agents and other agricultural educators also will find this cohesive guide a valuable source of information.

Resources are broken into the following categories:

· Cheesemaking · Ice cream · Dairy processing · Dairy animals · Business and marketing · Butter · Other dairy foods · Food safety · Feeds and grazing

Originally published in 2000, The Small Dairy Resource Book was updated in 2010 with new entries, and revised contact and price information for listed resources.

2. Prescribed Grazing and Feeding Management for Lactating Dairy Cows

This book is available on-line on the Northeast Pasture Consortium's Grazing Guide website at: http://www.umaine.edu/grazingguide/Other%20Stuff/cow-feeding-mgt.pdf, which also has a lot of other great grazing info available. It does take awhile to download (15 MB), but it is great to have an electronic copy readily available. To request a print copy, please contact Karen Hoffman, USDA NRCS: Email: karen.hoffman2@ny.usda.gov, Phone: 607-334-4632 ext. 116 ◆

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Educated Cows Eat Weeds

By Kathy Voth, Livestock for Landscapes, LLC
http://www.livestockforlandscapes.com
kvoth@livestockforlandscapes.com

If you're tired of spending time and money to manage the same weeds year after year, here's some good news. The solution may already be grazing in your pasture!

Nerves from the mouth, nose rumen meet in the same pathway in the brain so that creatures can link flavors and smells with nutritional feedback from foods.

Since 2004 I've been training cows to eat a wide variety of weeds. Training takes 10 hours over 10 days and for an investment of $250 you can train a herd of 50 cows who will go on to train their calves and their herd mates. By the end of the summer, you can have an army of weed-eaters patrolling your pastures, turning a former foe into forage.

How do you train a cow?

The training steps I developed are based on discoveries by Dr. Fred Provenza and his colleagues about how animals choose what to eat, and on the decades of research by animal behaviorists on how animals learn. That sounds complicated, but I've condensed what they wrote into the following uncomplicated steps that can be adapted to fit any producer's needs:

Step 1: *Know Your Weed ... Nutrients and Toxins*

Research shows that animals choose what to eat based on feedback from nutrients and toxins in their foods. The more nutritious a plant is, the more likely the animal is to eat it. Fortunately, most weeds are at least as good in nutritional value as the grasses our cattle commonly graze, and many are similar in nutrition to alfalfa. That means, that if I can get a cow to try it, she'll like it, and she'll keep on eating it in pasture.

After years of testing different weeds for nutritional value, my general rule of thumb is that if it is green and growing it is nutritious. So today, I spend less time worrying about nutrition and instead focus on making sure that the plant's toxins are safe. All plants contain toxins, even vegetables we commonly eat like tomatoes and potatoes. At low levels, toxins simply reduce the amount an animal will eat of that plant. At extremely high levels plants may become "toxic" and cause death, abortion, or illness. Obviously I never teach a cow to eat a plant that can cause it harm.

I never worry about thorns and spines. Those "physical defenses" that harm us have not caused a trainee any problems, including Italian thistle with it's 1/2 inch spines.

Step 2: *Choose the Right Trainees ... Female and Healthy*

Younger animals are more likely to try something new than older animals, and females stay on the farm a lot longer than steers. I like to work with yearling heifers, but I've also found that cow-calf pairs learn easily as well. It's important that all animals are healthy and are getting their normal ration, whether they're grazing in pasture or being fed by you.

Save yourself some work. Train 20 to 50 and let them train their herdmates. In California 12 trained cows taught 120, and a herd of steers in Montana learned from the trained heifers grazing in the pasture next to them.

Step 3: *Make the Unfamiliar Seem Familiar: Build a routine to encourage trying new things*

Animal behaviorists tell us that the more positive experiences

an animal has with new things, the more likely it is to try other new things. So I begin by giving my trainees lots of positive experience with new things. Morning and afternoon for four days I give them an unfamiliar, but nutritious food, served up in a recycled supplement tub. The foods are simply bags of feed from the local feed store or coop. I make sure to choose eight different feeds with varying flavors, textures, and shapes. By the end of the second day, I've set up a routine that links, me and tubs, with good food.

Trainees graze Canada thistle in pasture (photo by Melissa Griffiths)

On the fifth day of training I break the routine by skipping the morning feeding. In the afternoon, I pick weeds, mix them with one of the feeds they've already tried, and serve it to my trainees at the normal afternoon feeding time. I feed weeds mixed with a little less feed on the sixth day, and on the seventh day, trainees eat the weed plain.

I have found that educated cows are more open-minded about what food might be. Trainees in my projects have gone on to add all kinds of weeds to their diet. Science tells us that animals will generalize from a familiar thing to an unfamiliar thing and react accordingly. I translate this into what I imagine my trainees are thinking: "Well, if that was good, this might be good too. I'll try a bite." If you find your trainees aren't trying everything you need them to, you can always bring back the training tubs for a quick refresher.

Step 4: *Practice in Pasture*

For this step I put trainees in a small pasture. Small means that there is enough forage for 1 to 2 days, including both

continued on page 25

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Valley Farmer-Owners Receive Outstanding Quality Awards for 2009

Organic Valley honored its dairy farmers in Gold, Silver and Milk Quality Recognition categories for 2009. To achieve these honors, Gold Award recipients needed an average Somatic Cell Count (SCC) of less than 150,000; Silver Award recipients an average SCC between 151,000 and 200,000; and Milk Quality Recognition recipients an average SCC between 201,000 and 250,000. In addition, all levels had to achieve a Standard Plate Count average below 25 and a Preliminary Incubation Count averaging less than 30. All of the gold and silver winners received a plaque and the quality recognition winners received certificates for their accomplishments.

The following farmers received the top milk quality Gold Award, the "Cream of the CROPP," in each region:

- Eastern Region: Meyer Family, North Hardwick Dairy LLC, Hardwick, Vermont
- Midwest Region: Kevin and Mary Jahnke, Jahnke Family Farm Limited Partnership, Lancaster, Wisconsin
- Western Region: Greg and Marci Bingham, Bingham Farms, Weston, Idaho

Horizon's National Quality Award goes to Perrins for the Second Year in a Row

Congratulations to the Perrin family of Woodburn, Oregon on receiving the 2009 National Quality Award out of nearly 500 farmers in 22 states for the second year in a row. For the last five years, they have been in the top four Quality Farms for the state of Oregon. John and Cindy milk 115 cows on their farm in Woodburn, Oregon, with the help of son Matthew, daughter Stephanie and son-in-law Rick.

The second place Quality Award went to Paul and Diane Staehely and Debbie Timm of Valley Veue Dairy in Oregon City, Oregon and third place went to Wayne Bragg of Sidney, Maine.

The Quality Awards recognize the top 10 percent of Horizon Organic Farmer partners in each state whose milk is the highest quality within Horizon Organic's network. In order to be considered for the award, producers must ship organic milk to the company for one full calendar year, and the average test results for each shipment must be among the best in their respective states. ◆

NODPA Field Days: October 7 and 8, Unity, Maine

NODPA's Field Days marks its 10th anniversary on October 7th and 8th at the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association's (MOFGA) Common Ground Fairgrounds and Education Center in Unity, Maine and we are planning a great event.

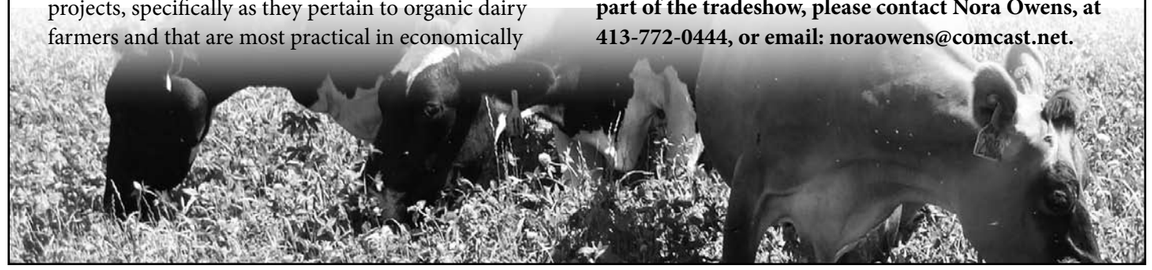
This 10th Field Days event focuses on the hottest topics in the Organic Dairy Industry, including the Final Rule on Access to Pasture; supply management discussions and presentations from an international panel of experts; and an extended focus on renewable energy on the dairy farm.

We are excited to welcome Miles McEvoy, Deputy Administrator of the USDA's National Organic Program as our keynote speaker. He'll also lead a Q & A session on the Final Access to Pasture Rule on Friday morning. Lawrence Andres, highly regarded organic dairy farmer and owner and president of Harmony Organic Processing, Ontario, Canada, will join the supply management discussion as well as address the group on nurse cows and innovations in cow comfort. Maine's rich history of cutting edge renewable energy projects will be on display as we feature the best of these projects, specifically as they pertain to organic dairy farmers and that are most practical in economically challenging times. And, Mary Ann Hayes, executive director of Maine Rural Partners, will help participants 'think outside the energy box' when she addresses our group. Last but not least, Heather Darby, University of Vermont Extension, will connect all this information as she talks about the practical implication to our cows and soil of renewable energy and energy efficiencies on the farm.

We are fortunate to have access to so many innovative renewable energy and energy efficiency projects, displays and mini-workshop opportunities in Maine, so we have changed our opening day format to include a full afternoon of these learning activities at the MOFGA fairgrounds rather than traveling long distances to each site. It will greatly enhance information sharing as well as expand the scope of our tradeshow.

Throughout the past ten years, we always hear that one of the most important reasons farmers and their families travel to Field Days is to get to see one another, learn about new resources, network, share ideas and the latest gossip. The great fresh, local organic food doesn't hurt either!

For more information, or if you are interested in sponsoring or being a part of the tradeshow, please contact Nora Owens, at 413-772-0444, or email: noraowens@comcast.net.



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Dairy Looks to Bottle Own Milk

By Kathryn Flagg

One North Ferrisburgh, Vermont dairy farm is considering reviving the dwindling tradition of bottling and marketing its own milk in the hopes of escaping the economic uncertainty of the bulk milk market.

Organic dairy farmers Cheryl and J.D. DeVos, who currently sell their milk to Horizon Organic, are moving ahead with a proposal to build the Green Mountain Organic Creamery. Though the organic milk market is more predictable than the volatile conventional milk system, the DeVos family said a creamery could offer stability and profitability in an otherwise precarious industry.

"(About two years ago) we felt like organic was not trying to keep up with the prices of producing our milk," Cheryl DeVos said. "We were always having to rely on a national company. We might be one of the bigger farms in Vermont that produces organic milk, but we feel powerless, basically."

The DeVoses hope that by marketing their milk and products like butter and ice cream directly to consumers they can bypass the middlemen in the bulk milk market and have more control over their prices. If the plan comes to fruition, Green Mountain Organic Creamery would be just the second organic creamery bottling milk in Vermont, after Strafford Organic Creamery in Strafford.

The plan, more than two years in the making, is taking shape as organic dairy farmers struggle. Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-Vt.) livestock and dairy advisor Willie Gibson said the last year and a half have been tight for many organic dairy farmers, many of whom entered the industry just a few years ago and incurred a lot of debt making the switch to organic.

Organic dairy farming has long been considered a sanctuary from the price swings of the conventional milk markets. Organic farmers sign a contract, agreeing to a set price per hundredweight (cwt) for their milk, whereas conventional dairy farmers are held captive to the highs and lows of the federal milk pricing system.

But major organic milk purchasers like Horizon Organic and the farmer-owned Organic Valley Co-op have been flooded with more milk than they can sell for the last year. As consumers cut back on more expensive organic purchases at the grocery store, Horizon Organic and Organic Valley had to sell some of their organic milk on the conventional market.

"The past couple of years have been a struggle," DeVos said. In December, when the farm signed a new contract with Horizon, the Boulder, Colo.-based company asked the farm to make a 5-percent cutback in the amount of milk it sold each month.

There's also concern among other dairy farmers who sell their milk to Horizon that the company may dial back the prices it pays to farmers. Gibson said Horizon is discussing the possibility of lowering the "cost of production" bonus it adds on to base milk prices in some parts of the country, a move Gibson said the company hopes would help Horizon remain competitively priced on supermarket shelves.

"I'm hearing from a few Horizon farmers that they're quite concerned about that," Gibson said.

The prospect also makes the DeVoses nervous. Their finances are not breaking even at this point, though if prices stay stable they said they could be "caught up" by this summer.

Though the prices that organic dairy farmers earn for their milk is substantially higher than what conventional farmers bring in (right now, the DeVos farm earns around $29 or $30 per cwt — roughly twice what conventional dairy farmers get) DeVos said the cost of production is tremendous. Feed costs in particular make up a huge part of the DeVos farm's expenses.

"It's what gets us every month," DeVos said, adding that it's not unusual for the farm to spend $40,000 every month on feed.

Currently, the DeVoses milk around 200 Jersey, Holstein, and Jersey-Holstein cross cows, and ship 320,000 pounds of milk every month. (That amounts to more than 38,000 gallons of milk.)

The plans for the creamery are still in fairly early phases. The farm earned a Farm Viability Program grant from the state to fund some of their business planning efforts, and the state also provided an $8,000 grant to help build an on-farm retail store if the creamery moves ahead.

Cheryl DeVos said the creamery would be a roughly $1 million project, and the farm is looking for investors to raise about half of the total cost of the facility. Finding investors will be important, she said, because banks are reluctant to invest heavily in capital-intensive agricultural ventures that might not hold their worth if the company fails. If funding comes through, the creamery would likely be built on the family's North Ferrisburgh Kimball Brook Farm, though it could potentially be established in a building in Shelburne.

Gibson said that while some dairies in the state could potentially establish their own creameries, the hurdles are daunting. Between regulations and the cost of equipment, building a creamery is expensive.

Dairies also need to make sure that there's a market for their milk. That, he said, is the tricky part: There's only so much milk that can be sold locally in Vermont.

"It's a very challenging thing, and it's only going to work for a very small number of people who really have that entrepreneurial spirit," Gibson said.

But DeVos said that local stores have been receptive to the idea of stocking local, organic milk, and some have expressed a willingness

continued on page 38

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Dairy Study Results 2008

continued from page 1

Some organic dairy farms have been able to earn extra income from the sale of extra dairy animals. One thing that a number of farmers are telling us is that their culling rates have declined by being organic, allowing them to raise fewer heifers for their own use and sell off extra animals. Sixteen of the farms in the study sold extra cows or heifers for dairy production in 2008.

The farms' average gross income averaged $4,555 per cow. Farms that sold extra dairy animals had a higher income than the other farms. Obviously, farms with a higher milk production per cow also had a higher gross income, but higher production does not always translate into profit.

Table 2. Comparison of Organic and Conventional Dairy Farms (2008).

	Organic Dairy Farms	Conventional Dairy Farms
Milk price/cwt	$30.90	$19.37
Cows per farm	67	66
Milk per cow	13,438	19,650
Revenue per cow	$4679	$4517
Feed per cow	$1283	$1110
Vet, medicine, breeding	$105	$158
Expenses per cow	$3762	$4010
Net Farm Revenue	$917	$507

The expense side of the ledger is where the difference is made for farm profitability. Cash expenses per cow averaged $3271 and ranged from $4810 to a low of $1710 per cow. The lowest cost per cow was attained by one of the herds that fed no grain. Only 2 other herds were able to keep total costs under $2000. In contrast, the herd with $4810 expense per cow was the highest producing herd in the study.

The highest cost for all but two of the farms in the study in 2008 was purchased grain. On average, the farms spent $1218 on grain and supplement feeds (no forage). By removing the farms that fed no purchased feed or the 2 farms that raised all their own feed, average purchased grain costs came to $1363 per cow. On average, 42% of total cash expenses were spent on purchased grain.

Other top expenses per cow were $476 for parts and supplies, $304 for labor, $180 for interest and $159 for gas, diesel, and oil. Managing expenses is very crucial and when looking at the expenses of 2 of the most profitable farms, these farms were below average in every expense category! And they were not the top production herds either!

One expense that has been going up in recent years has been depreciation. Frankly, organic farms have been making a profit so they have been able to replace equipment and make reinvestments in the farm operation. Depreciation per cow for the study farms averaged $472 per cow and ranged from a low of $66 to a high of $1017. Younger farmers were more likely to have higher depreciation as would be expected. Older farmers without a clear designated successor are much less likely to reinvest in buildings although they will keep their equipment modernized.

The bottom line is what counts and for 2008, the 35 farms averaged $917 per cow (before paying the owner for labor and management). Again we see a bit of variability with two farms showing a loss per cow after accounting for depreciation. With these farms taken out of the picture, the average net revenue jumps to $1010 per cow.

While looking at figures on a per cow basis is useful, we need to keep in mind that the entire farm operation has to meet family living needs. In this respect, net farm revenue per farm was $59,660. With dropping the two farms that had negative income for the year, average net farm revenue for the top 33 farms was $66,092. Of the 35 farms in the study, 2 farms had negative net revenue, and 9 other farms did not earn enough to support a $35,000 family cost of living. On the other hand, 24 of the 35 farms in the study earned more than $35,000 to support a $35,000 cost of living. We concede that some families draw considerably more and some less than $35,000 for family living but this is the figure we have used during the study based on comparable returns from the Northeast Dairy Farm Summary.

In comparison to small conventional dairy farms as reported in the Northeast Dairy Summary, organic dairy was 80% more profitable. Despite contrasting milk prices and milk per cow, organic dairy farms generated just $162 per cow more revenue than conventional dairy farms. However, expenses for organic farms was $248 less than conventional dairy farms, leading to a higher net farm revenue of $917 per cow vs. $507 for the conventional dairy farms. Feed per cow was a bit higher for organic dairy while conventional dairy farms spent more on vet, breeding, and medicine.

We know that 2008 is history and we are all concerned about now and the future. For anyone familiar with 2009, we all know that conventional dairy farms incurred substantial losses while organic farms appear to have remained more viable . Average conventional milk price dropped more than $5 per cwt while feed prices were at higher levels, hitting profits from both sides. Preliminary estimates from the Northeast Dairy Farm Summary for 2009 indicate that the average farm lost more then $250 per cow. This is preliminary with official numbers likely available in early June.

Where are we headed for this coming year? Compared to conventional, organic looks very appealing. But organic farmers are getting hit from several directions. First, base prices have been cut and some seasonal premiums and Market Adjustment Premiums (MAP) have been eliminated, although the milk companies are still paying a premium for winter milk of $3 per cwt.. On top of that CROPP has imposed a quota and Horizon has limited some farmers through changes in contracts requiring farmers to reduce milk production or, in the case of quotas, take major price cuts for over quota milk. These have hurt some farmers more than others but have hurt all organic dairy farms. On the expense side, some organic dairy farmers are paying more for hauling and stop charges. Although feed prices have declined a bit, other costs like repairs, parts, supplies, real estate taxes, and family living expenses continue to increase. Dairy farmers are also finding it difficult to find credit either through their lenders or their suppliers.

Combine the revenue and expense changes, and nearly every organic dairy farm will be facing lower income in 2009 and 2010. For a number of the farms, its going to be difficult, if not impossible, to pull a reasonable family living after paying production expenses. There is a need for greater income, either through a higher base price or leniency to produce more milk for farms to have long term survival. What will the market bear in 2010 is a challenge for processors, cooperatives and farmers.. I can almost guarantee there are no organic dairy farms planning to go back to conventional milk production unless forced to through losing their contract. Conventional dairy prices may, at best, approach break even this year. Under this prospectus, there are likely plenty of dairy farms willing to switch to organic if they could.

So the future remains clouded. Will we see a resurgence in organic dairy sales? Is the American consumer feeling more confident to spend more on organic milk and dairy products? Will we see a strengthening or stabilization of organic milk prices? There is a lot that remains unknown for the coming year and it will be challenge for organic farms to survive in this unknown environment. ◆

2008 Vermont Organic Dairy Farms (N=35 averages)

	Per Farm	Per Cow	Per Cwt
Average # of cows	67.1	67.1	67.1
Lbs shipped total	910,174	910,174	910,174
Lbs shipped/cow	13,438	13,438	13,438
Milk price	$30.90	$30.90	$30.90
Receipts			
Milk sales (a)	281,229	4,155	30.90
Dairy cattle sales	7,079	142	1.12
Cull cow sales	4,443	68	0.49
Bob/Veal calf sales	595	9	0.07
Crop sales	1,169	21	0.16
Government payments	3,829	48	0.39
Patronage divendends	1,365	25	0.18
Custom work	157	2	0.01
Syrup	871	18	0.14
Timber	879	17	0.16
Other	3,549	51	0.38
Total Cash Receipts (b)	$305,165	$4,555	$34.01
Accrual Revenue Adjustments			
Livestock inventory	5,029	17	0.14
Breeding livestock purchases	(877)	(19)	(0.14)
Accounts receivable (c)	1,668	28	0.21
Hay	4,732	45	0.28
Grain	3,154	35	0.27
Total Accrual Revenue (d)	$14,458	$124	$0.88
Total Farm Revenue (e)	$319,623	$4,679	$34.89
Expenses			
Auto and truck expenses	1,661	25	0.20
Bedding	5,235	85	0.62
Breeding	3,198	52	0.38
Chemicals/pesticides	21	0	0.00
Custom hire:	11,577	142	1.07
DHIA	1,074	18	0.12
Fertilizers & lime	1,920	29	0.21
Feed - purchased grain & other	77,731	1,219	8.87
Feed - purchased forage	5,471	64	0.52
Fuel and Oil	11,018	159	1.20
Insurance	4,801	76	0.57
Interest	12,713	180	1.41
Labor	25,560	304	2.29
Milk Marketing	4,038	70	0.54
Real estate taxes (farm portion)	2,955	44	0.32
Rent	5,628	79	0.58
Repairs	16,781	233	1.74
Seed and plants	1,299	13	0.09
Supplies	16,240	243	1.87
Utilities	9,091	139	1.06
Vet	2,649	45	0.32
Medicine	626	8	0.05
Miscellaneous	2,846	47	0.35
Total Cash Expenses (f)	$223,853	$3,271	$24.38
Accrual Expense Adjustments			
Depreciation	33,388	472	3.57
Accounts payable	4,485	50	0.40
Pre-paid expenses	(864)	(17)	(0.13)
Supplies	(898)	(15)	(0.11)
Total Accrual Expenses (g)	$36,111	$491	$3.72
Total Farm Expenses (h)	$259,963	$3,762	$28.11
Cash Income from Milk (a-f)	$57,376	$883	$6.52
Accural Income from milk (a+c-h)	$23,319	$430	$3.07
Net Cash Farm Income (b-f)	$81,313	$1,284	$9.63
Net Farm Revenue (e-h)	$59,660	$917	$6.78
Family Living (i)	$35,000	$682	$5.35
Net Cash Farm Earnings (b-f-i)	$46,313	$602	$4.27
Net Farm Earnings (e-h-i)	$24,660	$235	$1.43
Off Farm income (j)	$7,274	$130	$1.05
Net Family Cash Earnings (b-f-i+j)	$53,587	$732	$5.32
Net Earnings (e-h-i+j)	$31,934	$365	$2.48
Average Assets	$816,166	$13,834	$107.08
Average Equity	$581,639	$10,361	$79.84
Return on Assets	3.6%	3.6%	3.6%
Return on Equity	-0.6%	-0.6%	-0.6%

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pasture Rule Training Update

By Lisa McCrory

At least 80 people attended the Pasture Rule Training in Woodland California on April 26, 2010. Of those, I would say half of them were producers – which is a great number, especially in comparison to all the other training locations. Dr Kerry Smith gave the same presentation that she gave at the other locations with perhaps some more detailed case study examples,which were used at the end of the workshop to see how well people understood how the new rule was going to work.

In the afternoon a local USDA NRCS agent by the name of Richard King covered the nuts and bolts of management intensive grazing. It was particularly nice to see that, having been to two of the trainings and having heard about a third one, each grazing management presenter has had a slightly different style in getting the message across.

Richard King, is also a Holisic Management Educator (HMI ©) and it was refreshing to hear his perspective. He talked about how hard it is on the plants and their root system when they are overgrazed, and how overgrazing can prevent seed production. "Small leaves can only feed small roots" he said. Some key points with a good grazing system are: 1) the importance of minimizing the overgrazing of plants and the over resting of the land, and 2) provide adequate rest periods and avoid excessive accumulation of standing litter to keep grass vigorous. Mr King also talked about microbes and how grazing grass flushes plant sugars from the roots into the soil and gives the microbes energy. "Microbes include the fungi that have miles of microscopic hairs that can bring nutrients and moisture to the roots that are otherwise unavailable to the grass."

Symptoms of a poor grazing plan includes:

1. No description of what the landscape is being managed toward
2. Planning is based on grazing periods rather than recovery periods
3. Livestock performance is poor
4. Realistic stocking rates not calculated quickly
5. Changing plant growth rates are not considered in developing the plan
6. Invasive/noxious weeds increase
7. Very long grazing periods occur
8. Pastures need replanting every 4-7 years
9. Wildlife needs not adequately addressed
10. Poorly planned drought reserve

Questions from the audience at the end were predominantly from certifiers wanting clarification on a particular scenario:

Let's say there is a farmer that meets the minimum 120:30% on pasture when the animals are receiving their full pasture ration. But during the days that the farmer transitions their cattle onto pasture in the spring and the days when they are extending the grazing season in the fall, the animals are only getting a small amount of pasture. If the volume consumed on these 'transition' periods were included in the DMI calculations, then the average %DMI from pasture could fall below 30% for some farms. The answers received from the NOP staff did not really satisfy the audience. Most of the challenges came, I think, with the interpretation of what 'grazing' means. For the NOP, Grazing has a significant meaning now, which should not be taken lightly.

There will be a Q and A section posted on the NOP website soon which I hope will clarify the right way to present certain scenarios within an Organic System Plan so that the producers can properly document their practices. The NOP also hopes to make useful resources available in print form to meet the needs of the many producers who do not use the internet.

A number of educational organizations such as NOFA Vermont and MOSES are starting to offer workshops to help their producers understand new Pasture Standards. Go to t he Calendar section in this newsletter to read about some workshops happening in Vermont and Wisconsin. Check with your certifier, your organic outreach organization, your extension agent, your NRCS agent or processor and see if they are putting something together. ◆

Organic Dairy Questionnaire

By Pam Moore

Dairy farmers, I've been asked to write an article for NOFA-NY about the affects of the "organic milk surplus." Your responses will remain confidential unless you give permission to use your name. Thank you for contributing to the article.

1. How has the organic milk "oversupply" that began in the winter of 2008/2009 impacted your dairy farm? Are you doing anything differently to manage any impacts?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. -- Did your milk handler implement any supply management measures, such as milk quotas or reduction recommendations? YES NO
   -- Did your farm exceed any production limitations requested by your handler? YES NO
   -- If so, were you paid less for the overproduction? YES NO
   -- What were you paid? _____

3. Did your milk handler ask you to renegotiate or prematurely renew your contract for less favorable terms? YES NO
   -- If so, did your farm do so? YES NO

4. How confident are you in the long-term availability and stability of your current organic milk market?

   _____

5. If this organic milk "surplus" situation is not resolved by June of 2011 do you anticipate having to make changes in your operation? YES NO
   -- If so, in what way(s)? _____

   _____

   _____

6. Do you support the supply management efforts your milk handler made, or are there alternative measures you wish they had considered? YES NO
   -- Describe alternatives:

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. In what way(s) do you anticipate that the new pasture requirements in the USDA Organic Standards will impact your dairy farm? What changes, if any, will you be making to accommodate these new requirements?

   _____

   _____

   _____

Optional:

Name _____

Farm town/state _____

May I use your name in the article? YES NO

Phone number _____

Email Address: _____

Want to see and comment on draft of article by email? YES NO

Milk Handler: _____

Current Certifier _____

Dairy Certified Organic since _____

years in Transition _____

Did you transition dairy cattle using the 80/20 rule? YES NO

Cows Milked in 2009 _____

Raise own Heifers? _____

Total Farm Acres _____ Pasture Acres _____ (total grazeable)

Grow all own feed? YES NO

If not, what's purchased? _____

Crops grown _____

_____

Family Members _____

Family Members working farm _____

How long has your farm been in business? _____

Does your farm include other enterprises besides the dairy? YES NO

If yes, what? _____

_____

Do you direct market any farm products? YES NO

If yes, any dairy products? Please describe: _____

_____

_____

Please return survey to:

Moore Farms, 2083 Moore Hill Road, Nichols NY 13812

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance 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 :

_____ $0.02 per hundredweight to support the work of NODPA

_____ $0.05 per hundredweight to support the work of NODPA (the amount that has been deducted in the past for national milk marketing but can now be 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 per hundredweight (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 Coordinator, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342

Producer signature: _____ Date: _____

Producer number/ member no: _____ E-mail:_____

Number of milking cows: _____ Tel #:_____

Certifying Agency: _____

Farm Address: (please print) _____

Producers—please send this to NODPA, Attn Ed Maltby, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342, so we can track who has signed up and forward this form to the milk handler. Thank you.

Subscribe to the NODPA News and support NODPA!

By becoming a subscriber you will receive 6 copies of the NODPA News and help support the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance. NODPA depends on your contributions and donations. If you enjoy the bi-monthly NODPA News; subscribe to the Odairy Listserv (ODAIRY-subscribe@yahoogroups.com); visit our web page (www.nodpa.com) or benefit from farmer representation with the NOP and processors that NODPA provides, please show your support by making a generous contribution to our efforts.

Note that if you sign up for the NODPA Voluntary Organic Milk Check-Off, you will be automatically signed up as a NODPA News subscriber.

_____ $35 to cover an annual subscription to NODPA news

_____ $50 to become an Associate member (open to all)

_____ $100 to become a supporter of NODPA

_____ $150 to become a Business Member

_____ $300 to $500 to become a Friend

_____ $500 to $1,000 to become a Patron

_____ $1,000+ to become a Benefactor

Name: _____ Farm Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Date: _____ Are you a certified organic dairy producer? YES NO

Number of milking cows _____ Milk buyer _____

Are you transitioning to organic? YES NO If yes, anticipated date of certification: _____

Please mail this form with a check to: Ed Maltby, 30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342, or by fax: 866-554-9483 or by email to ednodpa@comcast.net. Please make your check payable to: NODPA

Credit card: Master Card Visa Card #: _____

Name on Card: _____ Expiration Date: __ __ 201__ Security Code on Card: _____

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

DIAC holds its first meeting – political convenience or the possibility of real change?

By Ed Maltby

The USDA Dairy Industry Advisory Committee (DIAC) held its first meeting in Washington DC on April 13th -15th with 17 members from every sector of the dairy industry. Secretary Vilsack welcomed the group on the first day with a strong message of support and a charge to look at farm profitability, price volatility and some immediate recommendations for either regulatory or legislative action. Secretary Vilsack spoke plainly about the need: "this industry has got to get control of itself" and that the 'bandage approach' was not working, and also stressed the impact that a failing dairy industry has on rural economies. On the second morning, Deputy Secretary Merrigan joined the meeting for the first hour and explained some of the work that the USDA has done in preparation for this meeting. She highlighted the importance of recognizing what has been tried before; the programs that are currently available; and the need to build consensus within the industry. The Deputy Secretary also stressed the need to look 'outside the box' for long term solutions while also discussing possible short term regulatory changes or programs that could be implemented quickly to assist struggling dairies.

The first order of business was for the committee members to introduce themselves, and this was a significant indication of the uniqueness of this committee. It's not unusual for folks to spend some time introducing themselves; describing all their achievements; and clarifying their policy positions in order to ensure that their voices are heard. It was fascinating to be part of introductions that were self-deprecating, humorous and short, but with a passion to solve the problems of dairy. This very diverse group (which included an organic dairy producer with 50 cows sitting next to a non-organic producer with thousands of cows, a State commissioner of Agriculture, representatives from Nestle, Leprino and Giant Foods, cooperatives and milk processors) were willing to put aside their different perspectives in order to make best use of their time together. While many may question the appointment of different folks and the balance of the committee, it was immediately clear that those sitting around the table were intelligent, knowledgeable and willing to work together to solve challenges rather than to cement boundaries and polarize positions. It was no surprise that within a couple of days the established culture of the committee was to be positive and direct, yet polite and with a willingness to consider new ideas for their merit.

As we launched into the meeting it became clear why we had been given such a large 3-ring binder! Over the first two days, the committee heard presentations from and was able to ask questions of the following:

- USDA Economic Research Service on Dairy Farm Financial Condition and Milk Utilization Patterns
- USDA Agricultural Marketing Service on Federal Milk Marketing Orders
- USDA Farm Service Agency on Dairy Product Pricing, Milk Income Loss Contract Program
- USDA Chief Economist Trade Agreements' and Other Countries' Dairy Policies Impacts on U.S. Dairy Policy Options
- USDA Risk Management Dairy Options Pilot Program & Livestock Gross Margin Insurance for Dairy Cattle
- USDA Foreign Agricultural Service Dairy Export Incentive Program
- Overview of Dairy Policy History and Impact on Industry Structure from Scott Brown, University of Missouri
- Credit, Food Demand, and Environment Panel including James Putnam, Farm Credit, Mary Christ-Erwin, Porter Novelli, Jim Baird and Gerald Heatwole, American Farmland Trust
- Cooperatives Working Together by Jim Tillison
- National Milk Producers Federation Four Part Program by Jerry Kozak
- International Dairy Foods Association Policy Proposals by Connie Tipton
- Milk Producer's Council Price Stabilization Plan by Robert T. Vandenheuvel
- National Farmers Union Policy Proposals by Chandler Goule

While the presentations were interesting and in many ways allowed everyone on the committee to be at the same level, the ability to ask questions and query the basis for assumptions and conclusions was as important. The presentation from James Putnam of Farm Credit gave us up to date figures on profitability but also highlighted the need for a more general, if not always current, picture that the USDA ERS service supplies. There were ongoing questions asked of USDA employees about how transparent the reporting of product inventories is especially those which are used to determine pay price. There were questions about whether the dairy industry could have the same electronic reporting that livestock and other commodities have available as the committee tried drill down into the statistics and how they were collected. The presentations by National Milk and IDFA were familiar to most on the committee and illustrative of how all sectors of the dairy industry are aware of how the lack of profitability and the loss of equity suffered by producers across the country also dramatically affects both the processing and manufacturing sectors. The stabilization plan presented by the Milk Producers Council and supported by legislators in Cali

continued on page 34

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Educated Cows Eat Weeds

continued from page 13

regular forages, and the target weed. This encourages them practice the new skills they need to harvest the target plant on their own.

For us the equivalent is learning to use chopsticks instead of a fork. If I have access to a fork, I'll never improve my chopstick skills. At the same time, if I have few chopstick skills I might starve. So I balance the time spent practicing chopstick use with time spent just getting food in my mouth with a fork. For my weed-eating trainees, I'm balancing time spent practicing weed harvesting with getting enough food.

Manage Weed-Eaters to Meet Your Goals

Once your cows are eating weeds, they will eat them the rest of their lives, no matter the size of the pasture. How much of the weed they eat depends on the relative nutrition of everything else in the pasture and on how you're managing them. You can manage them to eliminate the weed by decreasing pasture size and increasing the number of times the weed is bitten over the course of the grazing season. You can also manage for biodiversity, keeping in mind that those resilient weeds can be useful in drought times, and by providing good nutrition they could be part of a healthy grazing system when properly controlled.

Though meat quality and flavor don't seem to change much for weed-eating animals, dairy farmers should probably manage their weed-eaters for potential changes in milk flavor. Plants with strong flavors can transmit those flavors to the milk and the more an animal eats of a strongly flavored plant, the more the flavor of the milk is likely to change. Your best solution for a strongly flavored plant is to make sure that there is plenty of other forage to mix with it.

Plant Chosen by Boulder County Project Herd	Protein (%)
Bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*)	16.1
Prickly lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*)	17.3
Prostrate pigweed (*Amaranthus blitoides*)	20.1
Common Sunflower flowers (*Helianthus annuus*)	14.1
Cutleaf Nightshade (*Selenum triflorum*)	15.6
Broom-like ragwort (*Senecio spartioides*)	14.6
Netseed lambsquarters (*chenopodium berlandieri*)	15.2
Common ragweed (*Ambrosia Psiostachya*)	11.3
Musk Thistle flowers (*Carduus nutans*)	11.2
Chinese Lantern/Purple Groundcherry (*Quincula lobata*)	13.9
Wormwood Sagewort (*Oligosporus dracunculus*)	12.3
Wild Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza lepidota*)	15.2
Louisiana sage (*Artemisia ludoviciana*)	7.9
Plains milkweed (Asclepias Pumila)	12.3
Fetid Marigold (*Dyssodia papposa*)	18.4
Red Stem pigweed (*Chinopodium hostata*)	9.3
Unknown Sunflower	8.9
Velvet weed (*Gaura mollis/parviflora*)	11.8
Wild Rose (*rosa arkansana*)*	6.8
Moth Mullein (*versbacum blattaria*)	8.5

A list of weeds that trained cows added to their diet on their own and their protein values.

There are a lot of resources on my website to help you learn more about how weed-eating cows can turn your problems into forage. You'll find information on past projects, lists of what animals have eaten or can eat and responses to frequently asked questions. Just visit http://www.livestockforlandcapes.com. While you're there, check out the link to my blog where I'll be writing about new projects, and answering questions people have about weeds and training.

If you have questions, please send them to me at:

kvoth@livestockforlandscapes.com. ◆

ORGANIC PRODUCTION: FEATURED FARM

The Burroughs Family Farm, Denair, CA

Ward and Rosie, Zeb and Meredith, Benina and Heriberto, Christina and Brian

continued from page 1

when his grandfather Benjamin Burroughs first came to California to find his future in the mlk business. Today, the ranch has evolved into two certified organic dairies, an almond farm (of which one third of it is certified organic), a pastured egg business, a new cheese making enterprise and plans for an olive grove and local food store in the making. All of the enterprises are owned in a partnership arrangement between by Ward and Rosie and each of their children: Full Circle Dairy is a 900 acre 500-cow seasonal organic dairy farm and pastured egg business run by their daughter Christine and her husband Brian; Vista Almonds is a 950 acre almond farm, run by their daughter Benina; and California Cloverleaf Farm is a 960-acre, 550 cow seasonal organic dairy run by their son Zeb and his wife Meredith.

There are many notable things to write about in this Feature Farm article, but what we have decided to focus on is the way in which Ward and Rosie have managed to set up a way to transfer the farm to their children. As many know, farm transfer can be a very emotional, tangled web. It requires a clear vision, good communication, a willingness to plan into the future, and time to put the plan in place. It also works well when the older generation can let go and let the next generation take the reins – and Ward and Rosie have been very good at doing this for their children.

Christine, Brian and their children with their pastured poultry

Partnerships

Ward and Rosie believe that the greatest resource agriculture has is its young people, and supporting and encouraging them to keep that enthusiasm growing is something that gives them great satisfaction. Their first Vision Statement was developed in the 1970's and became the engine for their decisions and plans. It illustrated how blessed they were with an opportunity to work on the ranch and raise their children in that environment and how important it was to be able to pass on the lifestyle and opportunity for their children and to their grandchildren.

In 1999 Ward and Rosie started setting up farm partnerships with their children. Right now the partnerships are 50:50, but over time the children will evolve into full owners of their respective businesses. Over time, the vision statement changed to include input from their children. "Not only did our kids continue our work, but they surpassed our expectations of where we could go", says Rosie. "Our greatest legacy," says Ward " is not only that we have been able to pass onto our children an opportunity to farm, but to see that their health and our grand children's health is better; each generation is stronger; quality of life is improved by increased health, thanks to organic and sustainable farming practices and the production of nutrient dense food."

The Burroughs family members have learned the importance of taking a close look at their land base, their quality of life goals, their family needs, and their community. When furthering the business ventures on their ranch, new ideas must flow through their vision statement and come out the other end intact in order to be considered. A facilitator is brought in on occasion when it is felt that the vision statement needs to be reviewed. This tends to happen every 5 years or so. Their most recent vision created about 5 years ago is: "The Burroughs Family is committed to sustain family farming and to promote the preservation of quality farm land. The greatest responsibility we have as farmers and food producers is to turn over our farms, the most precious of natural resources, to future generations, in better condition than we inherited them. By using sustainable agriculture practices we are accomplishing this goal."

Learning and Growing

Continued learning and growth seems to be a trait that comes naturally on this ranch; the Burroughs are always working on ways to evolve and make room for a new ideas. They attend conferences regularly, participate in farmer discussion groups for continued learning and peer mentoring/support, and are

Four generations of Burroughs family

very involved in their local community on many levels. They do not rush into anything; time is spent in sharing the idea with the rest of the family, making sure it fits within the current vision statement, and researching the enterprise further including the development of a business plan. This often times includes traveling to different parts of the United States and beyond to learn about the new venture being considered.

Before Christina started Full Circle Dairy in 1999, she traveled to New Zealand to visit seasonal grass dairies. There she stayed and worked for several months with some farm families and learned to manage grass. Then, with her father Ward and her grandfather Ernie, they visited several grass-based dairies in the U.S. including Charlie Opitz (Wisconsin), Steve Ross (irrigated dairy in Texas) and Al Wehner (irrigated dairy in Georgia). All these experiences (1998-1999) helped her to design and implement a double-36 swing parlor with high tensile fencing, 300 irrigated acres and seeding pastures down to a pasture mix of mostly ladino and ryegrass.

Benina has been interested in making cheese and recently she and Heriberto purchased a small farm and 17 acres adjacent to their home where she can set up a small cheese making operation among other things. Benina has purchased a lot of the cheese making equipment she will need, has been taking cheese classes and has even traveled to Italy and France to learn about various types of cheeses. She also plans to open a Farm Visiting Center, which will offer a farm experience, school tours and a farm store complete with fresh and value added local food products. Much of the land will be planted to olive trees and there will also be space set aside for growing pumpkins and grapes for making wine. As Benina was doing the cheese making research and pulling together the equipment needed for their cheese making enterprise, an opportunity to rent a local cheese facility once a month came up and it was hard to pass it up. Rosie started taking milk from both of their dairy farms once a month making 70 ten-pound wheels each batch. By July 2009, Burroughs Family Farm started marketing an organic artisan cheese called Benina Crema named after the daughter who had been planning this venture all along. It was recently awarded 5th place in the Open Class Hard Cheeses at the 2010 World Champion Cheese contest. "It is not surprising that when you start with good quality product that you make a high quality cheese," says Rosie.

Brian, Christina, Zeb, Meredith, Ward and Rosie have been part of a dynamic discussion group called The Pro-Grass-Tinators; a group of about 17 Pasture Based Dairy Farmers from about 9 different states. The goal of this group is to learn from one another by sharing management practices as well as financial comparisons. The group meets at least three times each year on a members farm to see the practices used and discuss the attributes of grazing management on that farm. Members are required to keep sound financial records of their farm operations and share those records with all member of the group. They also make sure to have an educational component to their meetings and will bring in a speaker to cover subjects of interest such as succession planning, estate planning or finances.

The Cornell Dairy Farm Business Summary (DFBS) is the system of record analysis used by the group. Each year, a financial summary is prepared and comparisons are shared at a winter meeting. This experience has had such a positive experience for the Burroughs that they were inspired to start a new group in California. With the help of Cindy Daley at Chico University, they started 'Graziers West' a couple years ago.

About the Dairy Farms

The dairy farms on Burroughs Family Farms are both seasonal grass based dairies; each milking between 500 and 550 cows. The farms have been 'designed with simplicity working with nature concentrating on the environmental and economical sustainability for their land, their animals and them

continued on page 28

FEATURED FARM

Burroughs Family Farm

continued from page 27

selves.' They milk Jersey cross cows whose genetics are mostly from New Zealand, France and Scandanavia. They manage their cows on rotational pasture, giving them a new paddock after every milking.

Both dairies utilize open and simple New Zealand style, highline, swing-over milking parlors. During the grazing season, cows get a new pasture after each milking and an average of 8-14 lbs of grain fed in the parlor. Yearling heifers are used as followers in the grazing rotation.

Pastures are irrigated each day for most of the grazing season. Water is pumped from their own deep wells to irrigate their pastures and they have buried tile lines to recycle irrigation water runoff from the pivots.

Livestock Health

The goal on both dairy farms is to reduce stress on their cows and to offer preventative measures to maintain health. Examples include an 8-way vaccine that includes clostridium, respiratory complex, IBR, PI3, Lepto and BRSB. They also offer free choice kelp, humates and aloe to their cows, calves and heifers.

continued on page 32

Benina and Heriberto

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Chico Research

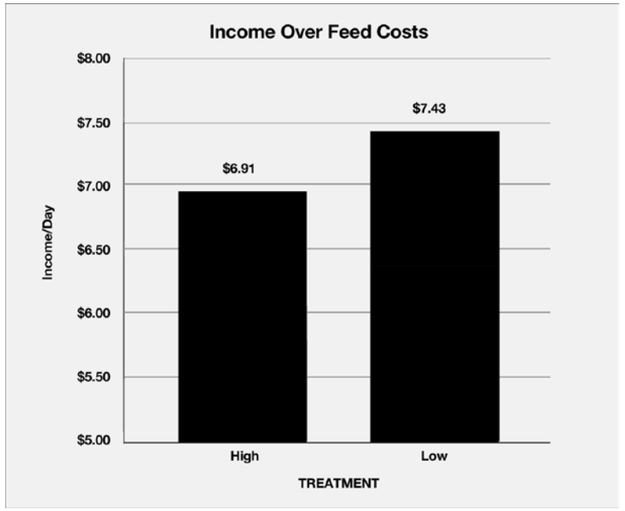
continued from page 5

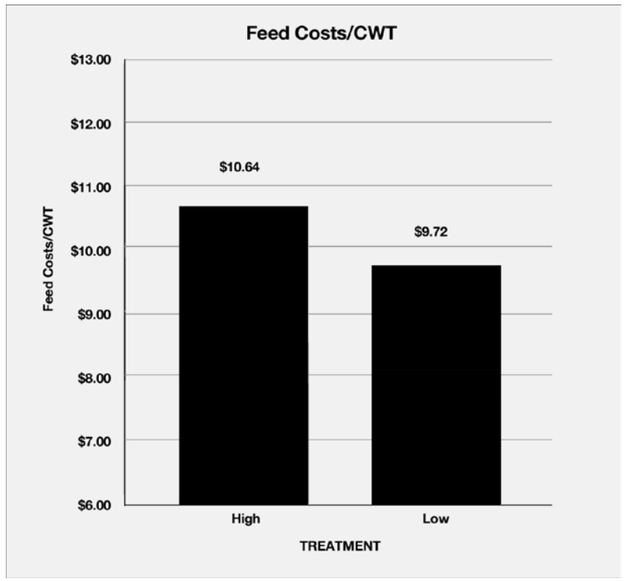
day or approximately $25.20 per cow per month. These figures are down 24% from one year ago due to the decline in feed prices. The main portion of this feed savings is based on the lower supplementation rate in group L. The diet for group L consisted of 12% less concentrate and 12% more forage (from the pasture) than group H causing a cost savings because of the lower cost of pasture versus grain. Previous studies by Hanson et al. (1997) would agree, programs that utilize grazing have lowered overall feed costs.

Overall, there was no statistical difference between the mean pounds of milk yield for group L (48.34 ± 1.84) and group H (50.12 ± 1.82), there was on average 1.78 lbs more total milk produced per day in the H group receiving 12 lb of grain/day as compared to cows receiving 6 lb of grain/day. Interestingly,the additional 6 lbs of grain produced only 1.78 lb of milk. If our milk is worth $0.24/lb and our grain costs $0.21/lb, we are spending $1.26 and getting $0.42 in return.

McEvoy et al., (2007), with the Dairy Production Research Centre, Moorpark, Ireland, conducted a similar study where he found at higher forage intakes (17 kg DMI = 38.25 lbs) there was no difference in milk production between cows receiving 3 kg (6.75 lb) grain and those who consumed 6 kg (13.5 lb) of grain, using Holstein cows. We did not detect differences in components including protein, fat and solids non-fat, or in somatic cell counts.

Using 2009 grain prices ($425/T delivered), we saw significantly lowered feed costs/cwt of milk produced, indicating that the low grain feeding regime decreases feed costs significantly without a significant drop in milk production or milk components (under unlimited grazing of high quality forages).





Income over feed costs (IOFC), was not different between groups H and L ($6.90 vs $7.42, respectively for the High and Low grain treatments). While there is a $0.52 cent advantage for the low grain group, there was not adequate numbers to establish a statistical difference, nonetheless, for a 100 cow herd, there would be a $52/day advantage to the low grain group.

In addition, there was no reported difference in reproductive performance, with an average of 83.6±5.05 days open for the H group and 79.6±4.98 days open for the L group. No significant difference in body condition score was noted between groups.

Conclusions

A key finding of this study was that decreasing the concentrate supplementation levels from 24 to 12 percent of DMI was shown to have little impact on milk yield or milk quality in an intensively managed, pastured based dairy with high forage quality, resulting in a higher net profit/cow.

Our study shows that forages can be a suitable substitute for grain inputs under intensive grazing management where pastures provide ample high quality vegetation.

These preliminary results show that the income over feed costs can be significantly greater for the low supplementation group (L) making intensive grazing a potential solution for organic

continued on page 31

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Free Choice Smorgasbord

continued from page 9

3. Folks are worried that the cows (or whatever species is in the herd) are not "smart" enough to know what they need.

This has nothing to do with IQ type of "smart" but rather has to do with allowing individuals to work with the innate intelligence of the body, that intelligence that knows what it needs to come to functional balance in any given situation or circumstance. This can be explained by considering the balancing of charges in the body and the environment and recognizing how nutrition – including water – influences the balance of these charges.

4. Folks say it's all about correcting the soil… and once the soil is right there is no need for these supplements.

I absolutely agree. Without a rich and active soil biology, without nutrient balanced living soils, we cannot expect to produce nutrient dense forages and feeds. As the soils on a farm become more balanced and vital, you will see the animals will begin to back off the smorgasbord supplement consumption.

However, not even ideal soil conditions will compensate for the influences of weather, lack of sun, other stressors (including pushing production, changes in forage through the growth, metabolic cycles and storage of the feedstuffs) and individual animal's unique needs (often a reflection of less than optimal health).

For those of us who are interested in living soils, one can see how the use of free choice mixed minerals will actually serve to create and perpetuate imbalances in the soil ecology. Animals will do the best they can with what's in front of them. They will eat more things than they need in an attempt to balance what they are lacking (be that an actual lack or a relative lack – e.g., needing "extra" phosphorus because the calcium in the diet is so high it skews the Ca:P ratio). Everything they don't need – or everything that is presented to them in a form that is not biologically available to them – is going to pass out with the manure. That's going

to result in a manure that contains the same lack of balance that's found on the farm generally, thus perpetuating the overall imbalance of the soil/forage on that farm.

If these same animals are allowed to choose only what they need, then their manure is going to be more appropriate for the needs of the farm biology. This is the kind of manure that will hasten the revitalization and balance of that individual farm ecosystem.

I've seen this many times – the animals choose the individual supplement that is lacking in the soil tests. Often this is one of those nutrients considered to be "trace" or micronutrients.

As we begin to sort out troubles in the herd, we often need to actually look back six or nine months and figure out what was happening at that point in time. That'll often times give you the most accurate clue to the underlying reason/s for the presentation of the immediate moment.

I encourage you to explore this idea of providing animals choices around their supplements. If you keep your mind and your eyes open, you'll see some amazing things. Always remember that there is no "one size fits all" solution – everyone's situation is different. Remember also that stock does things for a reason. If you don't know what that might be, or have come to the end of all the light you know, get with someone else who has the ability to help you explore why things might be happening. ◆

Susan Beal, DVM is the Agricultural Science Advisor for the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA). Dr Beal comes from a long background of holistic veterinary practice, ranging from mixed practice through emergency medicine, equine, and companion animal practices. Before joining the team at PASA, Dr Beal was responsible for Big Run Healing Arts, a veterinary practice dedicated to providing holistic care for animals and the environment. She can be reached through the PASA office (www,pasafarming.org or susan@pasafarming.org) or her personal email and cell phone: alchemy@penn.com and: 814- 952- 6821.

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Chico Research

continued from page 29

dairy farmers with access to high quality pastures. Anecdotally, it was noted that cows supplemented with additional grain grazed less. We concluded that cows supplemented with the higher grain diets were less efficient grazers, making them more dependent on expensive inputs rather than motivating her to get her own.

Given the outcome of this 4-month study, it is clear that a longer study of this nature would be the next step. A 2-3 year study specifically designed to address the impact of low versus high grain (treatment groups recommended would be 0,6,12,18) is recommended that could report on net profit to include a full economic assessment (milk, reproduction, health, etc). The only barrier to keep this study from happening right now is funding. ◆

For a more detailed report on the research findings, you can contact Cindy Daley, Ph.D., Professor/Program Coordinator, College of Agriculture, California State University, Chico, Chico, CA 95929, Phone: 530-898-6280, Email: cdaley@csuchico.edu

FEATURED FARM

Burroughs Family Farm

continued from page 28

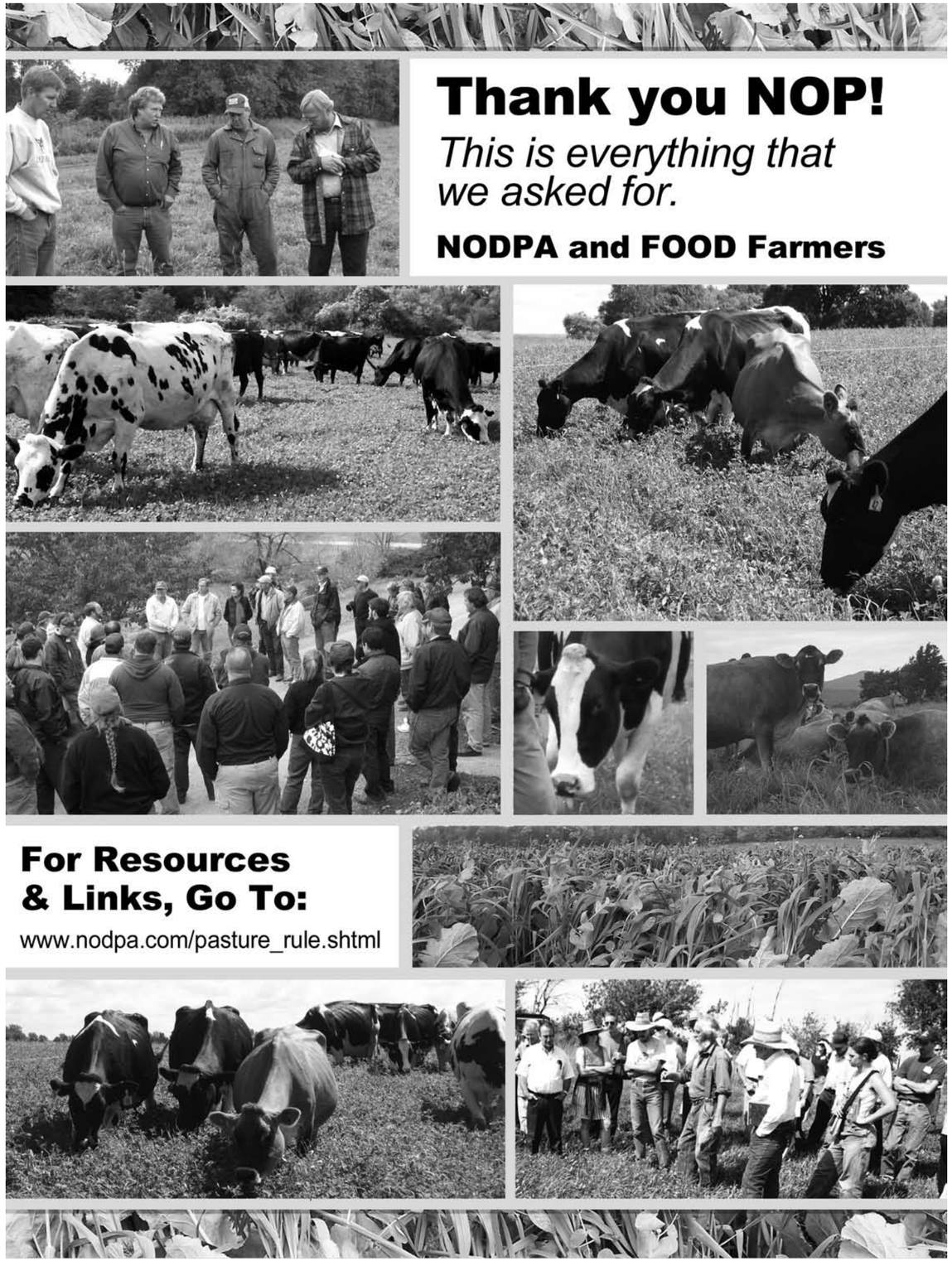
With these management changes, they have seen less health issues and beautiful strong heats, allowing them to breed within their tight calving windows for their seasonal herds. Common treatments that they turn to tend to be Aloe, vitamin C, herbal tinctures, homeopathic remedies, Vitamins A, D and E, Multi Minerals and fluids.

The herd veterinarian is used for preg checks, the occasional calving and BANGS vaccine. An ideal veterinarian would be one that was familiar with the use of homeopathy, tinctures and have training in livestock nutrition. They work with a dairy nutritionist who helps them balance their rations for optimum herd health.

Calves are raised on milk for 120-150 days and are introduced to grain and pasture at about 3 weeks of age. They feed their calves milk using a 55 gallon barrel with nipples placed midway. Vaccines are given at 8 months of age and include BANGS and Brucellosis. Calf health is excellent, but for the occasional occurrences, they turn to Dr. Paul's tinctures for coccidia, and black walnut hulls and diatomaceous earth for parasites. Calf mortality rate has been at 1% or lower with the "mob" raising system.

Conclusion

The Burroughs Family Farm has evolved over time from a production farm to a farm 'organism' with many ventures, value added products, and numerous opportunities for people to come to the farm and learn, experience, purchase product and celebrate the bounty of a diversified enterprise. The initial vision of passing the farm to the next generation seems to have morphed into sharing their bounty with the local community and beyond through product, education and reverence for the land. Their farm has become an annual destination point for a nearby college, a place to take in apprentices from overseas, and now, with their involvement with the Slow Food Movement, their impact on the agricultural landscape has crossed beyond their farm boundaries more than ever before. An accomplishment anyone would be proud of. ◆



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

DIAC holds first meeting

continued from page 24

fornia and Vermont proposed a 'new tool to keep a better balance in supply and demand'. They boldly stated that, "This is not supply management like we've ever seen before…this is a uniquely-American method of production management."

The final day was devoted to public comment, asking clarifying questions of USDA employees, and comments by committee members. The last few hours of the meeting were spent covering administrative details and setting up three sub-committees: Options under Current Law, Dairy Farm Profitability and Milk Price Volatility. The next meeting will be on June 3rd and 4th, with another meeting in late September.

Is this just another political committee or will its recommendations be considered and acted upon? Dairy problems are not new and inadequate solutions have been many, but the dramatic lose of organic and non-organic dairies from California to Vermont, combined with a slow recovery, is unprecedented. Crises bring opportunity for change, and the personal investments of Secretary Vilsack and Deputy Secretary Merrigan give the committee the opportunity to be heard. To those that assume National Milk and IDFA already have the political lobbying power to impose their solutions, this committee has the opportunity to question those assumptions, provide a platform for ideas and perhaps provide a vehicle for a broader consensus-based solution that will address the needs of the 50 cow dairy in Maine and the 10,000 cow dairy in New Mexico.

How might recommendations from the committee impact the organic community? The most recent oversupply increased organic reliance on the non-organic market. Processors were balancing organic fluid milk at prices which were down under $10 per cwt because of the low class 3 price. For many organic producers MILC and DELAP payments introduced because of low non-organic pay price provided a much needed cash infusion and some organic processors factored that into decisions around pay price. As the price difference between organic and non-organic dairy product increased, sales flattened and dropped for the organic product.

As we look at supply management, and as Organic Valley fine tunes its definitions for a producer base, we need to learn from the mistakes of the non-organic dairy in plotting a path forward that ensures long term profitability for producers. If nothing else, this committee will continue to question the historical assumptions on farm profitability and price volatility; highlight the continuing lack of transparency and inadequate data reporting which causes inequity and poor use of federal funds; and look at every opportunity to improve the existing system. The committee has the opportunity to sketch out a blueprint for change and provide valuable recommendations to the Secretary. With support from the dairy industry and community this committee does have an opportunity for real change with recommendations supported by all sectors of the industry. ◆

For more information on the DIAC meeting please go to: www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/newsReleases?area=newsroom&subject=landing&topic=ner&newstype=newsrel&type=detail&item=nr_20100419_rel_0416.html

NET UPDATE

Recent ODAIRY Discussions

By Liz Bawden, NODPA News co-Editor, NODPA Producer Representative

Since the adoption of the new Pasture Rule, there has been some discussion about what it means to each of us at the farm level. One producer asked how many acres per cow would provide for a cow's yearly forage needs. Several farmers responded; some obviously had highly productive land -- they recommended 2 acres per cow to cover pasture and stored forage needs. Other producers had more modest recommendations at 3 acres per cow. And of course, more acreage would be needed to keep any additional heifers. One post highlighted the difference in land requirements when different pasturing systems are used: less land is required for intensive rotational systems.

There was some discussion on how the 30% rule would be applied over the grazing season. The answer from the training workshops hosted by the USDA is that the 30% figure is to be the minimum average over the grazing season. So a producer might graze 80% of the DMI in the peak months, and drop to below 30% in dry months; the months would be averaged out across the grazing season.

A farmer asked for help in her treatment of a fresh cow with milk fever symptoms. After the standard treatment of IV 23% calcium gluconate, the cow got up and was eating and drinking. The next day she was down and unable to rise, even after more calcium. Other producers chimed in with several suggestions: oral calcium products were suggested ("Dr. Register" was the brand, but be sure it is the formulation OK for organics), subcutaneous administration of calcium was suggested, CMPK products were suggested to balance a suspected magnesium deficiency (it was mentioned that magnesium oxide pills or epsom salts would also work). If the cow is an alert downer, and eating and drinking well, then it is very possible that it's a pinched nerve. It was suggested that a blood sample be drawn to test for her electrolyte balance. A potassium deficiency is rare, but can happen -- a vet uses a bottle of Fleet enema added to a bottle of dextrose or hypertonic saline, which is then given IV. To determine if it is a potassium deficiency, it was suggested to look for the classic "S-shape" in the cow's neck, and another producer checks the ears -- if the cow is down with warm ears. The good news: after several days of patience, extra minerals, and TLC, the cow got up on her own.

Two seasonal producers were dismayed to find some cows with a prolapse. A vet reminded us that "prolapse in an older cow is almost always due to milk fever, hence milk fever is always an emergency." If a prolapse happens on pasture, don't make the cow walk anywhere since it could easily rupture her vessels. It was suggested to use hobbles above each of the ankles and then attach a come-along to each hobble, drawing her legs backwards and rump up. Tie the tail up out of the way. Then go to work with a board underneath the uterus; take particular care in cleaning the uterus -- this is extremely important before you attempt reinsertion. Then work it back in, using only your knuckles so to not poke a hole through the uterine wall. It is extremely important to fully place the uterine horns back into their original position. Give the calcium IV afterwards and not before. Place iodine pills or Van Beek uterine pills for slow release to fight infection

Some suggestions to avoid the possibility of prolapse included: 1) check the minerals that dry cows received, 2) make sure that cows and heifers stand up shortly after calving, 3) keep their hind

continued on page 38

Subscribing to ODairy:

ODairy is a vibrant listserv for organic dairy farmers, educators and industry representatives who actively participate with questions, advice, shared stories, and discussions of issues critical to the organic dairy industry.

To sign up for the Odairy listserv, go to:

http://www.nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml

Calendar

Organic Pasture Rule Workshops in Vermont
May 19th at Wayside Farm in Randolph.

The new pasture rule requires that all ruminants (cows, sheep, goats) over 6 months old get a minimum of 30% of their DMI (dry matter intake) from pasture for at least 120 days each year. There are many additional details in this rule that organic farmers will need to know. All workshops will run from10:30 AM to 2:30 PM; BYO Lunch. For directions, to register or for more information, please contact the NOFA office: 802-434-4122 or info@nofavt.org

May 29, 2010: Holistic Grazing Workshop, Washington, VT
9:00am - 5:00pm, Subjects to be covered are grazing for carbon sequestration, fertility improvement, landscape lay out and design, increasing biodiversity, and self sufficient feed systems. The morning will consist of a "classroom" session covering technical information and concepts. The afternoon will be an on farm pasture walk, and tour.

Cost: $55 full day. Space is limited; please preregister. Contact Jonathan at 802-883-2269

June 8, 2010: Organic Dairy and Animal Health Field Day
Dale and Carmene Pangrac, Kim and Andy Olson, Prime Pastures Organic Dairy, Lewiston, MN

During the visit to the Dale and Carmen Pangrac 450 acre farm near Lewiston MN from Noon to 3 PM, we will discuss growing organic livestock feed crops (barley, corn, hay) and grazing of organic dairy cattle. In addition, veterinarian Dr. Paul Detloff, staff veterinarian with Organic Valley will be present to discuss overall animal health and give a short workshop on "Reading the Bovine Haircoat to Assess Animal Health". This fascinating tool, useful for all types of cattle, aids the farmer in assessing the functioning and health of glands as well as overall animal health. Good crop yields rely on good weed management and the use tine weeders as well as flame weeding will be reviewed. Healthy soils and good management direct relate to high quality milk and maintaining healthy dairy cows. Anyone interested in learning more about transitioning to, or improving their organic operation, as well as observing practices which can receive cost share funds through the Natural Resources Conservation Service EQIP program for water and soil quality conservation activities (crop rotations, cover crops and intensive grazing are all fundable) will find this field day worthwhile. Contact Kristin Jurcek 920-342-9504, MOSES registration.

Tuesday, June 8th 10am-Noon, Weed Control in Small Grains
Central Susquehanna Valley Organic Crop Growers' Network
To Be Held At White Frost Farm, Kit and Cathy Kelley
909 Washingtonville Road, Danville, PA 17821. (The farm is at the corner Route 254 and Fairview Road, one-half mile west of Washingtonville.)

Penn State Extension teams up with local organic crop growers to offer an on-farm educational opportunities for farmers interested in organic production of agronomic crops. Free and open to all interested persons. For more information, contact Dave Hartman, Penn State Extension, at 570-784-6660 ext. 12 or dwh2@psu.edu

June 8-19, 2010: Midwestern Bioag Offers Free Grazing Workshops
Lancaster and Franklin Counties, Pennsylvania

Karl Dallefeld is a forage specialist for Barenbrug and MBA, and is a grazier/grass-finisher, and manager of Iowa-based Prairie Creek Seed Company. Karl continually investigates the advantages and disadvantages of grass-based production systems, looking at practical on-farm applications. In this workshop, Karl will address: *Managing soil for quality forage; *Grass-based system management & grazing; * Pasture species identification; * Biological and financial benefits of a tight crop/pasture rotation; * How to determine dry matter intake from pasture.

MBA offers specialized soil and plant tissue analysis, a complete consulting package including dairy nutrition and exclusive, top-of-the-line biological and organic products to support our program including soil correctives, fertilizers, livestock minerals, seed, inoculant, Bio-Vet ™ direct-fed microbial livestock products, and Dr. Karreman's organic treatments for dairy cattle. Call Rebecca Brown (MBA Consultant) for more information: 774-521-6100.

June 12, 2010
Dairy Farm Success Through Diversity Field Day: Rotational Grazing, Transition to Organic Dairy, Cheese-Making and Raw Milk Production
Robinson Farm, Hardwick, Massachusetts

Presenters include Stephen Herbert (UMass), Tom Akin (NRCS), Winton Pitcoff (NOFA/Mass), and our hosts and operators of Robinson Farm, Ray and Pam Robinson. The day includes a walking tour of the farm along with explanation of management techniques provided by the presenters. For full information on this event, including registration info, please see:

http://www.nofamass.org/programs/extensionevents/dairyfieldday.php

Registration for this workshop is $35. The NOFA membership discount is $5. The early registration (by May 29) discount is $5. Contact: Ben Grosscup, 413-658-5374. By email, ben.grosscup@nofamass.org; put "June 12" in subject.

June 17-18, 2010
Vermont Veterinary Medical Association Summer Meeting
Burlington Hilton Hotel, Burlington, Vermont

Featuring Scott Hurd, DVM, PhD, a leading expert in global food safety

continued on next page

CALENDAR

continued from previous page

and emerging infectious diseases, and Dr Paul Rapnicki, and instructor at the University of Minnesota. Dr Hurd will present 'Antimicrobial Resistance' and Dr Rapnicki will present 'Coordinating Mastitis Control – from Prevention to Treatment'. For more information contact Kathy Finnie, Email: Kathy@vtvets.org, Phone: 802-878-6888 or visit the VVMA website: www.vtvets.org.

June 22-24, 2010 : 3-Day Intensive with Ian Mitchell-Innes
Eagle Hill School, Hardwick, MA

Learn about mob grazing and ultra high stock density grazing, holistic planned grazing, holistic financial planning, how energy equals money, and fencing, herding, and watering with Ian Mitchell-Innes, Certified Holistic Management Trainer and South African rancher. Cost: $600 for three days, plus $200 for room and board. Contact Ridge Shinn at Rotokawa Cattle Company at 413-477-6500 or ridge@rotokawacattle.com for more information.

Tuesday, July 13th, 7pm-9pm: Roller Killing Cereal Rye to Plant Soybeans
Central Susquehanna Valley Organic Crop Growers' Network
To Be Held At Paradise Valley Organic Farm, Bucky Ziegler

51 Ziegler Road, Milton, PA 17847. From Route 254, between Milton and Washingtonville, turn onto Strick Road toward Limestoneville. Follow Strick Road through Limestoneville, and at the split in the road go straight onto Ziegler Road. First farm on the left.

Penn State Extension teams up with local organic crop growers to offer an on-farm educational opportunities for farmers interested in organic production of agronomic crops. Free and open to all interested persons.

For more information, contact Dave Hartman, Penn State Extension, at 570-784-6660 ext. 12 or dwh2@psu.edu

July 15, 2010
Producing organic livestock feed crops and accessing NRCS cost share programs. John Koschmeder, Riceville, IA 50466

1- 4 PM, Organic corn, soybeans, oats and clover have been grown successfully in rotation for many years on this organic farm in North Central Iowa. Farmers looking to learn more about organic production, as well as Natural Resource Conservation Service EQIP cost share programs (including diversification of crop rotations, use of cover crops, protection of stream riparian areas, planting windbreaks and more) which are available in the Cedar Creek watershed, and across the state of Iowa are encouraged to attend. Contact Kristin Jurcek 920-342-9504, MOSES registration.

July 30, 2010: Achieving and calculating 30% dry matter intake from grazing and producing high quality feed crops.
Dan and Darlene Coehoorn, Rosendale, WI 54974

1-4:30 PM, Organic regulations require organic dairy cows to consume 30% of their dry matter intake during the grazing season from pastures. This field day will discuss how to manage both fields and pastures to produce feed for the organic dairy herd and will include a short description on how to calculate dry matter intake from grazing for the various ruminants on your farm. Contact Kristin Jurcek 920-342-9504, MOSES registration.

August 13-15, 2010: NOFA Mass Summer Conference
UMass Campus, Amherst MA

Featuring keynote speakers Sally Fallon Morell, Community activist and Nourishing Traditions author and Fernando Funes, considered the father of the Cuban organic agricultural movement and author of Farming Like We're

continued on page 40

Classified Ads

Livestock

Wanted: Looking for 20 good Jersey cows or Bred Heifers. I prefer fall calving, But will consider any Jerseys.
Contact: Joel Kauffman Email: kaumarfarm@gmail.com
Phone: 814-422-8995 Location: Spring Mills PA

For Sale: Certified Organic Heifers NOFA 4 Jersey and 1 Holstein 1st calf heifers bagging and due within the next few weeks. All animals are bred to a Jersey Bull. We have sold a number of animals but some of the best still remain. All offers considered. Photos are posted at BreezyAcresOrganicDairy.com
Contact: Bill Sullivan Email: william_sullivan@hotmail.com Phone: 607-591-2171 Location: Cuyler New York 13158

For Sale: Dutchbelt Calves for sale:30 plus organic cows to freshen no more room. Also wanting to buy a breeding age dutchbelt bull willing to travel.
Contact: Scholten Family Farm Email: scholten@gmavt.net
Phone: 802-989-8076 Location: Weybridge,Vermont

For Sale: Registerd duch belted bull proven claves can be seen on premises. $2500 or best offer. Location: Darien N.Y.
Contact: Dan Miller Email: millersorganic@bluefrog.com

For sale: out of our spring seasonal calving window-organic NOFA-NY certified cross bred cows and heifers. Jersey, Lineback, Ayrshire, Brown Swiss, and Normandy. 8 cows, 3 bred heifers, 3 yearling heifers $14,500 takes all. Location: Cortland,NY
Contact: Triple 3 Livestock-Jim Phillips
Email: triple3livestock@verizon.net Phone: 607-591-0562

Products

Wanted: I'm from California, moving out east to help run a restaurant near Gloucester, MA this summer. We're looking for the best quality, local, organic ingredients we can find. I was wondering if you might be able to help us out with sourcing: Butter mainly, as well as milk and cream. Also, know of anyone raising pastured laying hens? We'd like to source as much as possible within Essex County, hopefully easing the distribution/supply; anyone already delivering into the Gloucester area would be fantastic, but we will probably be able to do pickups within a reasonable distance.
Name: Oliver Monday Email: olivermonday@gmail.com
Phone: 510-502-0815

Employment

Organic Valley's **Northeast Region Pool Coordinator** is responsible for servicing the needs of our growing dairy pool regions in New York and the northern tier of Pennsylvania. The position is accountable for fulfilling procurement and support of regional dairy pool producers for ongoing organic milk needs in the Northeast Region; plus secondary emphasis to prospect regional grower, meat and egg pool member-owners. Accountable for recruitment and producer support of dairy producer/members in Northeast Region, plus work with other regional support & procurement team members in the region.

For more information www.organicvalley.coop. To apply please send application materials to:

Organic Valley ATTN: Human Resources
One ORganic Way, La Farge, WI 54639
Phone: 608-625-3512 Fax: (608) 625-3071
HR@organicvalley.coop

NET UPDATE

Recent ODAIRY Discussions

continued from page 35

end higher than the rest of them so that gravity doesn't work against you, 4) be aggressive to treat milk fever and follow up with CMPK when you think it may be needed, 5) consider the use of oxytocin to rapidly contract the uterus, if your milk company allows this (it is allowed by the NOP for calving issues). Homeopathic Secale may be of help as it is useful in restoring circulation in extremities and in smooth muscles. Longer-range suggestions were to monitor P levels in forage fed to dry cows.

Then a vet entered the idea that the fresh cow's calcium metabolism is controlled by the DCAD (Dietary Cation-Anion Difference) during the close-up dry period. Anionic salts such as magnesium sulfate (Epsom salts), calcium sulfate, and calcium chloride as used to acidify close-up cows. This will control milk fever, prolapses, retained placentas, metritis, displaced abomasums and ketosis.

The issue of determining the best way to provide just the right minerals brought about some great discussions about the pros and cons of free-choicing individual mineral components (That method is addressed in the article by Dr. Susan Beal on page __ in this newsletter). Some members of the list felt that cows could not adequately address their deficiencies at a free-choice bar; other members felt that cows have to learn this skill, and that requires some time and experimentation.

The idea of surgery without antibiotics makes an organic farmer shudder with worry, but there was a lot of talk about just that this month. A producer wanted to have a stubborn case of hardware dealt with by surgery if it would be possible. A helpful vet encouraged her not to pursue surgery involving the stomach. Several other producers said they had had good results with DA's completed without antibiotics, even performed on-farm. ◆

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Dairy Looks to Bottle Own Milk

continued from page 16

to pull national brands if a local option becomes available. She also said that she's spoken with a chain of major natural foods store in the Boston area that is also interested in the product.

In addition to bottling milk, Green Mountain Organic Valley would also produce butter and possibly ice cream.

"Our dream, first and foremost, is to sell all of our milk, and then to start trying to gather in other organic dairy farmers, and create Vermont jobs," DeVos said. ◆

Reprinted with permission from Addison Independent, April 29, 2010. Reporter Kathryn Flagg is at kathrynf@addisonindependent.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

From the MODPA Treasurer

Spring has sprung early in the Midwest. As the crops go into the ground for the coming season it makes one appreciate all that we have been given and all the more hopeful for the coming year. I have always thought that a farmers' year begins with spring, not January 1, as the calendar says. Hopefully a lot of the struggles of the last year have left with the change of the seasons.

With the pasture rule finally being out we will all have to do our part to make sure we are in compliance. Please feel free to contact your favorite MODPA representative and/or your certifier if you have any questions. This will be the only year we will have to make any needed adjustments to our organic plans. It will most likely amount to a small amount of additional paperwork, but should not overwhelm you. I have recently attended one of the training sessions that the NOP has provided and will make sure that the rest of the MODPA Board Reps have an update on do's and don'ts.

There is talk of the organic milk supply already tightening in some areas of the country. Hopefully this trend will continue and those of you who have been placed on a quota will be able to go back to fall production soon.

We all need to work together to get a producer controlled system put in place to try and avoid the situation we faced last year. I have faith that we as producers can come up with a system that we control and not let the processors control us. The unity of farmers that helped get the pasture rule together can and will also work to establish a supply management program. Please feel free to contact any of your MODPA representatives with your thoughts on this issue. The more ideas we take to the table the better.

Thank you for your continued support of MODPA. We look forward to hearing from you on these or any other issues you may have. We have a lot of resources available for almost any situation that may arise. Feel free to contact a representative. ◆

Have a safe spring!

Bruce Drinkman

MODPA Treasurer

Glenwood City, WI

About MODPA

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

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

MODPA Board

Wisconsin
Darlene Coehoorn, President
Viewpoint Acres Farm
N5878 Hwy C
Rosendale, WI 54974
ddviewpoint@yahoo.com
Phone: 920-921-5541

Jim Greenberg, Vice-President
EP 3961 Drake Avenue
Stratford, WI 54484
greenbfrms@tznet.com
Phone: 715-687-8147

John Kinsman, Secretary
E2940 County Road K
La Valle, WI 53941
Phone: 608- 986-3815
Fax: 608-986-2502

Bruce Drinkman, Treasurer
3253 150th Avenue
Glenwood City, WI 54013
bdrinkman@hotmail.com
Phone: 715-265-4631

John Kiefer, Director
S10698 Troy Rd
Sauk City, WI 53583
taofarmer@direcway.com
Phone: 608- 544-3702

Jim Small, Director
26548 Locust Ave.
Wilton, WI 54670
Tel: 608-435-6700

Iowa
Andy Schaefers, Director
25037 Lake Rd
Garnavillo, IA 52049
Tel: 563-964-2758

Michigan
Ed Zimba
Zimba Dairy
7995 Mushroom Rd
DeFord, MI 48729
zimbadairy@tband.net
Phone: 989-872-2680

Ohio
Ernest Martin, Director
1720 Crum Rd
Shiloh, OH 44878
Phone and Fax: 419-895-1182

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

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA)
c/o Ed Maltby
30 Keets Road
Deerfield, MA 01342

Prsrt Std
US Postage Paid
Permit 183
Greenfield, MA

CALENDAR

continued from page 37

Here to Stay'. For more information, contact NOFA/Mass: Phone: 978-355-2853, Email: nofa@nofamass.org, website: www.nofasummerconference.org .

September 14, 2010: Animal health and pasture tour
Sylvan Meadows Farm , Viroqua, WI

1:00-4:00 PM, Pasture Walk with National Speaker Jerry Brunetti, founder of Agridynamics and ag consultant. Jerry will present an overview of the strategies and tools available for successful holistic herd health management in your pasture systems. Call 608-637-5480 to register or for more information

October 7-8, 2010: 10th Annual NODPA Field Days
MOFGA Fairgrounds, Unity, ME

NODPA's Field Days will be held Thursday and Friday, October 7 and 8 at the MOFGA Fairgrounds in Unity, Maine. More information will be coming soon. To sponsor or exhibit, contact Nora Owens, 413-772 0444.

October 15-17, 2010: 4th Annual Northeast Animal Power Field Days
Tunbridge Fairgrounds, Tunbridge, VT

Friday, October 15th will feature field and forest working demonstrations at Howevale Farm, adjacent to the Tunridge Fairgrounds. Friday evening will include a community potluck dinner on the Tunbridge Fairgrounds. Saturday, October 16th will focus on workshops and equipment presentations, resource exhibitors, local food vendors, and networking sessions. Sunday, October 17th will start off with a Community/Teamster Appreciation Breakfast, followed by the premier annual meeting of the newly formed Draft Animal Power Network.

For more information, contact: Carl Russell & Lisa McCrory, 802-234-5524, info@animalpowerfielddays.org. ◆