# NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Featured Farm: The Corse Farm Dairy, LLC., Whitingham, VT

## Organic Dairy Production With A Keen Eye On Quality

*By Cheryl Cesario*

The Corse Farm Dairy in Whitingham, Vermont is located in the Southern part of the state, within minutes of the Massachusetts border. The town sits almost equidistant between the towns of Bennington and Brattleboro. The farm itself is the home of "Corse's Contented Cows" and one can see why. The farm sits at an elevation of 2,000 feet and the land, barns, and roads are all immaculately maintained. Here you can see the pride taken in farming the land that has been in the family and operating as a working dairy farm for close to 150 years.

### The Farm and Its History

Leon and Linda Corse are the fifth generation to farm on the property that Leon's great,

*continued on page 24*

## Organic dairy retail & feed price update: March 2012

*By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director*

As the costs of organic dairy production start to reach a new base level, the big question on producers' minds about pay price as they plan this crop season is 'Will the increases currently in place end in June, will there be seasonal cuts in the Market Adjustment Premium (MAP), how will the increase in retail price affect sales and what will the fall pay price be?' The fear of consumers switching to store brand milk or reducing purchases of organic with higher retail prices is a negotiating tactic used by processors to keep pay price down. Based on experience in 2011 this is not the case. From December 2010 to December 2011, the average retail price of organic milk increased by 14 cents per ½ gallon, sales increased by 14.3% over 2010 but producers received only an average of $1.25/cwt of the total retail increase of $3.26/cwt for

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

# From The NODPA President

The steady parade of customers coming and going in my accountant's office confirms that it is indeed tax time. The time of year when even the most ostrich-like farmer must take a cold hard look at his expenses and income from the preceding year. Most of us already knew that 2011 was a difficult year as our income has not kept pace with the rise in expenses. Some of us were surprised at what the numbers at the end of the year told us. How did you do in 2011? If you are like a lot of us, non-feed expenses were up by roughly 15% (that is just my personal poll, where I asked a few friends who wouldn't mind sharing that information ). If you bought feed this year, you know that those prices dramatically increased as well. If you finished the year without being deeper in debt than last year, you did very well. Producers candidly talk about rolling over the operating loan from last year, putting off repairs on equipment and buildings, having the biggest grain bill they can remember since transitioning to organic, getting an off-farm job to help with the bills, going back to conventional production, and diversifying into more lucrative niche markets.

We are disillusioned. NODPA has been pretty busy keeping this looming farm crisis in the media and organizing meetings with our milk processors. In early February, representatives from NODPA, MODPA (the Midwest), and WODPA (the West) delivered a presentation via conference call to George Siemons and others from Organic Valley. A week later, we delivered the presentation to Ron Schnur and a panel of representatives from Horizon Organic. Our message was as positive as we could be. We know that the processors have both pushed up the mailbox price, at least temporarily; In Horizon's case, their $2 increase is in the form of a temporary MAP, not in the base price. These increases are not enough to breach the hole in our financial statements. They have heard us complain about the shrinking margins, but they remain fearful of a consumer backlash if store prices are moved higher. One serious consequence of increasing the retail price to pass an increase in pay to farmers is that the grocery store slaps on it's mark-up on top of our increase, nearly doubling any increase intended for the producers.

We will soon be talking with other smaller processors in the Northeast, delivering the same message.

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

# From the NODPA Desk, March 2012

*By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director*

As you can see from the different articles in this issue, a great deal is happening that affects organic dairy farm families. 2012 will be an interesting year with many changes and a rising level of profitability for organic producers.

Representatives from the three producer groups (NODPA, MODPA and WODPA) have been meeting with processors to press home the issues affecting farm profitability. First and foremost is the increase in general farm operating costs and the increase in the norm baseline for feed costs. With producers losing equity, there needs to be a continuous and planned increase in the base pay price. We have proposed an increase every six months to adjust the base pay price to meet the changing operational economics. We have also proposed that the MAP's have an automatic trigger to adjust them to reflect increases in feed costs. We have further identified the need to continue exploration of supply management to better reflect the relationship between supply and demand in order to avoid the peaks and troughs experienced in the past few years. NODPA will continue to push these issues with processors. All organic dairy producers are welcome to be an active voice within NODPA, just call a member of the board or state reps to get involved (see full contact list on page 2). Also, remain active in your co-op committees; elect new members to your co-op Boards; and speak out at producer meetings. Now is the time to be heard on pay price.

The headline, Organic Milk – Are You Getting What You Pay For?, from the ABC News Blog on February 29th, was their interpretation of the USDA Office of Inspector General (OIG) audit report about the National Organic Program (NOP), focusing on oversight and monitoring activities of the National Organic Program (NOP) and its certifying agents with respect to organic milk. This report was requested by an activist group in response to their concerns about large scale dairies abusing the system. The interpretation by the media is again directed against the value of organic milk. Possible GMO contamination of organic feed was also highlighted as was alleged collusion between producers and certifiers. The NOP solutions to the problems raised by the OIG will affect all of organic dairy by increasing costs and paperwork rather than targeting the few 'bad actors' and their certifiers. With producers losing money and processors pushing retail price up, this report could not have come at a worse time. We need the confidence and support of consumers for organic dairy farm families, not continued questioning because of this very narrow report from one state (Texas) and a couple of large operations. Hopefully Phase 2 of this report will be broader in scope and content.

The NOSB livestock committee continues to tackle core issues around animal welfare and will be re-visiting the issue of vaccines that contain GMO's. Their workplan for the year is: outcome score documents for species; species-specific animal welfare guidance for each species; guidance for animal welfare and handling/transport; methionine; and vaccines that contain GMO's. The ongoing discussion and arguments around Horizon's use of Martek DHA algae oil will probably continue at the next meeting in New Mexico and hopefully there will be some movement by NOSB on a statement on GMO's, especially now that the OIG says they are a threat to organic dairy certification.

In 2011, OTA spent $50,000 to draw up a feasibility plan for an Organic Check Off as part of a Federal Research and Promotion Order. In January 2012, they launched the Phase 2 of their plan after approval from their Board. Farmers and ranchers did not receive the announcement with any enthusiasm because of their experience with check-off programs in conventional agriculture. OTA would have been better to work with farmers in Phase 1 rather than bringing them into the process when a plan had been laid out. Better to have spent some time and money in meeting with farmers rather than with the DC based lobbying company, Podesta Group. OTA kicked off its Town Hall meetings at the Natural Foods Trade Show in Anaheim, CA. NODPA continues to work with other producers and OTA to find areas of common interest and purpose.

The fight to protect organic producers from the effects of GMO's continues, as does the national drive for labeling of foods that have been genetically engineered or that include GE ingredients. There has been a legal setback with a court challenge to a case where NODPA is a joint plaintiff (Monsanto patent infringement) but that will go to appeal. NODPA has signed on to many petitions supporting labeling and highlighting the risks of GMO's, the most recent being a letter that requests that the Secretary of Agriculture deny deregulation of Dow's genetically engineered (GE), 2,4-D resistant corn (DAS-d40278-9).

Congress keeps threatening to complete a Farm Bill and the House has published some dates for Field Hearings in March and April to solicit feedback from farmers and ranchers. Interestingly, the venue they chose in New York is not close to many farmers. The current intelligence from those close to the situation is that a Farm Bill will not happen just prior to the election, which will mean a flurry of action in September to extend programs that are mandated to finish at the end of the Federal fiscal year in September 2012. Senator Leahy has already introduced legislation to continue the MILC for an additional year after it expires in September 2012.

The NODPA Board and State reps made the decision to have the 2012 Field days in Vermont and we benefited from a great, collaborative conference call with agricultural leaders in Vermont to plan the location, time and agenda for the event. ***The Field Days will be at Vermont Agricultural Business Education Center, Brattleboro, VT 05301 on September 27th and 28th and we will have a great program, so save the date.*** Here's hoping for an early spring, with no mud season and plenty of high protein, high energy grass. ◆

## ORGANIC PRODUCTION

# Managing For High Quality Forages, Part 1

*By Gary Zimmer*

So you want farming to be easy, you want to have fun, and you want to make money. As an organic grazier with those goals, you have to manage for high quality forages.

But what do you need to be successful? Where do you start?

First, you need to examine your soils, and be sure that they are healthy and mineralized. Then you need to look at the plants you are growing and be sure that they fit your management goals. Finally, you need to address the principles of the cow: what does the cow need to produce quality milk and meat?

In this first of a series of three articles, let's take a brief look at the first requirement for high quality forages, which is healthy soils.

### The Soil

*Growing quality forages starts in the soil.*

A healthy soil needs to have enough minerals to grow a good crop, but it also needs to have a good, loose crumbly structure and it needs to be full of biological life. The first step towards understanding where your soil fits on the health spectrum is to take a soil test.

A soil test gives you clues as to how many minerals are in your soil, and your soil's capacity to hold on to those minerals. When you take a soil test, you should look at a range of minerals, not just NPK and pH. There is plenty of evidence of the need for a sufficiency level of the 12 or so minerals I always test for on a complete soil test. A soil test is used to identify limiting nutrients and any excesses. Once you know a soil's strengths and weaknesses, you can start balancing the soil minerals by addressing calcium and phosphorous.

After you balance your soils based on any deficiencies found on the soil test, additional minimum nutrients need to be added to feed the crop. A good place to start is with soluble calcium from a good source along with sulfur and boron. Nitrogen would be helpful, but as organic farmers our options are limited. Pelleted chicken manure from laying hens is the preferred source that I use on my own farm. However, you can have too much of a good thing--yearly over-use results in lots of extra calcium and phosphorous. There are also questions on the use of manure from conventional hens fed GMO crops, which can have some unwanted things in it. This is certainly a concern that shouldn't be ignored.





Ideally, you should take soil tests every 3 to 5 years to monitor the mineral balance in the soil, using this information to make the soil corrections as dollars allow. It's important to supplement this soil testing with annual plant tissue tests and feed tests in order to see how many of those nutrients in the soil are getting into the crop. If the plants are short of minerals, use balanced crop fertilizer designed to fit the situation, and add soluble calcium.

The soil has a certain ability to dish out minerals, hold water and produce crops. Your fertilizer, besides addressing the limitations of your land, adds nutrients above and beyond sufficiency levels for better yields and quality than your soil can provide on its own.

With the price of fuel and feed, I see no other choice—we can and have to do better! More production and better quality is certainly achievable.

Once you've looked at your soil minerals, now what about other soil issues like compaction, plant root growth, water and air movement in the soil, and nutrient mixing? Can you just dump everything on the surface, like cow manure and fertilizers, and hope it gets to plant roots, or do you need an aeration tool to make holes in the ground, allowing water and nutrients to enter the soil? A deeper sub-soiling tool, such as a Yeoman plow, may also have its place. Managing compaction is very important, and sub-soiling certainly needs to be looked at. Most soils do really benefit from this management approach.

Another management concern is the lack of rotation that is often a problem on pastures. If you do rotate your crops with your pastures every few years, you could avoid doing the aeration-mixing, but then there's the cost associated with having freshly-worked and loose soil which could be more prone to compaction.

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

# The Benefits Of Using Fish and Seaweed Products To Feed Your Forage Crops

*By Ann Molloy*

## Why does Fish work so well as a Fertilizer?

The continued application of chemical fertilizers over the years on many of our agricultural lands have resulted in the depletion of many soil elements and a reduction in the biological life within the soil profile. The whole world was under ocean water at one time; fish fossils have even been found on the top of Mt. Everest. Ever since then, the soil has been de-mineralizing. The best Fish fertilizers come from fish that are caught well off shore, in the cold, dark, clean, mineral rich North Atlantic Ocean. These fish contains all the nutrients that our agricultural plants and soil need naturally.

## Cold-processed hydrolyzed fish vs. a fish emulsion

Hydrolyzed Fish consists of freshly ground up fish remains: the head, skeleton, skin and fins. When a fish is caught, only 30 to 40% is used for human consumption as the fillet and 60 to 70% (what is left) is turned into Fertilizer. This is a perfect way to utilize 100% of the Fish. The remains are liquefied, stabilized, and screened through a 150 micron screen, so that it can be used through a sprayer for easy application. The liquid plant food is loaded with enzymes, macro and micro nutrients, trace elements, amino acids, vitamins, omega oils and naturally occurring growth promoters. The general NPK analysis for Hydrolyzed Fish is 2-4-1 and the nutrients, if sprayed on the plant as a foliar feed, are absorbed by the leaves and go straight to the roots, because the Fish is systemic. Also, the nitrogen in the Fish is chelated, so it can be utilized by the crop, the day it is applied. In a hydrolyzed fish product, all the oils and fish meal remains in the product as well. Fish emulsion is made from one species of Fish; Menhaden, which is mostly caught in the Gulf of Mexico. The meal is removed for pet food, and then oil is removed for Fish Oil products. The waste water left behind after these two processes, is then boiled down to a 50% solution, and sold as Fish Emulsion. It smells really bad, and is notorious for clogging sprayers. The typical NPK is 5-1-1 or 4-1-1. If you see a Fish with a nitrogen content higher than 2, it has been cooked down, or fortified.

## What can farmers expect when they use hydrolyzed fish on their hay and pasture?

Hydrolyzed fish not only increases yield, it also increases the RFV (relative feed value) making a nutrient dense crop, and healthier animals. Livestock have been found to utilize the nutrients in their foliar-fed forages more completely when compared to crops fertilized with conventional fertilizer. One farmer even wrote to our company stating that when they fed the fish-fertilized hay to their cattle, daily dry matter needs decreased by 50% and mineral needs decreased by 80%, all the while maintaining body condition score of 4.

Manure has been found to break down in about 1/2 the time, which cycles the nutrients into the soil faster. This enhanced biological activity is also noticed by an increased population of dung beetles and reduced fly populations.

## Why does Seaweed work so well on fields and pastures?

Seaweed is an organic storehouse of over 60 naturally occurring major and minor nutrients and amino acids. It's growth promoting substances (Auxins, Cytokinins, Gibberellins) enhance plant development, color and vigor. Seaweed has also been found to increase plant hardiness and resistance to adverse environmental conditions, such as early frost, extreme heat and lack of moisture. Used as a seed inoculant, seaweed fertilizer increases and accelerates germination, and enhances the rapid development of a healthy root system. Seaweed is an excellent addition to any fertilization program.

## How much does it cost to use?

Based upon recommended application rates, the cost for applying Hydrolyzed Fish is about $10.00/acre per application. For best results, it is recommended that the product be applied after each harvest/grazing or a minimum of 3 applications per year.

*Ann Molloy is one of the owners of Neptune's Harvest Fertilizer along with 4 of her siblings, and 2 cousins. This family run business in Gloucester, MA is a division of Ocean Crest Seafoods, and came about as a way to fully utilize the fish they were processing. Ann can be reached at ann@neptunesharvest.com. Learn more at www.neptunesharvest.com, or call (800) 259-4769.*

## NODPA's MISSION

The mission of the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance is to enable organic dairy family farmers, situated across an extensive area, to have informed discussion about matters critical to the well being of the organic dairy industry as a whole.

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

# NOP, NOSB And Organic Industry News And Comments

*By Ed Maltby*

### European Equivalency Agreement

The European Union and the United States announced that beginning June 1, 2012, organic products certified in Europe or in the United States may be sold as organic in either region. Previously, growers and companies wanting to trade products on both sides of the Atlantic had to obtain separate certifications to two standards, which meant a double set of fees, inspections, and paperwork. This partnership eliminates significant barriers, and is expected to have a significant impact on the trade of organic products – and many are likely to be finished foods rather than agricultural products. All products meeting the terms of the partnership can be traded and labeled as certified organic produce, meat, cereal, or wine. Both parties individually determined that their programs were equivalent except for the prohibition on the use of antibiotics. The USDA organic regulations prohibit the use of antibiotics except to control invasive bacterial infections (fire blight) in organic apple and pear orchards. The European Union organic regulations allow antibiotics only to treat infected animals. For all products traded under this partnership, certifying agents must verify that antibiotics were not used for any reason. This is especially significant for dairy and livestock products, and apparently there is a commitment to ensure that there are high standards of transparency and integrity, especially over antibiotic use. I hope the policing of livestock records are better in Europe than they are in the US.

### Guidance on Handling Bulk, Unpackaged Organic Products

On February 3, 2012, the USDA published some draft guidance, which will directly affect all organic livestock producers. The guidance they are proposing is on handling of organic product, which will effectively require all those that truck milk, hay and grain to carry their own certification. "NOP regulations require brokers, traders or distributors of bulk, unpackaged organic commodities or livestock to be certified organic operations….. Uncertified brokers, traders or distributors of bulk, unpackaged organic commodities or livestock must either:

1. Seek and obtain organic certification, or
2. Be specifically included by direct reference in the Organic System Plan (OSP) of the certified seller or buyer of the organic products, subject to approval and inspection by the certifying agent of the certified operation.

Certified organic operations that receive bulk products from uncertified handlers and subsequently label the products as organic are in violation of NOP regulations, and .. certifying agents are required to review OSPs to ensure producers and handlers





receive hay, grain, milk, livestock, or other non-packaged organic products via a certified organic handler."

The comment period is open until April 3, 2012 and NODPA is working with the Accredited Certifiers Association Handling Bulk Products Working Group to provide comments that reflect the reality of transporting bulk organically certified products and the real difficulties for all trucking companies to carry organic certification.

### National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)

The next meeting of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) is on May 21-24, 2012 at Hotel Albuquerque at Old Town, 800 Rio Grande Boulevard, NW Albuquerque, New Mexico 87104. The agenda has not been released yet, but the GMO issue will definitely be on the minds of those commenting at the meeting in the hope that the USDA NOSB will develop a position on GMO contamination.

### Organic Research And Promotion Program Or Organic Check Off Program

In January the Organic Trade Association (OTA) Board decided to move to phase II of an initiative to reach a decision on a research and promotion order for organic. After reviewing the feasibility assessment prepared by is member-based steering committee and the DC based Podesta Group,( http://www.podesta.com ) the OTA Board found that an organic research and promotion order is achievable, and any challenges identified in the feasibility assessment should not prevent its success but inform strategy. OTA released a statement that included the following "the Board looks forward to continuing this exploration with the entire organic industry. To do so, OTA plans to hold Town Hall-style forums across the country to evaluate this exciting opportunity to promote the organic brand, and provide critical research for the continued health of the industry."

Until 1996, industry-specific legislation had to be passed by Congress before a research and promotion program could be established. However, under the Commodity, Promotion, Research and Information Act of 1996, industry groups may submit a proposal to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), requesting that a research and promotion program be implemented. The implementation process takes at least a year. These programs require the approval through referendum of those who would be covered by the program. Assessments are collected from designated industry segments. Research and promotion boards, usually composed of producer, handler, processor, and, in some cases, importer and public members, are appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture to administer the programs.

NODPA and other organic producers have long opposed any movement to establish an agricultural check off program for Organic promotion as part of a Federal Research and Promotion Program (FRPP). Currently the 19 programs that are already established are subject to scrutiny because of conflicts of interest, poor use of funds and lack of effective representation of the interest

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

# "Got Carbon?"

*By Bob Wagner, NEFU Carbon Credit Project Coordinator*

Or more to the point, do your farming practices reduce your carbon footprint or sequester carbon? If so, the New England Farmers Union's Buy Local Carbon Project wants to identify those practices and develop the methodologies so that carbon credits generated by these practices can be sold in the marketplace. Our goal is to create a viable carbon market for New England farmers who participate in conservation practices that benefit the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Despite the collapse of "Cap and Trade" legislation in Washington, which would have mandated a carbon credit market in the US, new markets for carbon have emerged over the last year. General Motors, Bank of America and the state of California have all announced that they want to buy carbon offsets from farmers. Other buyers include New England colleges and universities, such as Green Mountain College, and businesses, such as Ben and Jerry's and Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, who are taking steps to become carbon neutral. The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative of which all the New England states are members has a goal of capping and reducing CO2 emissions from the power sector by 10% by 2018.

Since June of last year, the New England Farmers Union has been working with Winrock International and its American Carbon Registry to research current conservation practices utilized in New England agriculture that reduce carbon loading and have the best chance of being eligible for carbon credits. At present, most carbon credit methodologies applicable to agriculture are skewed toward the larger, commodity-based farms of the Midwest. So far, we have identified four categories of New England farming practices that have best potential for aggregating carbon credits: fertilizer usage and application (corn/silage, potatoes, blueberries); manure management and methane capture (dairy); fuel switching (dairy, greenhouse/nursery); and, pasture management (dairy and livestock).

In the carbon marketplace, a verified reduction of 1 metric ton of CO2 is equal to 1 carbon credit – the more a practice reduces CO2, the more credits a farmer will have to sell in the marketplace. Once recognized and verified by an independent source, like the American Carbon Registry, credits are aggregated from a number of farmers by a carbon credit buyer to be sold on the carbon market, and proceeds of the sale are then returned to the farmers generating the credits. The sale of carbon credits has the potential to create a new revenue source from agricultural practices that themselves reduce environmental impacts and farm operating costs. For example, an input/output analysis conducted by researchers from USDA Agricultural Research Service of switching from a confinement-based dairy operation to a year-round grazing system on a typical 250 acre dairy farm in the Northeast found that among other benefits, the switch could reduce the CO2 output of the farm by more than 435 metric tons per year. This reduction would thus produce 435 carbon credits to be sold each year.



Carbon footprint comparison of Confinement vs. Grazing Dairy Systems

| Scenarios based on typical 250 acre farm in the Northeast US | A: Confinement all year, High | B: Confinement all year, Moderate | C: Confined, summer grazing | D: Grazing, Outdoors all year |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Baseline is A** | | | | |
| Annual total Milk (lbs ECM) | 1,847,000 | 1,850,000 | 1,850,000 | 1,830,000 |
| Annual lb $CO_2e$/lb ECM | 0.65 | 0.6 | 0.45 | 0.13 |
| Annual lbs $CO_2e$ | 1,200,550 | 1,110,000 | 832,500 | 237,900 |
| Annual MT $CO_2e$ | 544.57 | 503.49 | 377.62 | 107.91 |
| Annual MT CO2e Reduction from Baseline | | | 166.95 | 436.66 |

**REF: Rotz, C. A., Soder, K. J., Skinner, R. H., Dell, C. J., Kleinman, P. J., Schmidt, J. P., and Bryant, R. B. 2009. Grazing can reduce the environmental impact of dairy production systems. Online. Forage and Grazinglands doi:10.1094/FG-2009-0916-01-RS.**

Our Buy Local Carbon Project is endeavoring to collect and document similar data from other agricultural practices in the New England so that we may quantify the potential generation of carbon credits, determine the demand and potential price for these carbon credits in the marketplace both here in the region and across the country, and investigate the development of methodologies for each agricultural practice so that the generated carbon credits can be recognized and verified as eligible for sale in the marketplace. ◆

RESEARCH & EDUCATION

# Forage Radishes – A Foot Into the Soil

*By Rachel Gilker*

What is a forage radish? It is a tasty, nutritious feed that also may extend the grazing season, tackle the problem of soil compaction in pasture, and enhance soil quality in general. All in one high yielding package, tied up with foot-long, 1-4"-diameter taproots.

Let's start at the bottom, with the soil. Soil compaction is a challenge for farmers using grazing. Wet soils are especially easy to compact, and the pressure of hooves walking across can be the equivalent of that of a truck. This can cause compaction in the upper 4-6" of soil, where the majority of plant roots are found.

Compaction reduces the quality and yield of forages, reducing potential yields by as much as 15-40 percent. This can be because roots have a harder time penetrating the soil and also because the soil itself holds less water. Compaction changes the proportion of air space to solid soil particles in the soil profile. Soil organisms live in those air spaces, and the loss of the macropores, the bigger air pockets in soil, means that soil organism habitat is limited and soil organisms are less likely to thrive. This can also reduce soil quality, and then also forage yield and quality.

Addressing soil compaction in pastures has often meant either ignoring it or simply hoping the cycle of freezing and thawing will break up compaction or else…taking more drastic measures. Some with the means and the machine-accessible pastures may choose to turn the pasture over, tilling it or plowing it under, re-seeding, and starting again. Plowing is not the solution for everyone; pasture renovation is expensive, exposes organic matter to air where it readily decomposes,





and means waiting for the pasture to be ready to graze again.

There is another solution to compaction worth looking at: biological tillage, where the pasture stays in place and a special crop is seeded in. And that crop is the heart of this article: forage radishes, a tap-rooted brassica (Raphanus sativus L.). These radishes germinate in just a few days, and in 7-10 weeks, produce large taproots that penetrate compacted soils. The thick portion of the roots extend 8-12" into the soil, and the thinner leading portion, the root cap and apex may extend much further into the soil. These radishes winter kill and decompose in the spring. As they break down, they leave channels behind for water infiltration and for the roots of other forage plants to follow. The decomposing roots also release nutrients available for use by the growing forage plants.

There have been a lot of plusses associated with these white forage giants. Forage radishes contain glucosinolates, a class of sulfur-rich compounds. As glucosinates break down, they have been found to reduce weed and disease infestations and promote beneficial nematode populations. These compounds may suppress weeds, but they have not been found to reduce stands of the desirable crops when they were used as cover crops between plantings of soybeans and corn. Row crops planted following cover crops of forage radishes have been found to have much higher yields.

The nematode population may enhance the availability of nitrogen, but the roots themselves do a good job of it too. They can take up 150 to 200 lbs of N per acre, along with other nutrients that are inaccessible to most grass species. In the spring, as the roots decompose, they release this nitrogen into the topsoil, making it available for the pasture plants that are growing there.

Forage radishes also serve as a source of quality feed. Cows seem to enjoy grazing these radishes. We've heard of herds breaking through fences to get to radishes in the next paddock. And farmers tell of cows pulling radishes out of the ground by their tops, eating either the radishes themselves or the tops, with different cows preferring different parts of the plant.

Another plus: the radishes are nutritious. Forage radishes provide phosphorus, calcium and protein in great quantities, more than that found in native grasses. It also is high in water content, at more than 80% water. This makes it more digestible than typical forage grasses, but not practical for the main source of feed. Too much forage radish might flavor the milk, but seems unlikely that the herd will get into

so many radishes that milk will take on brassica undertones.

The radishes have been used as a cover crop in soybean and corn rotations with great success. The challenge is in planting forage radish into healthy existing pasture. Timing is part of the challenge. In Vermont, ideally, the radish should be planted by July 4th. Farther south, it can be planted as late as August. To calculate when you should plant,

*continued on page 38*

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

# Organic dairy retail & feed price update: March 2012

*Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director*

*continued from page 1*

¼ of the year (see chart on page 16). In January, the average retail price jumped by 7 cents/ ½ gallon before any increases went to producers in the middle of February or March.

Processors will have lower expenses in 2011 in dealing with the 'spring flush" of milk. With the current milk supply approximately 5-8% lower than demand, the annual spring flush of milk will not be the normal financial drain on processors as they utilize all of organic production for organic products rather than selling into the conventional market or making organic powder. With corn double the 2010 price and soy meal now over $1,000 a ton, the cost of winter milk will assume new highs, even with home produced forage and season extending small grains and brassicas. Factor in high fuel prices, increased costs in other inputs necessary for winter feed conservation, and increases in overhead costs, especially in health insurance, land rent and taxes, the request by NODPA, WODPA and MODPA producers for at least a $4 increase in pay price by the end of the summer is even more urgent and necessary.

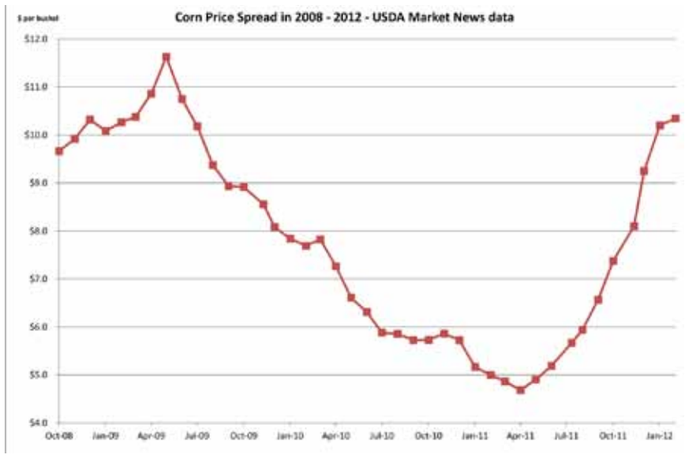
## Pay price increase

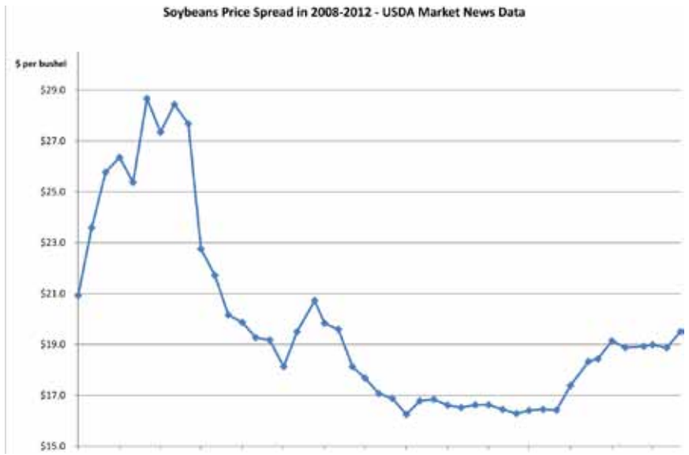
Horizon Organic increased their MAP by $2 in February, and Organic Valley increased their base by $1 and MAP by $1 in March, to add to the $1-1.50 increase they both gave in September 2011. Unconfirmed reports from producer meetings is that Horizon will keep its $2 increase in MAP through the summer, and Organic Valley will not take the $1 deduct in May, June and July.

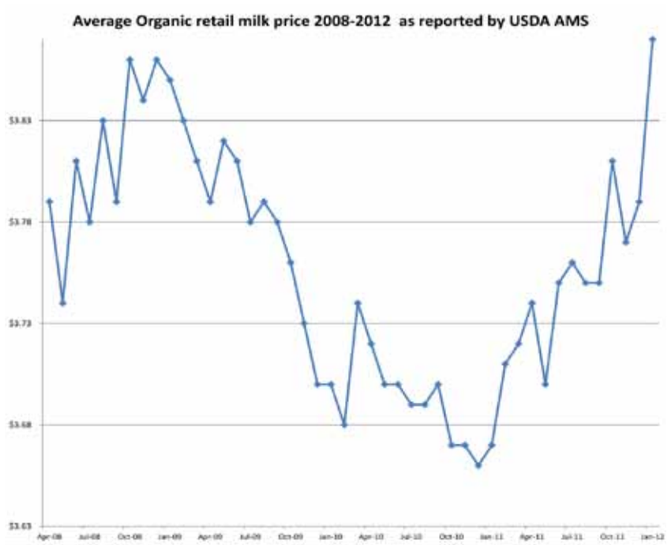
***What is the effect on sales if processors pass on these increases to their retail buyers?***

A $2 increase per cwt for farmers will be 9 cents/half gallon wholesale increase and with

*continued on page 16*



## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

# Organic Dairy Retail & Feed Price Updates

*continued from page 14*

a 30% retailer mark-up would be an 11 cent increase. The mark-up will vary between retailers. This assumes that the processor doesn't increase the costs over what they are paying producers.

USDA AMS reports that retail prices of organic half gallons have increased by an average of 7 cents /half gallon from December 2011 to January 2012, and by 21 cents/ half gallon since December 2010. This data doesn't take into account that at least 30% of milk volume is sold as private label which has a different, more competitive, retail pricing structure and is used by re-

| Month | Average retail price | Change in retail price | Milk volume in million pounds sold as fluid | Dollar increase in retail revenue from Dec 2010 base | Producer share** | Processor/ retailer share*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dec-10 | $ 3.66 | | 168 | 0 | 0 | $ - |
| Jan-11 | $ 3.66 | $ - | 171 | 0 | 0 | $ - |
| Feb-11 | $ 3.70 | $ 0.04 | 157 | $ 1,460,465 | 0 | $ 1,460,465 |
| Mar-11 | $ 3.72 | $ 0.02 | 183 | $ 2,311,628 | 0 | $ 2,311,628 |
| Apr-11 | $ 3.75 | $ 0.03 | 170 | $ 3,497,674 | 0 | $ 3,497,674 |
| May-11 | $ 3.70 | $(0.05) | 173 | $ 1,486,047 | 0 | $ 1,486,047 |
| Jun-11 | $ 3.75 | $ 0.05 | 163 | $ 3,381,395 | 0 | $ 3,381,395 |
| Jul-11 | $ 3.77 | $0.02 | 167 | $ 4,158,140 | 0 | $ 4,158,140 |
| Aug-11 | $ 3.76 | $(0.01) | 171 | $ 3,760,465 | 0 | $ 3,760,465 |
| Sep-11 | $ 3.76 | $ - | 182 | $ 3,760,465 | $ 2,275,001 | $ 1,485,464 |
| Oct-11 | $ 3.76 | $ - | 180 | $ 3,760,465 | $ 2,250,001 | $ 1,510,464 |
| Nov-11 | $ 3.74 | $ 0.02) | 175 | $ 2,946,512 | $ 2,187,500 | $ 759,010 |
| Dec-11 | $ 3.80 | $ 0.06 | 182 | $ 5,486,047 | $ 2,275,001 | $ 3,211,045 |
| Jan-12 | $ 3.87 | $ 0.07 | 171* | $ 8,269,767 | $ 2,137,501 | $ 6,132,266 |
| | | | | | | |
| Total | | $ 0.21 | | $ 44,279,070 | $ 11,125,007 | $33,154,063 |
| If all of increase return to producer/cwt | | $4.88 | | Actual return to producer/cwt | $1.25/cwt | |

* Estimated January 2012 sales based on 2011 sales ( drop of 7% in sales from December to January)

** Producer share is calculated at an increase of $1.25/cwt based on 23.2558 ½ gallons/cwt multiplied by total volume of fluid milk sold

*** Processor/retail share is based on the increased cumulative income of a higher retail price than they received in December 2010





tailers as a loss leader to attract customers to other organic and natural products. With the increase in retail price, the volume of sales has continued to rise, both month to month and year to year. Despite the 21 cent/half gallon increase in retail price since December 2010, December 2011 sales were at an all-time high with total organic fluid milk product sales of 182 million pounds, up 8.1% from December 2010, and annual sales are up 14.3% from January through December 2011 compared with the same period in 2010. This contrasts with an annual 3.9% December 2011 decline in sales for all fluid milk sold.

Comparing the December 2011 and January 2012 average price for retail half gallon organic reduced fat (2%) milk surveyed from stores in thirty cities as reported by USDA AMS, finds that 17 cities have higher average prices during January, 3 lower average prices, and 10 unchanged average prices.

The overall average price for all thirty cities increased 7 cents from December to January, from $3.80 to $3.87. This is a higher month to month increase than at any time since this data was first collected monthly by USDA AMS beginning in April, 2008. Wichita, at $4.24 for January, is the city up the most, 41 cents. Hartford, at $4.54, is the city with the highest January average price. Dallas, Houston and Denver, each with an average of $3.24, are tied for the lowest January average price.

Feed grade corn is averaging a slightly lower price, with the bulk of the sales throughout the country ranging from $410-450/ton, while corn in the Northeast traded $470-$600/ton. Argentinian imports of soybeans are still reportedly in use throughout the Eastern United States due to high US prices, although the quality varies. Soybeans are averaging $733/ton and soybean meal has jumped by over $200 per ton in the last month to average over $1,000 /ton. ◆

## Save the Date

### NODPA's 12th Annual Field Day

**September 27 and 28, 2012**

**Vermont Agricultural Business Education Center**

**Brattleboro, Vermont**

More details to follow. For sponsorship and trade show information contact Nora Owens at 413-427-7166 or noraowens@comcast.net

## Research & Education

# Farmers in Lake Champlain Basin to Get Increased Assistance with Nutrient Management Implementation

*By: Jeff Carter, UVM Extension Agronomy Specialist*

The University of Vermont Extension office in Middlebury welcomed another new staff member as part of the Champlain Valley Crop, Soil & Pasture Team. Kirsten Workman joins the team as an Agronomy Outreach Professional working to provide technical assistance to farmers in the Lake Champlain watershed. This special funding to increase on-farm assistance for local farmers has been provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) through the Lake Champlain Basin Strategic Watershed Action Team.

Kirsten comes to Vermont from Washington State, where she worked for Washington State University Extension and Mason Conservation District for 10 years with farmers throughout the Puget Sound and Olympic Peninsula regions. In those ten years she worked as a Conservation Farm Planner, Environmental Education Specialist, started the Mason County Small Farms Program and served as a member and co-chair of WSU's statewide Small Farms Team. During her time in Washington, she facilitated farmer participation in watershed cleanup plans, started the very successful Poultry Processing Equipment Lending Program, revitalized a local farmers market, and advocated for farmers across the region. She also taught classes for farmers on a wide array of topics including pasture management, composting, poultry processing, livestock management practices, whole farm planning and business planning for agricultural entrepreneurs. In addition to her duties with Extension and the CD, she and her husband own and operated a farm and nursery in Shelton, WA.

*If you are a farmer who is interested in writing your own Nutrient Management Plan, updating or implementing an existing plan or would just like more information about nutrient management practices, give Kirsten a call. Find out about the many opportunities to learn good nutrient management and qualify at the same time for money from the state! Kristen can be reached by phone or email at: (802) 388-4969 x347 or Kirsten.Workman@uvm.edu.*





## ORGANIC PRODUCTION

# Producing your Own Open Pollinated Corn Seed

## Homegrown Strategies for Dealing with the Onslaught of GMO Corn

*By Jack Lazor, Butterworks Farm, Westfield, Vermont*

If you are an organic producer who plants field corn, there is much to be concerned about these days. It doesn't matter if you are a dairy farmer growing corn silage or a cash grain operator harvesting corn for grain, gmo contamination of your crop is a real issue. Trans genes are everywhere. Five years ago, it was my hope that the market for corn seed here in the Northeast was so minimal that the big seed companies wouldn't bother developing genetically modified varieties for our region. At the time, there were quite a few shorter season hybrids available to us. It seemed like the majority of gmo corn variety offerings were in the full season maturity range of 95 to 120 days. Most of us were planting untreated 95 day and under corn hybrids. We still had some choices. This is no longer the case. Take a look at any commercial corn seed catalogue these days and you will find that just about everything there has some sort of inserted genetic trait right down to the very shortest season 75 day corn. Many of these varieties are "triple stacked" which means they have three inserted traits for insect and herbicide resistance. If you can find one variety in ten that is still a conventional hybrid, you're lucky.

The saddest thing about these recent developments in the seed industry is that the big guys have the best genetics. I have been very happy over the years with the short season corn varieties that I have purchased as untreated seed from the Canadian subsidiary of a very large U.S. corn seed company that I will leave unnamed. These folks know how to breed corn hybrids that will yield extremely well in the cool short season climate of the Canadian border region where I farm. I've tried some corn hybrids from several of the American organic seed companies, but they don't ripen as well as the Canadian cultivars because they have been bred in the Corn Belt of Iowa and Illinois. Even sadder yet is the fact that much of this organic seed is raised in an environment that is loaded with all sorts of stray gm pollen. Several years ago, a cooperative of organic grain farmers in Québec sent samples of organic corn seed away to a laboratory for PCR testing to determine the genetic purity of what they were planting. The results were disappointing and shocking. Several varieties had

*continued on page 20*

## ORGANIC PRODUCTION

# Producing your Own OP Corn Seed

*continued from page 19*

very low levels of contamination. One particular variety from a very well known U.S. organic seed company had gmo contamination levels that exceeded 60%. If you want to get even more depressed about the sad state of affairs out there, consider the fact that most of the organic corn that is being ground into livestock rations also has low level of contamination. Some of this pollution is coming from the seed, but most of it is the consequence of windblown pollen coming from a sea of conventional corn out there that is now 88% genetically modified.

All is not lost. Organic corn producers do have a few options. Corn breeders like Maury Johnson of Blue River Hybrids have begun to offer hybrids with a gametophyte factor from popcorn genes that actually block the entry of unwanted pollen. Organic corn seed is expensive enough already. Is there anything that we can do on our own to save money and be more independent? I suggest trying an open pollinated variety of corn. OP corn is especially good for silage because it is higher in protein and more digestible because of its lower lignin content. The late season standability that has been a problem with some older open pollinated varieties is not really an issue because the crop is usually harvested early enough to avoid stalk breakage and lodging. There are numerous OP varieties still available from small corn seed producers in the U.S. and Canada. Lakeview Organic Grain and Green Haven Farm are both located in New York State and offer OP corn seed. Minnesota 13 and Reid's Yellow Dent are two 90 to 100 day varieties that will make good corn silage in some of the warmer areas of our region. If you are looking for an 85 day corn, try Wapsie Valley. It stands very poorly in the late fall when left out to dry for grain, but will make excellent silage when chopped in late September.

For years, success with an OP corn with less than an 85 day maturity eluded me. I tried corn from all over the place with very little luck. My little test plots either lodged or were killed by frost before they ripened. In 2005, I planted a bag of Early Riser corn that had been bred by my friend Frank Kutka, who was finishing up a PhD in corn breeding at Cornell. Frank called his creation a composite variety because it was made up of five different breeder's strains that were all naturally crossed onto each other in a field situation. The corn was named Early Riser for its early season vigor. This was the first and only OP corn that has performed well for me. The plants just about jumped out of the ground and never stopped growing. My little two acre field had the look of a strong well grown hybrid crop. There was some lodging that year, but my worst problem was from raccoon damage. The coons had their choice of my OP corn or some chemical stuff down the road. They chose the Early Riser because it tasted better and had higher nutritional content. I harvested the field as ear corn and brought a large load of it out to New York Seed Improvement (an affiliate of Cornell University) for drying and processing. Vermont Early riser corn was born that year. I took my harvest to Ithaca the next two years, but due to distance and transport costs, began to process it myself in 2008.

Herein lies the beauty and simplicity of OP corn. If you find a variety that you like, you can select it for the traits that work well on your farm and save your own seed. Find a protected spot and stay away from drifting gmo pollen to maintain varietal purity.

Early Riser is a blessing for me because it silks and tassels earlier than any of the conventionally grown hybrid silage corn in my neighborhood. I plant shorter season corn because I am primarily interested in a harvest of corn grain.

Saving corn seed takes care and attention, but it is not very difficult. Select seed from your healthiest earliest maturing plants. Harvest corn on the ear as soon as the crop is physiologically mature. To determine maturity, snap an ear in half and look at the cross section of cob and surrounding kernels on the tip end of the ear. Once corn has dented you will notice the milk line on the side of the kernels. Make sure you look toward the tip of the ear to find the milk line. If you look at the cross section toward the butt, you'll see the germ side of the kernel. The milk line will descend down the kernel as final ripening progresses. After two to three weeks all of the soft starch in the kernel will be metabolized into hard material. The milk line will be gone and a little black layer will form on the bottom of the kernel. This little black dot actually seals off the vascular system of nutrient transfer from plant to kernel. When you see black layer, your corn is now physiologically mature. Kernel moisture is still at 35% and will have to drop to below 15% for long term safe storage. This is the critical moment in corn seed production.

To attain seed with the highest rate of germination, harvest your corn immediately as soon as it is ripe. An old fashioned corn picker-husker does the best job of snapping ears from the stalk. Some ears won't husk well because they are a little on the moist side, but this really isn't a problem. Finish drying the ear corn with forced 100 degree air. If you leave seed corn to field dry, moist ears can be subjected to cold freezing nights as the months of October and November progress. Germination will be reduced if corn freezes and thaws too many times. There are various strategies for drying seed corn on the ear depending on the size of your harvest.

For those of us who are doing several hundred ears or less, bring the corn into a heated house and lay it out on screens. Protect your seed corn ears from mice and other rodents. For larger amounts, dry the ears in an aeration floor bin or other vessel that will allow you to blow in lightly heated air from underneath. Monitor kernel moisture level often. When the moisture drops below 14%, it's time to start shelling ears. Old fashioned hand cranked corn shellers can be very easily motorized to perform this process. The combination of low rpm's and the internal cast iron friction plate will help you preserve seed quality by very gently removing kernels from the cob.

Clean your shelled corn with a fanning mill to remove the fuzzy debris generated during the shelling process. Lighter and shrunken kernels can be removed with a gravity table. The last step is to test your seed for germination. Final seed storage should be in a cool dry place that is rodent proof like a shipping container. This may seem like a lot of work, but the pay off in money saved and personal satisfaction is enormous. You will begin to develop your own unique variety of corn that has been selected for the growing conditions on your farm. We were able to harvest 62 pound test weight Early Riser corn with a 97% germination rate this past season under some pretty adverse growing conditions.

***If you need seed, help or advice about saving your own corn seed, contact Jack Lazor at jack@butterworksfarm.com.***

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### USDA Unveils the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Compass

On February 29, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack unveiled the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Compass, an interactive web-based document and map highlighting USDA support for local and regional food projects and successful producer, business and community case studies. The Compass consists of an interactive U.S. map showing local and regional food projects and an accompanying narrative.

- Local Food Infrastructure: maps USDA support for food hubs, cold storage facilities, local food processors and other infrastructure and examines how this infrastructure keeps wealth in rural communities.
- Farm to Institution: examines programs to connect local food producers and institutions.
- Careers in Agriculture: discusses USDA support for young and beginning farmers and ranchers, as well as opportunities to get involved in agriculture.
- Stewardship and Local Foods: explains how local food producers are implementing environmentally sustainable practices.
- Local Meat and Poultry: showcases resources for local meat and poultry producers and small processors.
- Healthy Food Access: highlights tools to connect farmers and ranchers underserved communities to increase access to healthy food.
- Local Food Knowledge: tracks existing research and identifies opportunities for further understanding of local and regional food systems.

### USDA sets organic crop insurance guarantees: $7.99 corn, $20.05 beans

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency set the guarantees, which act as the 'floor price' for crop insurance policies at $5.37/bu conventional corn and $7.99/bu for organic corn and $12.55/bu conventional and 20.05/bu for organic beans in the Midwest. Price does vary across the country. Barley floored at $5.37; cotton at .93/lb; wheat at $7.84/bu.





## Organic Milk Sought

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**CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley** is the nation's largest farmer-owned organic cooperative. With members throughout New England, the Northeast and Southeast, we offer a stable, competitive organic milk pay price to members. We are forecasting solid growth in these regions and welcome the opportunity to talk with producers about joining our Cooperative.

We offer veterinary support, quality services, organic food, the Organic Trader buy/sell newsletter and inclusive communications from a farmer-owned cooperative with nearly 25 years of organic farming and marketing experience. Our Feed Department sources organic feed purchases for our member operations. Please contact our Regional Coordinators or Farmer Relations for further details.

- In New England, contact John Cleary at (612) 803-9087 or john.cleary@organicvalley.coop.or Steve Getz at (608) 632-3790 or steve.getz@organicvalley.coop.
- In New York, contact David Hardy at (608) 479-1200 or david.hardy@organicvalley.coop.
- In Pennsylvania/Maryland, contact Peter Miller at (612) 801-3506 or peter.miller@organicvalley.coop.
- In the Southeast, contact Gerry Cohn at (919) 605-5619 or gerry.cohn@organicvalley.coop.

Farmer Relations is available from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Eastern Monday through Friday at (888) 809-9297 and online at www.farmers.coop.

**Dairy Marketing Services Organic:**
More milk is needed by Northeast organic customers! Dairy Marketing Services can help you facilitate the transition from conventional to organic production. Count on DMS Organic specialists for organics, transition stabilizers, pasture requirements, pasture supplies and more. Call David Eyster at DMS: 1-888-589-6455, ext. **5409 for more information today!** ◆

*Any buyers looking for organic milk who would like to be listed in this column for the May 2012 issue, please email the desired text to Lisa at lmcrory@hughes.net or call 802-234-5524.*

## ORGANIC PRODUCTION: FEATURED FARM

### The Corse Farm Dairy, LLC., Whitingham, VT

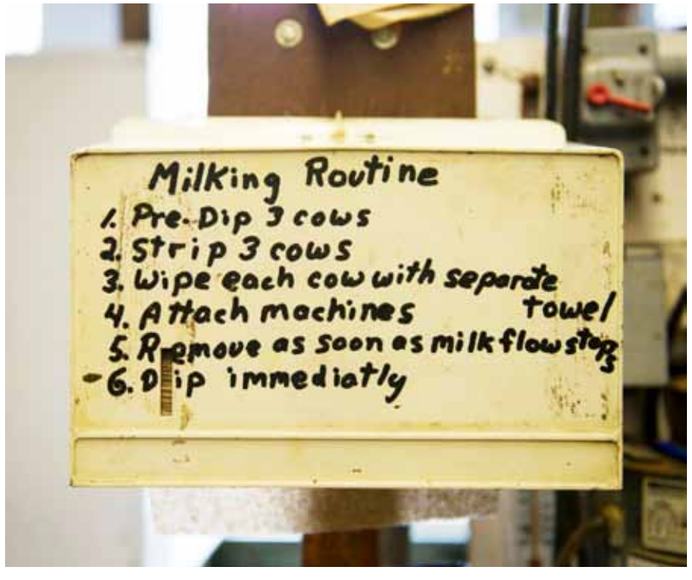
# Organic Dairy Production With A Keen Eye On Quality

*continued from page 1*

great grandfather purchased in 1868. The original farmstead comprised of 200 acres, where a herd of 13 cows were milked. The Corse Farm today is 379 acres, of which approximately 90 acres are permanent pasture. The Corses milk between 55 and 60 cows year round. The herd is mostly Holstein, but includes some Jerseys crosses and Red & Whites as well. Production runs about 16-17,000 pounds per cow for the year or about 55 pounds per cow per day. Milk is shipped through the Organic Valley Cooperative.

Over the years, the original dairy barn was expanded on seven different occasions as the herd grew. A new freestall barn was constructed in 1978, which is where the cows are housed today. Cows are milked in a double-3 milking parlor and the milk house contains two bulk tanks. Heifers are housed in a 60' x 96' greenhouse-style 'Maxidome' barn built in 2006. The original dairy barn is still standing, a piece of history, serving as a storage barn for hay and machinery.

Two generations are involved in the day-to-day management at the Corse Farm. Leon is the farm's general manager and also the primary milker, while Linda is the caregiver of all the non-milking animals. Abbie, Leon and Linda's daughter, has milking and other responsibilities on the farm. This schedule changes in the summer when Linda does all the afternoon milkings, allowing Leon and Abbie the time needed for fieldwork.




## The Next Generation

This schedule is a relatively new one, implemented when Abbie expressed a desire to return to the farm three years ago. After leaving the farm for college, Abbie received a degree in journalism and had a series of jobs in the arts. However, something was missing. "I felt like I wasn't living up to my potential. I came home and worked two months on the farm, seven days a week, and loved it. I appreciated the air and the freedom of motion," she says.

The change of heart was a surprise to everyone, including Abbie. She says, "I swore my whole life I would never come back here. As a child it seemed my parents were always busy and always working. I couldn't understand that there was any quality of life in that." Abbie says being back on the farm was "where my soul was best served." Unlike her previous jobs, here she has more ownership of the tasks at hand and feels a sense of accomplishment. "When you're out in a field haying, fencing, milking cows, there is an end result." In addition, Abbie feels that the farm is an ideal place to raise her 19-month old son, Eli.

Leon says fitting Abbie into the routine has been an evolution. "She is the primary manure spreader, she cleans the barn most mornings, and does five afternoon milkings. In addition, she is responsible for soil testing and is capable of every field job." For the first year, Abbie worked alongside Leon. She says, "Dad is an amazing educator. I'm learning how to be a farmer from a person who knows what he's doing. He respects the animals and milk quality is a really high priority." Abbie is also teaching her parents about how important living the organic life is, something about which she is very passionate and knowledgeable.

So what is the secret to it working? Abbie says, "My schooling wasn't in farming. I didn't come home with all new ideas to change things. Dad is very innovative. The lines of communication are open." Leon and Linda also have two sons, Caleb and Henry, who are currently working off the farm. However, Leon says, "The door isn't closed for them."

## The Transition to Organic

Leon's interest in organic was piqued when he attended an informational meeting held by Organic Valley. He says, "I went to the meeting out of curiosity." When he left, he thought, "Wow, we could do this, we're almost there."

The Corses have been certified organic by Vermont Organic Farmers for almost four years now, becoming certified on May 11, 2008. The



Corse Farm was one of the first farms in Vermont to transition their herd under the 100% organic feed rule implemented in 2007 (100% organic feed for the full 12 month transition). Because synthetic fertilizer had been used on the pastures, the Corses started the transition of their land in 2005, overlapping the final year of the land transition with their whole herd transition, which began in 2007. The transition was complicated by a barn fire, caused by lightning, which destroyed the milkroom and parlor in May of that year. One of the benefits of the long transition was that Leon didn't feel like he was rushing into anything. In 2006, one year before his herd transition began, he switched to using only approved organic treatments for his cows. "I wanted to see what kind of issues I'd have to address," he says. This gave him the flexibility to treat a cow if he needed to. Turns out, he didn't.

Like many farmers considering organic production, Leon admits their original motivation was financial, but he says it didn't take long before they realized there was a lot to the philosophy. Leon summarizes, "Our cows are healthier than they were before."

## Feeding and Pasture Management

Rotational grazing has been a part of the farm's management for quite some time. In the 1960's, Leon's father was practicing an early version of strip grazing to move the cows to fresh grass each day. Instead of the modern fiberglass posts and polywire, back then wooden posts with steel wire was used. Leon explains that after breakfast, he or one of his siblings would be employed to hold back the herd of 20-25 cows while his father moved the fence to provide a fresh area of pasture.

Dry matter intake from pasture at the Corse Farm averages 45% during the grazing season. Milking cows are moved to a fresh paddock every day. Due to the farm layout, at night cows are pastured on the same side of the road as the barn. This eliminates issues with crossing the road for night grazing. Cows will stay in the same paddock 2-3 nights in a row, although Leon says he's continually working to improve his night pasture system. Some land has been cleared to create more pasture acreage on the barn side of the road.

Cows are typically turned out to pasture in mid-May and graze the permanent pastures until late June. Hay fields are utilized for grazing after first cut, with additional acreage added in after second cut. The result is approximately 173 acres available for grazing by mid-summer. Early in the season, rest periods are 21 days, giving the pasture time to grow back before the animals re-graze an area. By October, the rest periods increase to 50-60 days to account for the slower re-growth later in the season.

Land utilized for grazing is somewhat limited by how far the cows can reasonably walk. By August, some of the hay fields used for grazing are more than a mile from the barn. Leon explains that he only sends the cows on the long commute on alternate days instead of every day. Interestingly, he has noticed during this time that his production goes up. His theory is that the added exercise stimulates the cows' appetites, resulting in more dry matter intake.

Pastures consist of a diverse stand of plants including white clover, red clover, and a host of grasses including timothy and reed canary grass, with the specific compositions varying with location. "We don't turn over our grass land except when clearing land. At this elevation, if we do a good job of maintaining what Mother Nature put there, it's better than us trying to battle what

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## FEATURED FARM

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she wants to do," Leon says. Soils are tested on every field and pasture on a three-year rotation. Manure and organic approved fertilizer applications are tailored to the soil test requirements. Due to the high elevation of the farm and weather influences from the surrounding mountains, Leon and Abbie work diligently to have the farm's manure spread by November 1st.

The cows are fed organic grain from Green Mountain Feeds in Bethel. All grain is fed in the parlor based on milk production. An average of 13 pounds per cow is fed year round. During the grazing season, the protein level in the grain is 10%, increasing to 12% during the winter months. This winter, since the haylage crop didn't test as high as in recent years, a 14% protein grain is being fed. Leon does forage testing every year and has found that for

2011, with its lack of consecutive sunny days and record amounts of rainfall, the nutrition of the forage is just not there. No doubt this is something farmers across the region are also noticing.

### Herd Health

The Corses keep a close eye on all their animals. Heifers, pastured 2-3 miles away are visited daily. Calves are Linda's department. "One thing I have learned is to catch things as early as I can," she says. She watches the calves, looking for telltale signs such as droopy ears and lack of appetite, also observing energy level. When it comes to feeding time, she says, "I'm a stickler for the milk being warm." Linda has increased the time calves are on milk from six weeks to three months. She says she is religious about getting colostrum into the calf within a few hours. The fresh cow will be milked by hand to feed the calf if it is born more than three hours before milking time. Iodine is sprayed on the newborn's navel as soon as possible.

Some of Linda's go-to products include Crystal Creek Replena-Lytes which is used for scours. Bright Start (also from Crystal Creek) is used if a calf is looking a bit off, or not coming along as she thinks it should. Also on hand are garlic tincture, vinegar and yogurt. Grain is offered after the first week, and hay is also available for when the calves are ready to eat it.

When it comes to cow health, Leon says, "I always have been a believer of the value of dry hay in the cow's diet. Our milking cows get a consistent supply of dry hay throughout the year. The first feeding in the morning, when they come out of the parlor, is dry hay in the feed bunk." During the grazing season, the balance of their diet comes from pasture; haylage replaces the pasture during the non-grazing season.

Udder Comfort is a primary mastitis fighting tool (In fact, you may have seen Leon and Linda in the Udder Comfort ad in the pages of this publication). Aspirin is relied upon for a variety of health concerns. "If you can keep the cow's temperature down," Leon explains, "she can do the rest of addressing what the problem is. If her temperature is down, she's more likely to eat and drink and fight the battle more effectively." In addition to aspirin, Crystal Creek's Super Boost bolus is also used. "Beyond that," Leon says, "we don't use much else." The Corses rely on Dr. Guy Jodarski, Organic Valley's consulting veterinarian. A local vet comes about three times a year for vaccinations (rabies and lepto) and the rare emergency case. Vet and medicine bills typically run less than $1,000 per year.

### Taking Quality Seriously

Quality milk production is a primary focus for the Corses, with the herd's somatic cell count typically averaging below 100,000 for the year. In 2011, the wet weather presented some challenges, which caused the average to be a bit higher at 107,000. The Corse Farm was presented a 'Gold' quality award by Organic Valley in 2010, and a 'Silver' award in 2011. Starting off 2012, the Corses are back where they want to be with January numbers averaging 89,000.

Leon calculated that with last year's production of 930,000 pounds of milk shipped, approximately $22,000 in quality premiums was captured. To help monitor milk quality, Leon employs several methods. The cows are on a DHIA program, but the Corses also use an on-farm 'Porta SCC' test for use on any cow they are concerned about or any fresh cow. All parties involved with milking work hard to spot any sign of mastitis. Leon is able to download test results of his milk tank samples from the Organic Valley website, which further helps him track the numbers and monitor quality.

With the quality premiums, pay price at the Corse Farm is averaging $30.00 per hundredweight, with an extra $3.00 per hundredweight incentive premium on production in the winter months. There has been a lot of discussion recently on the ODairy listserve regarding pay price. Leon echoes some of those sentiments when he says, "Over time the organic dairy industry has to come up with a way to increase farmer pay price, not wait until there is a crisis. The price of everything we buy goes up over time. To make organic dairying remain viable in the long term, the organic pay price also needs to go up over time." With their attention to detail and focus on milk quality, the Corses are ensuring that their farm is maximizing its potential profitability. ◆

*Cheryl Cesario is a certification specialist at Vermont Organic Farmers, the certification program of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT). She and her husband raise grass-fed beef, humane veal, and pasture-raised pork and poultry on their farm Meeting Place Pastures.*

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

# Managing For High Quality Forages, Part 1

*continued from page 5*

Maybe making and feeding some stored feeds or seeding in the field and delaying pasturing cows on recently worked fields can offset these issues. Then there are the concerns with land that is in permanent pasture. Many farms have land with too many stones, or with steep slopes, making it hard to rotate. How do you maintain high quality feed on those pastures?

With healthy soils and balanced fertilizers it's possible to change the level and amount of minerals in the forage plants, and minerals in highly digestible forages become highly available to the animal.

In hay fields, research shows that after three years in hay there's up to a 30% yield reduction. Can permanent pastures, which are never aerated or rotated, maintain yields? Is the best strategy on those pastures to mob graze in tall, over-mature, lower digestible forages--wasting much but adding to soil organic matter?

Rotations allow you to plant blends of improved varieties in ideal ratios-- starting over, so to speak, when pastures become dominated by just a few species. Working the land while rotating pasture plants also allows soil corrections to be made and allows nutrients that have accumulated on the surface to be mixed into deeper layers of the soil. I know this production system works and yields high quality forage along with tonnage; that's how we do it at Otter Creek Organic Farm.

The question is: can you save money doing it another way and still get good results? You can't skimp on high quality, high yielding forages if you are not supplying grain as a supplement. Is the supplement just adding what's missing? With healthy soils and balanced fertilizers it's possible to change the level and amount of minerals in the forage plants, and minerals in highly digestible forages become highly available to the animal.

How do you do all this without feeding grain? Again, it requires better management; it's more difficult than just "give them a little grain with all the goodies added to it". You need healthy soils with plenty of available minerals in order to get healthy, balanced forages.

It's important to always evaluate your system. Take soil tests so you know your soil's strengths and weakness, and you can address those weaknesses. You need to create an ideal place to grow nutritious, healthy plants. Mineralized healthy plants need to be managed so they won't violate the principles of the cow. That's challenging, but certainly profitable once it's working.

What it all boils down to is basically this: Get soils healthy and mineralized and you will have a solid base to produce the high quality forages you need. In my next article, I'll take a closer look at forage blends and how to manage them for optimal plant growth and optimal livestock nutrition.

*Gary Zimmer is a farmer, agri-businessman, author, educator and President of Midwestern Bio Ag. Dedicated to improving farming through restoring and balancing soils, he has written two books and spoken to and worked with farmers across the U.S. and in Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, China, and South Africa. The Zimmer family's organic farms utilize the ideas Gary has gleaned over a lifetime spent studying agriculture. Otter Creek Organic Farms includes an organic dairy, pastured beef and poultry, vegetables, and other crops on 1,000 acres.*

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

# Vaccination of Organic Livestock

## Goals and strategies for a first rate vaccination program.

*By Guy Jodarski, DVM (reprinted from the July, 2008 NODPA News)*

Vaccination of organic livestock is a topic that receives a lot of attention. The enormous number of vaccines available is confusing. Wide ranging claims (both positive and negative) about vaccine effectiveness and safety leave many producers wondering if they should vaccinate and if so how often and with what products?

The first thing to consider is the fact that vaccination does not equal immunization. This means that just giving a vaccine does not guarantee a proper immune response to the organism being vaccinated for. To immunize an animal is the process of inoculating a vaccine into an animal that responds with a detectable immune response. This implies a level of protection against the pathogen being vaccinated for. To vaccinate on the other hand is the process of inoculating a vaccine into an animal, whether or not an immune response has occurred. Failure to immunize an individual or group can occur for many reasons; poor timing of vaccination, immune suppression (stress), wrong vaccine used, failure to give a booster and many others.

This article will outline some ideas and strategies for the vaccination (and hopefully immunization) of organic livestock with an emphasis on dairy cattle. Please remember to work with a local veterinarian to develop a specific vaccination program for your herd. There is no one ideal vaccination schedule that works in every situation. Disease challenges by infectious organisms (viruses, bacteria and parasites) vary with climate and local conditions. Dr. Ron Schultz at the University of Wisconsin Veterinary School said it well; "The first decision in the process of designing a vaccination program is choosing the correct vaccine(s). One must understand that there are not now, nor will there be in the future, vaccines to prevent all infectious diseases."

In my opinion, the goals of a vaccination program should be to:

- Produce a good immune response similar to natural infection.
- Provide protection against clinical disease and reinfection.
- Give long lasting protection.
- Result in minimal side effects or reactions.
- Allow for vaccine to be given in a humane and labor efficient manner.
- Provide a positive cost/benefit ratio compared to risk of disease.

The last point is important to consider. It makes little sense to vaccinate for diseases that do not generally occur in the area where the herd is kept. On the other hand, diseases common in the population that cause serious losses when they occur should be vaccinated for on a regular basis. Bovine Virus Diarrhea (BVD) virus and Leptospira bacteria are two pathogens that are common in cattle herds and wildlife populations. These two organisms cause millions of dollars in damage to the dairy and beef cattle industries. It is my belief that most if not all cattle producers should vaccinate for BVD and lepto. Likewise, sheep and goat producers should seriously consider vaccinating their herds and flocks for Clostridium (overeating and tetnus) with a CD/T vaccine on a regular basis. Some organic cattle producers also use a different combination vaccine for Clostridium because blackleg is common in their area.

### Vaccine Types

The large number of vaccines available is often a point of confusion for livestock producers. Let's start by breaking it down into types of vaccine – one way to classify vaccines is whether or not they contain living organisms. Modified Live Vaccines (MLV) contain living disease organisms that have been changed from their wild form to a form that is less likely to cause disease. An example of an MLV is the intranasal vaccine for cattle that contains the IBR and PI3 viruses. This vaccine has been altered so that it will not grow in temperatures above 85 degrees Fahrenheit. The viruses in this vaccine multiply on the surfaces of the nasal passages but can't grow inside the body (and cause lung infection) because of its' higher temperature.

Killed vaccines on the other hand, contain disease causing organisms that are not alive. Heat or other methods are used to kill the viruses, bacteria or parasites present in the vaccine. Some vaccines like Lepto. and Clostridium containing products are only available in the killed form.

***What are the advantages and disadvantages of MLV and killed vaccines?***

MLVs stimulate a more complete and lasting immunity than do the killed vaccines. Vaccination with an MLV provides a wider spectrum of coverage for a given pathogen. BVD for example, is a large family containing many different strains of the virus, and MLVs for BVD will provide immunity to more strains than a killed vaccine will. MLVs do not require multiple doses for good immunity to develop whereas killed vaccines require a booster (2 to 4 weeks after the first dose) to be effective. MLVs stimulate both antibodies (humoral immunity) and T-cell lymphocyte responses (cellular immunity) killed vaccines stimulate only antibodies for the most part. MLVs contain less antigen load than

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

# Vaccination of Organic Livestock

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their killed counterparts and therefore cause less vaccine reactions such as fever, off feed animals and decreased milk production following vaccination.

A potential downside to MLVs is that they can cause disease in an immune compromised individual. The MLVs should also not be used in pregnant animals as they can cause abortion. Farmers and Veterinarians that remember the first MLVs to be marketed are reluctant to use them because the early versions did cause problems such as abortion in cattle that were kept close to vaccinated cows. The old vaccine was not very "tame" and could pass from an open cow that was recently vaccinated to one of her pregnant neighbors and cause an abortion in a cow that wasn't even vaccinated. Fortunately, modern MLVs have been altered sufficiently or "attenuated" so that this is not a problem. Still, one should not use an MLV on cows or heifers within 3 weeks of their breeding date.

The table on this page summarizes the important differences of vaccine types – MLV vs. Killed

In general, MLVs provide better immunity than killed vaccines but some vaccines like Lepto., Clostridium, and mastitis vaccines are only available in a killed form. Some producers prefer the convenience of killed vaccines because an entire herd can be vaccinated at once and open bottles can be kept in a refrigerator for later use.

| Differences in Vaccine Types | | |
|---|---|---|
| Characteristic | MLV | Killed |
| Duration of Immunity | Longer | Shorter |
| Spectrum of Coverage | Many Strains | Narrow |
| Need to Booster | Less | Yes, Required |
| Amount of Antigen | Less | More Vaccine Reactions |
| Safety | Can Cause Disease | Safer |

## Timing of Vaccination

This is a critical part of a successful program. Times of stress should be avoided. Dairy cows have three well known stress periods – at dry off, precalving and just recently fresh. Cortisol levels will be high in cows at these times, cortisol is a natural stress hormone that decreases immune system function. Avoid vaccinating cows until they have been dry at least 10-14 days and also do not vaccinate cows from 2 weeks precalving to 4-6 weeks fresh. Calves should probably not be vaccinated until they are 4 to 6 months old as antibody received from colostrum can interfere with vaccination in younger calves.

## How many vaccines should be given at once?

In order to optimize the immune response to vaccination it is better to limit the number of antigens given to an animal at any one time. Combinations of more than one vaccine containing multiple antigens should be avoided. Vaccines that are derived from gram negative bacteria (E. coli, Salmonella, Leptospira, etc.) contain small amounts of endotoxin. Endotoxin is very stressful to all animals and one should not vaccinate with combination vaccines containing more than one (gram negative) endotoxin source. Use as few antigens as possible when vaccinating. It is better to give a second vaccine at a later time than to overload the immune system with multiple antigens.

## Reducing Vaccine stress – preventing milk production drops after vaccination

Avoid vaccinating the whole herd at once with killed vaccine. It is more convenient to vaccinate all cows at once but this approach results in all of the cows experiencing vaccine stress at the same time. Use MLVs on open animals only or better yet, do a good job of vaccinating heifers with MLVs before they enter the milking herd.

Many herds can stop vaccinating cows for the viral diseases (IBR, BVD, PI3 and BRSV) if they do a good job with MLVs in the youngstock. Cows will still need to be vaccinated with Lepto., as it is a killed vaccine that requires periodic boosters – probably twice per year in cattle.

## What about pregnancy losses (abortions) after vaccination?

One should never use vaccines containing live virus to vaccinate pregnant animals. Killed vaccines are considered "safe" but contain more antigen and also materials called adjuvants. My personal belief is that the "loading" of killed vaccines with adjuvants and increased amount of antigen leads to vaccine reactions (fever, off feed, abortion) more often than occur with modified live vaccines. For these reasons I recommend giving MLVs to open cows instead. If one must vaccinate pregnant cows, limit the number of vaccines and antigens to as few as possible.

## Example Program – Dairy Herd

One should always consult with a local Veterinarian and design a vaccination program specific for your operation. The following is a basic program for a dairy herd that I recommend as a starting point. This is not a "one size fits all" program that every dairy ought to use but rather a simple program that should provide

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NODPA PETITION CAMPAIGN

## Fair Share of the Retail Dollar for Organic Dairy Producers

The Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA) started a petition January 4, 2012 to draw attention to the fact that organic dairy producers need an increase in their milk price in order to stay afloat. We are asking consumers if they would be willing to pay more for their milk if they knew that the increase went straight to the farmer. Please sign the petition and tell your friends to sign, put it on your Facebook page, ask your certifiers and other organizations you are members of or support to promote it on their website and internet communications plus anywhere else that seems appropriate. We are all consumers, let's make our voices heard.

***Our goal is to have 5,000 signatures – we are well on our way.***

### THE PETITION

This petition will be sent to George Siemon, CEO (Organic Valley); Ron Schnur (Horizon Organic); and Gary Hirschberg (Stonyfield Farm). It says:

***"Increase Organic Dairy Farm families milk price by $0.60 per gallon to cover an increase in their farming costs or $0.70 per gallon to save family farms. As a consumer I support paying more if that money goes back to farmers."***

**Will you sign this petition? Go to:**
**http://signon.org/sign/save-organic-dairy-farm**

**No internet access?** Fax a letter in support with your name and which state you are in to 866-554-9483 or mail it to NODPA, 30 Keets Road, Deerfield , MA 01342.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** http://nodpa.com/in_fairshare_petition_01192012.shtml

## 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 _____, 201____. The total sum will be paid monthly to NODPA. This agreement may be ended at any time by the producer by sending a written request to their milk buyer with a copy to NODPA.

**Milk handlers please send payments to:**

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

Producer signature: _____ Date: _____

Producer 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, Executive Director, 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, NODPA Executive Director, 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: _____



## NET UPDATE

### Recent ODairy Discussions

*By Liz Bawden, Organic Dairy Producer, NODPA President*

Last month, discussions continued on problems farmers were experiencing associated with the lack of profitability in 2011. Discouraged farmers shared their frustration as they talked of getting jobs in town, selling out, and the recent difficulty of getting financing from lenders. Several farmers felt that retailers are taking unfairly high margins.

**A farmer asked about cost and availability of kelp.** Another producer responded by saying that all kelp is not created equal. It should have a good smell and be green, not brown. Many producers like to feed kelp; one commented that if you feed it free choice, the cows will eat a great deal of it at first, but then level off their consumption.

**A producer had a cow that was unusually large for her time.** She was "absolutely enormous" and was still 8 weeks from her due date. The producer asked for advice if special handling was needed. Several producers suggested that a vet should be called to determine if the cow was actually bred to an earlier service. An ultrasound isn't generally used in late-term pregnancies, but might be useful to determine if she is carrying twins. In the case of twins, it was suggested to dry her off 10 days early, as twins usually come early. It was also suggested to keep her close-by for monitoring, and feed an appropriate dry cow ration.

**A producer posted a video of a fly trap made by a Wisconsin farmer** out of a 55 gallon barrel. Called the "Neato Fly Barrel", it functions as a larger version of the familiar stinky bait trap. Four elbows of PVC pipe are inserted around the barrel to provide entrances for the flies. The barrel is filled with eight to ten inches of water, and a squirt of dish soap and some bait is tossed in. A window is cut in the top of the barrel, and a clear piece of plastic is attached. The flies enter the trap through the PVC pipe, attracted by the smell. They fly upward toward the light in the plastic window, and eventually drop into the water below. It seems a successful method to trap flies, although producers seemed to think that it would most likely trap house and blow flies, and not the stable or horn flies. ◆



## Website & E-Newsletter Advertising

NODPA is pleased to provide additional advertising opportunities for our organic dairy supporters and resource individuals through our Website and our monthly E-Newsletter.

### Website Advertising

Three ad spaces are located at the top of the home page and at least 10 other pages on NODPA's website. NODPA.com receives over 2500 visits each month navigating to an average of 3 pages per visit.

**Ad Design:** Display-ready ads should be 275 pixels wide by 100 pixels tall. Your ad can link to a page on your website.

**Cost:** Display-ready ads are $125 per month.

### E-Newsletter Advertising

Two ad spaces are located at the top of each E-Newsletter, going out monthly to 2,000 individuals through our E-Newsletter, the NODPA-Odairy discussion forum, and NODPA's Facebook page.

**Ad Design:** Display-ready ads should be 300 pixels wide by 125 pixels tall. Your ad can link to a page on your website.

**Cost:** Display-ready ads are $100 per month.

Interested in one or both of these opportunities? For more information, contact Lisa McCrory, NODPA News and Web Editor, at:

**Email: Lmccrory@hughes.net**

**Phone: 802-234-5524**

Go to the following web page for more information:

**http://www.nodpa.com/web_ads.shtml**

### Subscribing to ODairy:

ODairy is a FREE, 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

**March 14, 2012**
**IOIA/OMRI Livestock Inputs Webinar**

This webinar presented by IOIA will cover what organic livestock inspectors should look for during inspections and how OMRI reviews livestock materials. OMRI will provide the technical expertise of Lindsay Fernandez-Salvador, OMRI Program Director, as lead presenter. The course includes pre-course reading as well as in-class discussion and exercises, with opportunity for Q & A. An additional 30-minute pre-recorded session will be provided for those who have not taken a previous crop inputs webinar. Joint IOIA and OMRI Certificates of Completion will be awarded to successful participants. Link: http://www.ioia.net/training.html

**March 15, 2012**
**8th Annual Vermont Grain Growers Conference**
Essex Resort and Spa, Essex, VT

This daylong event will provide you with a diverse array of educational topics on seed security, equipment innovations, and grain processing. Keynote speaker is Loic Dewavrin, 'Our Own Seeds, The First Step to Sustainability'. Contact: Erica Cummings erica.cummings@uvm.edu . (802) 524-6501, or go to http://www.uvm.edu/extension/agriculture/?Page=grainconference.html



**March 17, 2012**
**Maine Grass Farmers Network Grazing Conference**
Fairfield, Maine

Maine Beef Producers Association and Maine Grass Farmers Network present the 8th annual grazing conference. The agenda includes speakers and workshops on forages, marketing, and grazing systems for sheep, cattle, and pigs. Link: http://umaine.edu/livestock/mgfn/conference/

**March 22, 2012**
**Northwest Pennsylvania Grazing Conference**
Clarion, Pennsylvania

"The Nature of Grazing" is the theme for this annual event. Learn from the experts about improving soil health and harnessing the power of diversity to improve soil function. Sessions address equine pasture management, multi-species grazing, and improving the bottom line with better record keeping. Following the main conference there will be a Regional Devon meeting for Devon producers and those interested in learning more about this heritage, high-performance-on-grass breed. Link: http://headwaterspa.org/GrazingConference.aspx

**March 22 & 23, 2012: Beginning Women Farmers Conference**
Amherst, MA

This two-day conference is for all farmers interested in improved quality of life, profitability, and land health. Sponsored by Holistic Management International, the USDA National Institute of Food & Agriculture and the University of Massachusetts. There will be over 28 sessions on topics like, Business Planning Basics, Nutrient Dense Grazing, and Farm Startups. For more information, contact Carrie Nelson at HMI, 505-842-5252, ext. 101, or go to: www.holisticmanagement.org/conferencebwfne

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### Food supply target of new Occupy movement

A new Occupy movement led by the Rainforest Action Network hopes to put new light on our food supply. This week organizers of the Occupy Our Food Supply day prompted supporters to rally against large agribusiness corporations, including Cargill, Monsanto, ADM and DuPont. According to a commentary in the Huffington Post written by musician Willie Nelson and author Anna Lapp, the movement looks at the role of these agribusinesses in our food supply. "Today, three companies process more than 70 % of all U.S. beef, Tyson, Cargill and JBS," Nelson and Lapp wrote. "More than 90 % of soybean seeds and 80 % of corn seeds used in the United States are sold by just one company: Monsanto. Four companies are responsible for up to 90 % of the global trade in grain. And one in four food dollars is spent at Walmart." ◆



## ORGANIC PRODUCTION

### Vaccination of Organic Livestock

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coverage against the most common and sometimes devastating infectious diseases of dairy cattle.

**Calves at ~6 months of age (4-8 mos.)** – One dose of live (MLV) 4-way virus vaccine (IBR, BVD, PI3 and BRSV) Examples include; Bovi-Shield Gold 4, Bovi-Shield Gold 5, Express 5, Pyramid 5 Titanium 5 and Vista 5

**Heifers at 10-12 months of age (Pre-breeding)** - One dose of live 4-way (as above) plus 5-way lepto (killed) Examples include; Bovi-Shield Gold FP5+L5, Express 10, Pyramid 10, Titanium 5 + L5, Vista 5 L5 SQ

Repeat 5-way Lepto 2 to 4 weeks after the dose listed immediately above. Examples include; Leptoferm-5, Lepto Shield 5

**Cows** – Booster 5-way Lepto twice per year, can give to all cows as this is a killed vaccine. A booster dose given at the time of pregnancy check boosts immunity to help protect the calf at the most common time of abortion caused by Lepto.

**Optional Vaccines for Cattle** – Clostridium 7 or 8-way (includes Blackleg and overeating disease), Intranasal IBR + PI3 (Nasalgen or TSV-2), or Inforce 3 (IBR, PI3, BRSV), E coli or endotoxin – J-5, J-Vac or

Enodovac-bovi BVD (w/IBR, etc.) for cows, Scours vaccines (rota- and corona-virus, E coli) Leptospira Hardjo-bovis, Salmonella (SRP)

**Not Recommended** – Haemophilus, Pasteurella, Mannheimia, Pinkeye, Hairy Heel Wart (Serpens species bacterin)

#### Homeopathic Nosodes or Conventional Vaccines?

The topic of homeopathic nosode use for immunization is controversial. Some feel that all conventional vaccines are bad and they prefer to use nosodes instead of vaccines.

Conventional vaccines work at the molecular and cellular levels and produce responses that can be measured with laboratory tests such as antibody titre (humoral response) or white blood cell assays (cellular response). Homeopathic nosodes work at an energetic level. The activity of homeopathic nosodes does not produce immunologic responses that can be measured in a laboratory. My personal preference is to use nosodes at the time a herd or individual is challenged by a pathogen but not as a preventative measure to immunize animals. Homeopathic nosodes for herpes, mastitis and ringworm are examples of preparations that producers have had good success with in the face of a disease outbreak. In my experience the use of homeopathic nosodes to immunize cattle against respiratory viruses (and bacteria such as Lepto.) has produced mixed results. Some producers report problems with pneumonia and abortions after using homeopathic nosodes to immunize their animals that resolve after they return to using conventional vaccines. Others feel satisfied that they have achieved good results using homeopathic nosodes exclusively in place of conventional vaccination.

#### Vaccines are a management tool, not a "Silver Bullet"

Please keep in mind that vaccines are not a cure-all. Many people have overly optimistic expectations of vaccination as an aid to animal health. Vaccines are sometimes used as a crutch to avoid making management changes. The first line of defense against infectious diseases is to have a healthy immune system. Organic production methods emphasize disease prevention by providing excellent nutrition, good sanitation and an environment that minimizes stress. Taking care of these basic needs will promote excellent natural immunity and decrease the incidence of sick animals. However, vaccinations can be a useful addition to overall herd management by helping to prevent and limit the severity of disease. The National Organic Program both allows and encourages the judicious use of vaccines as a livestock health aid. ◆

*Guy Jodarski, DVM, is a Staff Veterinarian for CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley based in Neillsville, WI. He works in an organic and sustainable livestock practice with an emphasis in dairy cattle herd health. Phone: 715-937-3078. Email: gjodarski@tds.net*

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### NOP, NOSB Updates

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of producers. Most producers see these programs as flawed and ineffective.

OTA's has overwhelming support for their immediate goal of removing the barriers that exist now that prevent organic producers from opting out of check-off programs that do not provide any benefit to organic production, sales or promotion. Achieving this goal would allow producers to determine how they spend the check-off dollars. Organic Dairy has shown how these funds can be used productively and equitably in ways determined by producers themselves.

As part of its phase II investigation, OTA needs to lead the organic industry as a whole in a discussion of new models for promotion programs rather than attempting to fit organics into a flawed conventional program. In the opinion of most producers, any assessments need to come from all levels of the supply chain and allocation of funds needs to be decided not on which sector contributes the most money but where a diverse and representative committee decides the need. There are many ways that the organic industry can fund generic organic advertising, promotion and valuable research rather than enter into the long and costly struggle to set up a FRPP and have it administered through the Federal government.

NODPA is working with OTA and other groups who have a variety of different perspectives to ensure that the producer voice is heard clearly in this ongoing debate. ◆

# Classified Ads

## Livestock

**Certified organic Normandy/Holstein first-calf heifer**, due March 10, 2012, asking $1200. Contact: Phillip Cutting, neros75@comcast.net, Phone: 802-254-6982, Location: Guilford, Vermont.

**Looking to purchase 2 certified organic heifers/cows.** Prefer holstein. Please email any availability to warren@shawfarm.com
Contact: Warren Shaw, Dracut, MA

**Retirement Sale: Organic Dairy Herd**
60 dairy cows - mostly Holsteins, 15 bred heifers due to calve from April - summer months, 8 more heifers bred to calve October - November. Would like to sell the whole herd as one group. Farmer is retiring after 50 years of dairying of which 15 of those years were certified organic (certified by NOFA NY). Animals are in excellent condition, and this has been a closed herd for many years. Herd is available May 1st - with some flexibility. Asking $1,950 each or best offer. Animals located in Cobleskill, NY. If interested, please call: 518-234-2188 or email: organicmilkman@hotmail.com. Prefer phone contact, please.

**Two organic cows for sale.** Their teats are too short for a hand milking operation. One is a Holstein, fresh in mid Nov, 2011, the other is a Holstein/Milking Shorthorn cross due the end of March/early April. Will sell both to one owner for $3000 for the two, or sell singly for $1600 each. Owner says they are both very nice heifers, just won't work for his situation. Contact Noah Coblentz, 2678 Fox Road, Cincinnatus, NY 13040

## Feed & Bedding

**Certified Organic (NOFA-NY) CLOVER SEED and TIMOTHY SEED** ready for frost seeding and/or spring planting. Cleaned and bagged on farm. Contact Jeff @ 607-566-8477 or Mitchellorganics@hotmail.com

**Certified organic dry round bales**, unwrapped, approximately 550# and stored inside. Cost is $40/bale at the barn. Located in Barnard, VT. Contact Joe Ladouceur, Email: ladouceurlj@aol.com, Phone: 802-763-7454.

**Organic hay and balage,** NOFA-NY certified. Dry Round bales, balage round bales, and dry small squares. Located in Cherry Valley, NY. Delivery available within NY. Email or call for price: rob@westwindfarm.com, Phone: 607-264-3635

**NOFA NY Certified Hay for Sale:** 200 bales of 1st cut of whch 100 are wrapped and te other 100 are dry and stored inside. Also 100 bales of 2nd cut wrapped … clover and ttimothy. Size of bales are 52 x 48. Real nice hay, located in Mooers Forks, NY. Contact Larry Ashline: lashline@twcny.rr.com, **Phone: 518-236-7445**

**1500 ton of cert. organic hay for sale.** It is mixed grasses with feed test. This hay is in 4x5 rounds and located in Virginia. Can be put on trucks for shipping to NY-PA-MD-VA or NC. Contact: John Murray, johnvictormurray@hotmail.com, Phone: 540 295 8074.

## Real Estate

**Farm For Sale: Colorado Certified Organic Raw Milk Grazing Dairy:** Certified organic dairy farm. Grade A milking facility. Licensed cheese plant. Double six parlor. 120 head freestall barn plus open lots. Dairy currently has 1000 raw milk cow share members, with established beef and egg market. Superb farmers' market access. Colorado has a cow share law allowing production of raw milk for share members.400 certified organic leased acres, 55 acres owned. 100 head Brown Swiss and Tarentaise cross, grass-fed dairy cattle and young stock available. All machinery available. Contact Arden @ Windsor Dairy for more information: 970-481-8314 or ajndvm@aol.com

## Research & Education

# Forage Radishes

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count back 8-10 weeks from when you'd expect your first severe frost.

You could choose to plant in May, but if you are seeding into a pasture, by planting later in the season, forage regrowth is slower, so the radishes and other forage may be ready at close to the same time. Planting too late may mean the radishes won't grow enough before severe frost kills them, or cold weather slows their growth.

The best way to seed in the radishes is with a seed drill, allowing good seed-to-soil contact. Seeds should be at about ¼-1/2 inch depth, or as deep as 1" if moisture availability is a problem. Without using a seed drill, the best way has been to broadcast the seed on a recently or currently grazed paddock by hand or with a spinner. A few days later, graze the paddock in order to tamp the seeds down into the soil. Grazing soon after planting will also help the forage radishes compete with the existing pasture plants. Germination success was best when the planting was done in the days before a rain event. When conditions were too dry, there was not much growth.

Recommended seeding rate when planting into pasture is 2-5 lbs per acre. Seed costs are around $2.50-3.50 /lb, and is available at many seed dealers. Some farmers found that the best use of the seed was in areas that were very compacted and partially bare, such as around water tubs or in congregation areas. This may make more sense when pastures are very thick, no seed drill is available, and seed-to-soil contact is unlikely.

It is best to wait about 7-8 weeks after planting before grazing the radishes. Waiting allows the radishes to grow significantly. At about this point, the rest of the forage in the pasture probably needs to be grazed as well. Another option is grazing multiple times over the radishes' growing period. This translates into smaller radishes, but the radishes seem to regrow, providing more lush green tops to graze.

One of the advantages of the forage radishes is their high-quality forage later in the season. If you are planning to include stockpiled forage in your rotations, grazing forage radishes may provide a boost in November or later in the year.

Forage radishes are worth trying out for your herd, and tasty enough to bring into the kitchen. The forage radishes we've been using are also known as Daikon radishes, and they're in your local grocery store!

**Acknowledgements:** Bridgett Jamison has provided insight into the world of the forage radish. Thanks to her and the farmers trying out forage radishes in their pastures for sharing their stories.

- Weil, R. and A. Kremen. 2007. Thinking across and beyond disciplines to make cover crops pay. Journal of Science of Food and Agriculture. 87 (4): 551-557.
- Website: www.forageradish.com

*Working with the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Rachel works on pasture-related issues such as compaction, biological control of weeds, and soil quality. She enjoys radishes on pasture and in salads. Support for work on forage radishes in Vermont has been provided by USDA NRCS through a Conservation Innovation Grant.*



## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

# From the MODPA Treasurer

***Greetings from Western Wisconsin.*** The last couple of months have brought a lot of activity to the organic dairy community. It has finally come to light that there is a shortage of organic milk for the consumer. There have been many factors that have played into this. The pasture rule has had a greater effect than many had thought that it would on production. The great demand for crop acres for corn for ethanol has also had a tremendous effect on us. The many thousands of acres that left organic production will haunt us for a long time to come. The conventional corn price continues to remain high and will likely draw more acres away from organic production in the coming season. I have heard comments from people in the conventional sector of conventional producers locking in prices well beyond $6 a bushel for corn into next winter, so there appears to be little chance of a crash in grain prices through the next winter. Everyday expenses continue to increase on all dairies as well. Fuel, taxes, insurance, repairs and supplies continue to increase in cost. While most of this is not new news to you it makes it all the more important that you continue to support the efforts of your regional ODPA. We have been working hard to try to get the processors to pay us accordingly. There has been some movement in price by them but it is far from the amount needed to truly make organic dairy the sustainable system that it should be. The processors have been terribly slow and hesitant to live up to their end of the deal. We need to remind them that they have an obligation to the producer to make sure that they are being compensated for the hard work that we all do. We are all on call seven days a week all year long and deserve to have the compensation for it. Many of us, myself included have been forced into second jobs to make ends meet. This is a disgrace to have so many trying to make do with so little. I do realize that some of you are not in such dire straits but would like to ask you to help those who are less fortunate to be able to achieve a better standard of living. I believe that we all need to support each other in this because if we don't this bad cycle will continue to revolve until we are all out of business. We have to make a better situation for the next generation of producers. If we don't do it now there won't be a next generation. Please get involved, use your voices and demand a fair and responsible pricing structure from the processors for the farmer, and continue to support the efforts of The FOOD Farmers and your regional ODPA.

May you all have a safe spring.

**Bruce Drinkman,** *3253 150th Ave, Glenwood City, WI 54013*

*715-265-4431 Home | 715-781-4856 Cell*

## 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



## 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 8**
**S. Deerfield, MA**

## CALENDAR

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**March 23, 2012**
**Breeding for Nutrition in Organic Seed Systems Webinar**

This workshop was originally presented at the Organic Seed Grower's Conference in Port Townsend, Washington, and the speakers are repeating it as an eOrganic webinar. The webinar is free and open to the public and advance registration is required. Link: http://www.extension.org/pages/62564/breeding-for-nutrition-in-organic-seed-systems-webinar

**March 31 - April 6, 2012**
**Crop, Livestock, and Advanced Organic Inspector Training**
State College, Pennsylvania

IOIA and Pennsylvania Certified Organic will co-sponsor Basic Crop Inspection Training and Livestock Inspection Training running concurrently April 2-6. Each basic course includes four days of instruction including a field trip to a certified organic operation, plus a half day for testing. Advanced Organic, unannounced inspections. For more information: http://www.ioia.net/training.html, or call: 406-436-2031

**April 28, 2012: Introduction to Biodynamic Agriculture**
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, East Troy, WI

Inspired by Rudolf Steiner, hands-on activities include preparation-making, applications to compost and fields, plant observations, and learning how to use planetary calendars. Visit their website for more information and to register. http://www.michaelfields.org/whole-farm-workshop-schedule, or call: (262) 642-3303.