

# NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Featured Farm: Moore Farms, Nichols, NY

## No Grain, Grass-Intensive Seasonal Dairy

By Lisa McCrory, NODPA News & Web Editor

Rob and Pam live in Nichols, NY, which is located south-central, along the Pennsylvania border. They operate a spring seasonal organic dairy farm on 300 acres of owned and 40 acres of rented land, with additional acreage certified for hay. Over the years they have fine-tuned their grazing system and 'simplified' their operation so that it runs efficiently with minimal inputs, labor,

and machinery. A dairy farming friend jokes he'd like to retire to a farm like Rob's one day. Though their operation looks simple on the surface, behind that veil is a complex farm that is cycling nutrients, growing and maintaining healthy livestock, and producing high quality organic milk with minimal labor requirements and only a couple pieces of equipment.

*continued on page 24*



## The 12th Annual NODPA Field Days & Annual Meeting: A Summary Report

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

NODPA Field Days and Annual meeting was a resounding success with excellent presentations and many producers in attendance. For a slideshow of some great pictures of livestock, presenters, producers (the beautiful, the handsome, the debonair and the well . . . all the rest of us!) and many great scenes from the Field Days, please go to the NODPA website and check out our full summary, with pictures.

*Full article starts on page 19.*

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## From The NODPA President

As we approach the season of Thanksgiving, I am hearing more sentiments of worry and fear rather than those of gratitude. Most farmers, when pressed, admit that this year could have certainly been worse. The variable weather in the spring, the armyworms, the drought. We all just did the best we could. Not all of us were hard hit, but most of us experienced a reduction in yields in both crops and pastures. A shining spot for me this fall was attending the NODPA Field Days in late September. We were fortunate to have an array of farmers and researchers working on a variety of ways to improve our bottom line. The presenters who shared their experiences in improving soil health to raise energy in forages, the no-grain or low-grain feeding strategies, the exploration of diversification on dairy farms, and the great farm tours, had ideas that seemed to really hit home. Thanks to all the folks who shared their time and talents to make this event happen!

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As farmers in my area take stock of their winter feed supply, they are making the necessary adjustments. Some are purchasing feed, some are culling milking herds heavily or selling off young stock to conserve the feed they have. I wish you well with your tough decisions, and hope you find yourself able to feel that sense of peace and gratitude as you sit around the table with your family and friends during this Thanksgiving season.

*Liz Bawden, NODPA President*

*Hammond, NY | Phone: 315-324-6926*

## NODPA MISSION STATEMENT

*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 wellbeing of the organic dairy industry as a whole.*

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the NODPA Desk,  
November 2012

*By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director*

Now the election is over and we know the makeup of Congress, congressional committees and political appointees it is easier to plot a path forward for some key issues that will directly affect organic dairy farmers' bottom line. At the time of writing there is no definitive projection about whether we will get a full Farm Bill, an extension of the 2008 Farm Bill or something included in an omnibus bill put together by congressional leaders. Many are betting on an extension of the 2008 Farm Bill. Without a Farm Bill, there is a default provision within permanent Farm Law that requires the Secretary of Agriculture to set the dairy price support between 75 and 90% of parity. Taking the November 2012 parity price of \$52.70 as a guide that suggests the Secretary would have to set the dairy support price at a minimum of \$40 on January 1, 2013 if no new farm legislation is passed. Having organic and non-organic raw milk selling wholesale at the same price would throw a lot of confusion into the retail market!!

California's Proposition 37, which would have required labeling of all food products containing genetically modified organisms within two years, was narrowly defeated 53 to 47%. The result has largely been credited to the \$45 million spent by a coalition that included Monsanto and Du Pont. Despite the defeat of the bill, we can claim some success given that it was outspent 5 to 1 and still managed to get over 4 million votes. The Just Label It campaign (of which NODPA is a member), and many other groups are examining ways in which we can make Federal GE labeling a focus within the Farm Bill to complement the existing state-by-state strategy being coordinated by the Center for Food Safety. With the National Organic Coalition (NOC), of which NODPA is a member, the Just Label It coalition and other groups, are also attempting to block language that would strip federal agencies of their authority to regulate GE crops. We also expect the release of the Advisory Committee on Biotechnology and 21st Century Agriculture (AC21) report now that the election is over. It is generally believed the report will present what is deemed a "compromise" solution that allows USDA and the biotech industry to continue to abdicate responsibility for preventing contamination and from adequately compensating growers. One of the recommendations is to support a system of crop insurance as a compensation mechanism which would set a dangerous precedent of having the victim rather than the polluter pay for damages caused by GE contamination. While this issue is painted as an organic versus conventional agriculture, it is not that black and white as the ability to differentiate between GE and non-GE products benefits many operations that choose not to use GE products and sell on a Buy Local, and many other marketing and production claims and labels.

Certification costs for producers will almost certainly increase

in 2013 as the National Organic Program (NOP) has mandated that organic certifying agents must test samples from at least 5 percent of the operations they certify on an annual basis. While testing has always been a part of organic product oversight and is required by the Organic Foods Production Act, NOP's action specifies the minimum amount of testing that must occur. While this additional testing will help certifying agents identify and take enforcement action against operations intentionally using prohibited substances or methods, somebody will have to pay for it. Inevitably, it will be producers who do not use prohibited substances who will bear the increased costs. The NOP's GMO Memo is still very unclear about the impact of GE contamination on crops and the resulting effect in the marketplace. As the rest of the world tightens up their regulations around GE contamination USDA fails to have an adequate response. While this issue is important to the entire agricultural and food supply chain, it is critical to the organic producers' bottom line that consumers continue to be assured that there is no GE contamination of organic products. What we do not need from increased testing is increased diversion of organic grain intended to be sold for human consumption to livestock feed and all the possible problems that may cause organic dairy and livestock production.

Food & Water Watch has recently published their report on "The Economic Costs of Food Monopolies." It includes 5 case studies of the impacts of increasing consolidation in agriculture. One of the five cases is on the market for organic soybeans. The report confirmed a story familiar to organic dairy that the farmers who grow organic crops and raise organic livestock now face the same forces of corporate consolidation that dominate the conventional food industry, with a declining number of buyers putting downward pressure on the prices farmers receive. The report highlights the effect that WhiteWave's Silk changing from organic to 'Natural non GMO soybeans' had on the producers of organic soybeans. The full report is available at [www.foodandwaterwatch.org/reports/the-economic-cost-of-food-monopolies/](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/reports/the-economic-cost-of-food-monopolies/).

The Union of Concerned Scientists released a new report recently that highlights the economic benefits of organic dairy farms and includes policy recommendations to better enable the growth of this sector and to support local economies. The report, "Cream of the Crop: The Economic Benefits of Organic Dairy Farms," is authored by Jeff O'Hara and looked at financial data from organic and conventional dairy farms in Vermont and Minnesota. The data were used to model specific metrics for the economic benefits of increased dairy sales using labor income, increased employment, incremental economic value and output. The report shows larger positive impacts from increased organic sales than similar increases in conventional dairy sales. In addition to the report, they are also featuring the stories of three organic dairy farmers whose success illustrates what a smart investment organic dairy farming can be. The report can be found at [www.ucsusa.org/food\\_and\\_agriculture/solutions/advance-sustainable-agriculture/economic-benefits-of-organic-dairy.html](http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/solutions/advance-sustainable-agriculture/economic-benefits-of-organic-dairy.html). ♦

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

# Addressing Low Soil Calcium Improves Forage Quality & Economic Return

By Cindy Dailey, California State University, Chico, College of Agriculture, Organic Dairy Program

The success of any organic farming system can be linked directly to soil fertility. High quality forages that optimize milk production require well-aerated, balanced soils. Getting “there” takes commitment and in some cases, blind faith that investing in your soils can actually provide a generous return, a return that continues to pay dividends long after the deposit is made into the proverbial soil bank account.

Making that initial investment was an important step in the organic evolution of the certified acreage at the University Farm. The investment was considered a pledge to the concept that soil remediation would return value to the operation in some tangible way. With the help and advise of the Organic Dairy Advisory Board and Agri-Dynamics (our consulting partner on the study), a long-term soil remediation field trial was designed to study the effect of a basic soil amendment program on forage quality and yield, with an emphasis on the economic return that would result from added milk production.

Soils in this area are classified as “Chico Clay Loam”, with a pH of 6.6 and CEC of 13.8. The initial soil analysis would show significant deficiencies in base saturation for calcium (55%), excessive amounts of magnesium (33.8%) and elevated phosphorus (23 ppm), moreover both soil nitrogen and sulfur concentrations were far below recommended norms. Such a significant deficiency in soil calcium (Ca) would likely compromise nutrient uptake in pasture forages, reducing digestibility and consumption.

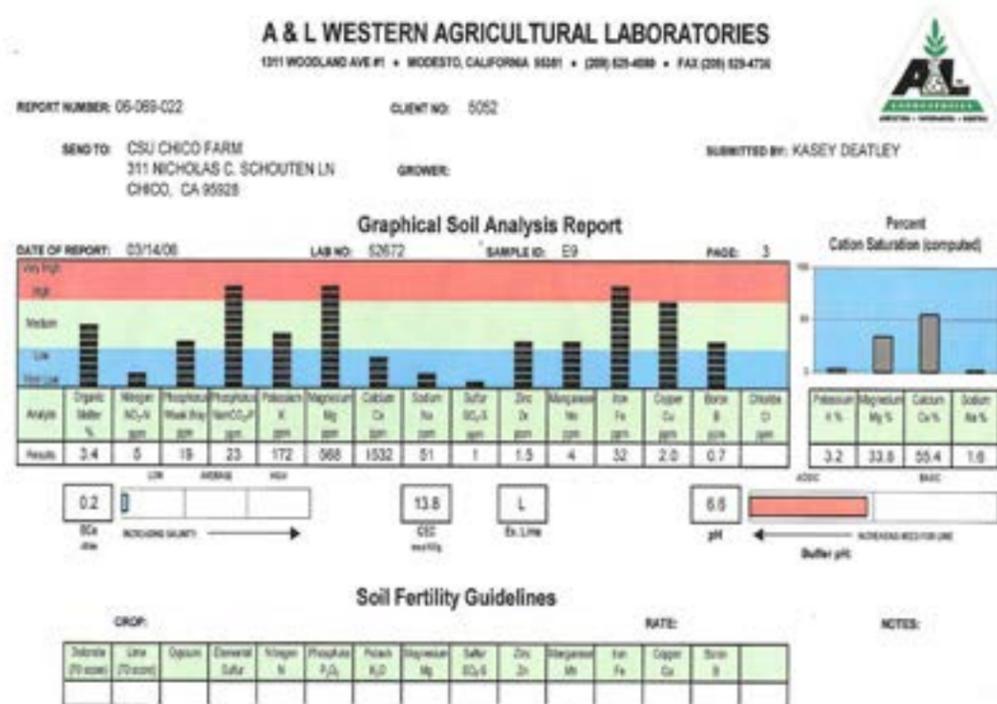
Although the initial soil organic matter (SOM) assessment was within the normal range (3.5%), soil penetrometer readings were very high (greater than 75% of readings in excess of 300 psi), indicating “tight” soils in need of aeration and soil biology. Soil Ca has a positive impact on soil structure by flocculating clays (breaking them up into flakes), in this way, Ca content works to improve water movement and aeration within the



soil profile. The low base saturation for Ca may help to explain (at least in part) the compaction issues in these soils.

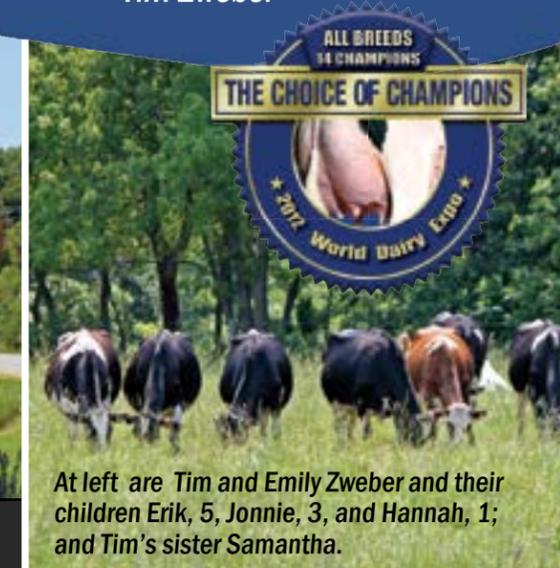
Methods: Ten 5-acre paddocks were randomized to one of two treatments, i.e., amended vs. non-amended, for the purposes

*continued on page 6*



# “Quality milk is important here.”

— Tim Zweber



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At left are Tim and Emily Zweber and their children Erik, 5, Jonnie, 3, and Hannah, 1; and Tim’s sister Samantha.

“We’ve been using Udder Comfort™ since before I was in college, so that’s about 10 years. It definitely works better than other products, and it’s the first thing we rely on, even before we were certified organic in 2008. We use it on cows that calve-in with edema and any cow with mastitis,” says fourth generation dairyman Tim Zwebber, a 2004 Univ. of Minn. graduate doing herd health at the family farm.

“Our approach has always been more about prevention and encouraging a cow’s own healthy immune system than to be putting out fires.

“Udder Comfort has always fit that proactive mindset.”

Tim and wife Emily are in partnership with his parents Jon and Lisa at Zweber Farms — home to 120 milk cows, along with dry cows and youngstock near Elko, Minnesota. Tim and Jon share the management of this Century Farm. Tim’s brother Steve and sisters Sarah and Sam also help out when they can.

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Addressing Low Soil Calcium

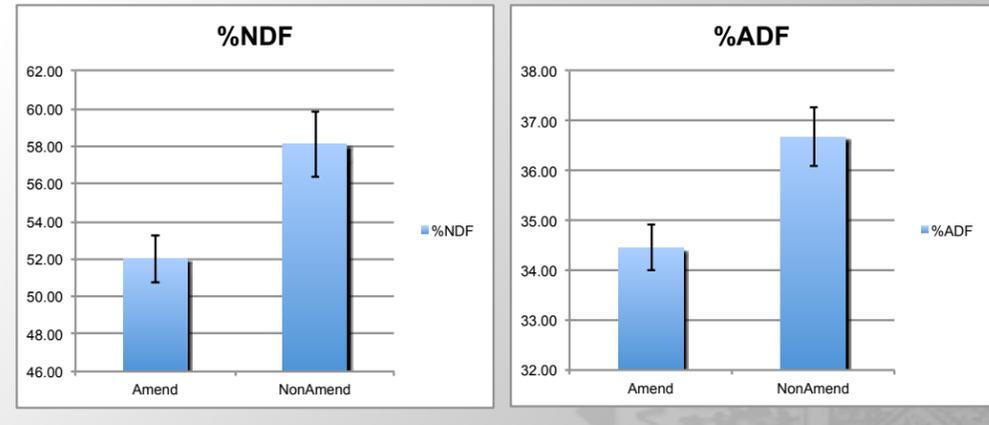
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of monitoring changes in forage quality and yield over time in response to a calcium-based remediation program. Amended paddocks received a combination of soil amendments designed to remediate the soil over a three-year period to defray these initial costs. All amendments were applied in the fall, with the exception of the spring gypsum application. Amendments for the treated paddocks included:

- 1/2 T Gypsum (\$53/T) 2x/yr
- 400 lbs Hi-Cal lime (\$196/T)



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- 2 lbs Manganese Sulfate (\$0.90/lb)
- 5 T compost (2:1:2 N:P:K)

Amendments were applied each year for three years at a cost of \$289.50/yr. Pastures were all managed the same with respect to intensive grazing management or MIG with a stocking density that varied throughout the season (100 -130 cows/acre). Rest periods also varied with season, for instance during the spring of the year, paddocks were rested 25-30 d, as the summer progressed, the rest periods would



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The Ruegamer Family, Villard, Minnesota

To learn more about the Ruegemers, the HOPE Award and the HOPE program, visit [HorizonOrganic.com](http://HorizonOrganic.com).

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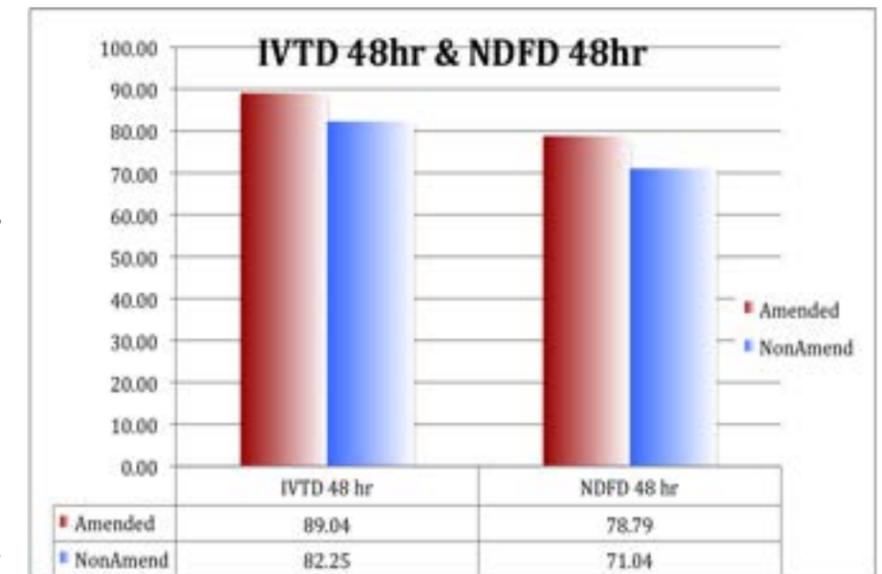
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take 45 days to achieve 10-12 inches of re-growth that was suitable for grazing. During spring, our pasture DMI can easily reach 70% of DMD, while changes in forage quality during the heat of the summer can reduce pasture forage consumption to approximately 40%. Summer heat changes the plant populations from cool to warm season species, elevating ADF and NDF, therefore reducing forage intake. As NDF rises, pasture DMI drops because feed takes longer to break down within the rumen, rate of passage slows, and the cow becomes limited on space (capacity).

All paddocks were measured for dry matter yield pre and post grazing using a Grass Master brand capacitance probe. Total dry matter removed was calculated by subtracting post DM values from pre-grazed DM readings. The difference was considered to be DM yield, as well as actual dry matter consumed. Residual DM measured approximately 1500 lbs/acre, pre-grazing DM production varied by season. Total average DM production per year averaged 6 T/acre.

Results: The results for forage quality and yield are averaged over for the last three years. It was not possible to pick up differences between treatments visually even though changes in forage quality and quantity did occur.



Dry matter production data indicated an additional 180 lbs of dry matter/grazing cycle within the amended paddocks. With 8 grazing cycles / grazing season the additional tonnage/acre was 1,440 lbs of DM/acre. Cost of forage production in our irrigated system is roughly \$0.08/DM lb, returning an additional \$115.20 per acre per year in the amended paddocks.

continued on page 8

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

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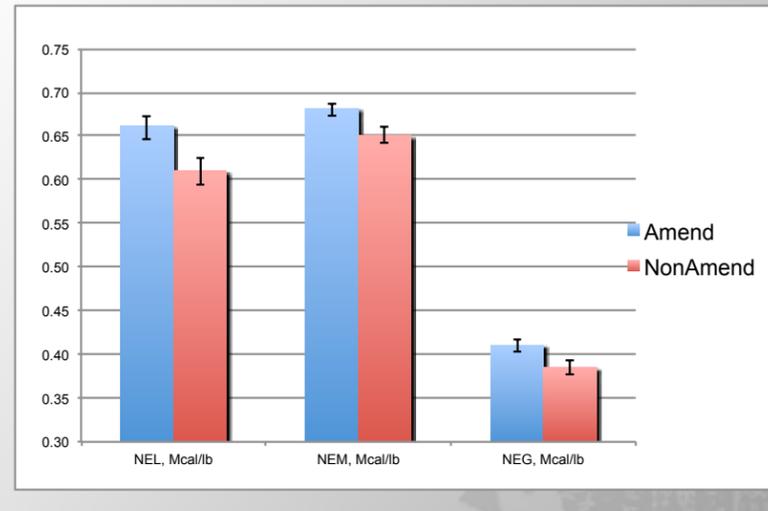
If we were to calculate the cost of replacing that 1440 lbs of DM with comparable feed, it would cost approximately \$253/acre to buy \$300 hay at 85% DM. For the 50 acres within this study, that amounts to roughly \$12,600 worth of hay that we didn't have to buy because we were able to increase our production of pasture-based forages.

What is more exciting than yield, is the change observed in overall quality. Obviously, as forage quality increases/lb of DM consumed, so will milk production. There is a direct correlation between forage quality and milk yield.

Acid Detergent Fiber or ADF was significantly improved (34.45% A vs. 36.67% NA) indicating a reduction in the fiber content of the forages. Neutral Detergent Fiber or NDF was also significantly improved within the amended paddocks (52.02% A vs. 58.10% NA), to the benefit of pasture intake because of the inverse correlation between NDF and DMI. What's more, the overall digestibility of the fiber content of the feed improved within the amended paddocks as reflected in NDFD or neutral detergent fiber digestibility. As the fiber content of the feed becomes more digestible, more total nutrients are then available to the cow for milk production and maintenance. In fact, for each 1% improvement in NDFD, DMI or dry matter intake improves by 0.37lbs, resulting in an increase in fat corrected milk production of 0.55 lbs/lb of dry matter consumed.

The energy content of the forage also improved significantly within the amended paddocks (across all energy categories), improving relative forage quality (RFQ) within the amended paddocks by 20% (189.85 A vs. NA158.69). Improvements in the overall digestibility, total digestible nutrients and the energy component of the forages within the amended paddocks resulted in

### NET ENERGY OF LACTATION, MAINTENANCE, & GROWTH

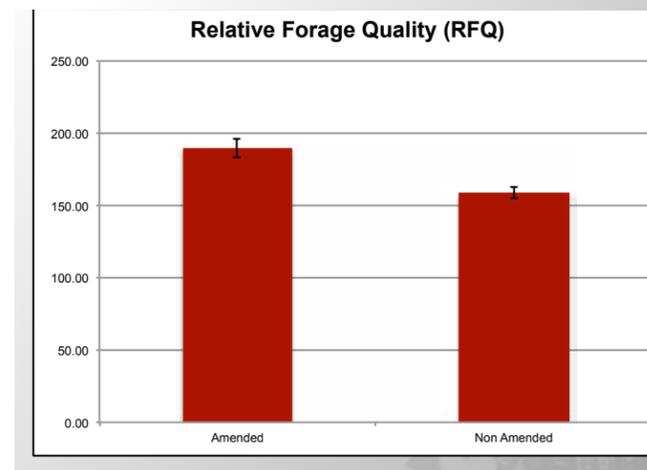


more milk production produced per ton of DM consumed (3,298 for the A treatment vs. 2,966 for the NA treatment).

Economic impact: Using the milk production lbs/ton of DM statistics, cows grazing the amended paddocks produce an additional 331.7 lbs of milk for every ton of DM consumed. In our grazing system, each cow consumes over 2 T of DM from pasture-based forages over the course of the grazing season. (e.g., @40 lbs of DMD and 50% pasture DMI; grazing 200 days = 2T/cow/season).

Cows that consume 2T of amended forages throughout the season, will produce an additional 662 lbs of milk over cows grazing on non-amended paddocks (2 \* 331 lbs of milk/T DM consumed = 662 total additional lbs of milk produced), at \$28/CWT = \$185.36 per cow. For our 90 cow herd, that would be \$16,682.40 for the year due to improved forage quality.

### RELATIVE FORAGE QUALITY



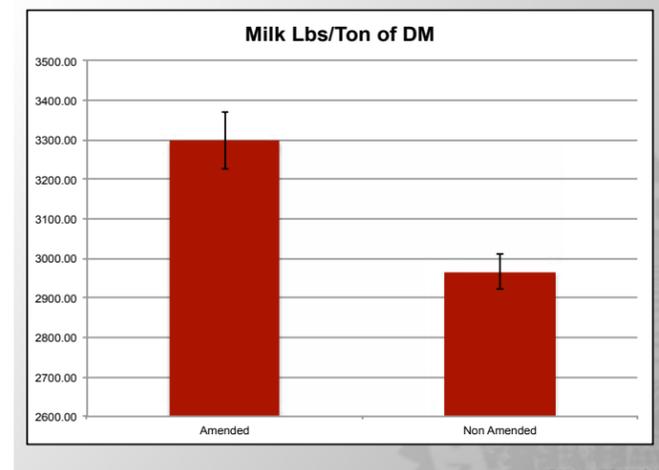
The additional yield was calculated to be \$5,760 for the season due to the soil amendment program. Collectively, the treatment yielded \$22,442.40 in additional income.

The amendments themselves (with application expenses) cost \$289.12/acre, for a total investment of \$14,457 for the 50 acres allocated to the dairy unit. Net return = \$7,985.40 for the season. The actual return on investment suggests that for every dollar invested in soil (under the conditions set by this study), there was a \$1.55 returned in additional income.

The caveat is that this study was conducted on low calcium, high magnesium soils, under irrigation, and MIG grazing with primarily Jersey-cross cows. Results on your farm would depend on your current soil fertility and cost of remediation, which are all site-specific but no less applicable. You won't know until you test your soil and run some numbers to establish costs. If your forage quality and yield are not yet there, you may need to test and get started, sooner rather than later.

There are a number of things that we did not factor into the economic picture including the reduction in grain costs. As energy values in the forages improve, the need for energy from grain will be reduced, something that would have a significant impact on feed costs and net profit/cow.

### LBS of milk per Ton of DM



In addition, we did not calculate the economic impact of improved soil organic matter (SOM) that comes from a more balanced soil. Higher SOM values would enhance the water holding capacity of the soil, reducing irrigation costs over time.

In summary, achieving balanced soils is essential to improving net profit in a pasture-based organic dairy system predicated on high forage intake and optimal milk production levels. To get to that next level in your program, test your soil & your forage, find a good agronomist or soil coach that can help you understand the data, establish some achievable goals and pull the trigger.

**Acknowledgements:** We would like to thank and acknowledge Organic Valley Family of Farms for their support of this research through the Farmers Advocating for Organics (FAFO) fund. We would also like to thank Agri Dynamics for serving as the technical consultant and industry advisor for this study. With their help, we were able to create a study that was relevant and applicable to the needs of the organic dairy industry. Your service and expertise has been greatly appreciated by our staff and students.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Maine Farmers Press For A New Farm Bill

By Annette Higby, Policy Director for New England Farmers Union (NEFU)

Congress skipped town in September without passing a five-year farm bill. Important safety net programs like the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program and others that support local and regional food systems, renewable energy and beginning farmers were all allowed to expire on September 30. Before they headed home to campaign, however, House members in particular got an earful from several hundred farmers who had come to Washington to press for the passage of a new farm bill before the old one expired. New England Farmers Union members joined with more than 200 fellow farmers, ranchers and fishermen from across the country in Washington, D.C., Sept. 10-12, 2012, for the National Farmers Union annual Fall Legislative Fly-In. Farmers attended USDA, Senate and House Agriculture Committee, and White House briefings before visiting their congressional delegation offices. The fly-in concluded with a massive Farm Bill Now rally at the Capitol Reflecting Pool.

Father and son team Doug and Olin Hartkopf, from Albion, Maine participated in the fly-in with the support of Organic

Valley. Doug and his wife, Linda, operate the Hart-to-Hart dairy farm and educational center. Their son, Olin, graduated this year from the University of Maine, Orono with a double degree in political science and history. He spent the summer working for the Angus King (I-ME) Senate campaign. For Olin, the trip was a culmination of his summer's political work. "Over the summer I had been following the progress of the farm bill as it made its way through Washington. It was amazing to see the bill passed by the Senate with bi-partisan support and disheartening to see it become a political football in the House. The gridlock was one of the main reasons I felt the need to go to D.C.," Olin said, "There needs to be more bi-partisanship and the Senate farm bill was a great example of that."

NEFU fly-in participants met with 30 New England congressional offices to press the case for passing a five-year farm bill. New England farmers, like farmers all across the country, need the certainty of a five-year farm bill. A short-term extension of the 2008 Farm Bill will be a costly and ineffective response to

our nation's drought and the long-term needs of our producers. Any extension is likely to be paid for by taking money from the conservation programs and "that will trickle down and hurt the organic initiative," Doug said. "I really appreciated the talk from Secretary Vilsack. He really laid it on the line and explained that delaying the farm bill was all about reducing support for agriculture."

As among the many programs and issues involved in the 1,000 plus page farm bill, the most important to Olin was the need for adequate mandatory funding for renewable energy programs, and to tie conservation compliance to the receipt of federally subsidized crop insurance - as the Senate bill does, but the House Agriculture Committee bill does not. The Energy Title of the farm bill can provide research and funding for on-farm energy conservation and on-farm energy production, such as the anaerobic methane digester installed in Exeter, ME that used Rural Development funds under the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP).

The meeting with Chellie Pingree was by far one of the most memorable. "Chellie Pingree not only represents the congressional district that I am a part of," Olin says, "but she also has an extensive background of support and involvement in agriculture. She has been a farmer and has strongly supported a local food initiative from her position in Washington, and is someone who I believe

has represented farmers and Mainers as a whole rather well."

"I was struck by how often we met with the member of Congress rather than just staff," said Doug. "In spite of busy schedules, they will take the time to meet with farmers. I especially enjoyed the meeting with Rosa DeLauro." (Ranking member of the Agricultural Appropriations Subcommittee.) Members of Congress also attended the Farmers Union reception on Tuesday evening. "I was impressed that so many came and I had the chance to speak with Peter Welch (D-VT), Claire McCaskill (D-MO) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI)," said Doug.

Taking the time away from the farm to go to Washington was a "tough call," said Doug. "I decided that the issues were important enough, and I wanted to see how the process worked. I enjoyed meeting other farmers and was amazed that whether you're farming in Iowa, or Wisconsin or Maine, the issues are the same."

Both Hartkopfs say that the trip made them more likely to reach out to Congresswoman Pingree and their State's Senators in the future. "Having a face to put to the name will make it easier to reach out and make them aware of my concerns," Olin said, "It was a great experience and I look forward to another fly-in."

To learn more about New England Farmers Union, please go to: [www.newenglandfarmersunion.org](http://www.newenglandfarmersunion.org) or call: 413.625.3051.



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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

MYCOTOXIN ALERT!

By Mary-Howell Martens, Lakeview Organic Grain

**M**ycotoxins are toxic chemicals produced by certain types of fungi that grow on plant material, both in the field or in storage. Mycotoxins are a common problem worldwide, indeed, it is estimated that globally, over 25% of field crops are affected annually with mycotoxins. In Europe, Napoleon's defeat in Russia may not have been due as much to cold or military skill but rather to mycotoxin-contaminated grain fed to their animals which resulted in a catastrophic loss in horses.

Here in the northeast, we often are not conscious of mycotoxin-related issues, although a recent study from Vermont estimates that over a 10 year period, nearly all dairy farms in that state will experience mycotoxin-related issues, even though most will not connect symptoms to actual cause. Recent erratic weather that has caused significant crop stress has made it difficult for many of American farmers to not notice mycotoxins - serious animal health problems, poor quality forage and rejected grain has brought the issue front-and-center for many people. The severe drought in the Midwest this year has resulted in significant mycotoxin-contaminated grain that is now moving 'through the system' and requires dairy farmers to be ever more alert to this issue.

Many types of feedstuffs can develop fungal toxins, or mycotoxins, including grains, haylage, baleage, silage, dry hay, and high

moisture corn. Infection is most common on plants grown under stress, especially when damaged by insects, birds, mites, hail, early frost, heat and drought stress, windstorms, and other unfavorable weather. Mycotoxins can also form or increase when grains and forages are harvested and stored at undesirably high moisture levels, when grains are put into storage dirty, if plastic ag bags get torn or damaged, or if storage facilities leak.

Experts estimate there are over 300 fungal toxins can contaminate crops, but several are distressingly common and damaging. In the Northeast, the common soil fungus, Fusarium, causes ear-rot in corn and scab or head blight in wheat, barley, oats, and rye and produces several mycotoxins, including vomitoxin (DON), fumonisin, and zearalenone. Fusarium can also infect ensiled/bagged forage and silage. The risk increases when corn/forage is harvested late (especially after frost), gets moldy or lodged in the field, is rained on or sours in the windrow, or is not adequately packed to exclude oxygen. Silage corn cut after a frost or late in the season is often too dry to pack well, impairing normal fermentation and allowing Fusarium, already present on the corn, to proliferate. Several species of the Aspergillus fungus produce aflatoxin, which is most commonly seen in hotter, dryer areas of the South and southern Midwest. Greenish-colored Penicillium is most commonly seen in silage and can produce several different toxins. Ergot toxins (from the mushroom fungus Claviceps) have also caused problems mostly on rye (St. Anthony's Fire). Byproducts can also contain mycotoxins, with products containing

peanuts being notorious for aflatoxin problems.

How do you know whether your grain/forage contains mycotoxins? If feed is visibly moldy, that is a pretty good clue -just as you wouldn't eat moldy food, neither should your animals. However, it usually isn't that simple. Not all molds you can see produce toxins, and not all grain/forage containing toxins looks moldy. For that reason, although we rarely see moldy grain, we do often test often for mycotoxins. There are accurate lab tests available - Dairy One does a nice 6 mycotoxin scan for \$65, but this are expensive and slow, and tests are only as accurate and representative as the sample was, so they are usually not done unless there is good reason to suspect a problem.

What makes us suspicious? We generally test grain that is light test weight, poorly matured, off-color, musty, dusty, harvested excessively late, has many broken or damaged kernels, or just doesn't look/smell/feel right. We also randomly test other samples of each grain during the season to get a baseline and to check our assumptions. A slight pink coloration to the grain can indicate the presence of Fusarium. We usually recommend testing all on-farm feed supplies if a farmer complains of 'typical' mycotoxin symptoms in their animals. We also recommend that, if you must feed forages that are moldy, slimy, off-smelling, or otherwise not quite right, you test them first. Traditionally, aflatoxins have been detected by placing grain under a 'black light', but that is not a reliable test for the Fusarium toxins.

At high levels, mycotoxins can cause liver damage, internal hem-

orrhaging, cancer, abortion, and reproductive failure in animals, but even a fairly low levels, they can strongly suppress an animal's immune system, resulting in other opportunistic infections, such as salmonella, clostridia, and E coli to 'break through', causing diarrhea, mastitis, and other production/health problems. Some mycotoxins are estrogen-like, interfering with cycling, conception and fetal development.

Often before clinical symptoms are seen, feed with mycotoxins can result in reduced feed intake, impaired rumen functioning, elevated SCC, poor vaccine take, reduced milk yield and butterfat, reduced weight gain, and impaired reproductive function in both females and males. The problem here, of course, is that other factors can cause similar low-grade symptoms, which is why farmers may not connect symptoms to cause. But, if you see such symptoms, mycotoxins in feed are one of the first things to address. Animals under stress for other reasons tolerate lower levels of mycotoxins than healthy animals.

There are 'threshold' levels of concern for different mycotoxins depending on the animal species being fed. According Dairy One, ruminants can tolerate a total toxin level of around 5 parts per million (ppm) of vomitoxin while other experts caution not to exceed 1-2 ppm. Pigs and chickens are much more sensitive. The acceptable threshold for organic human food grains is essentially zero. Other mycotoxins are of concern at a much lower tolerance level. New

continued on page 29

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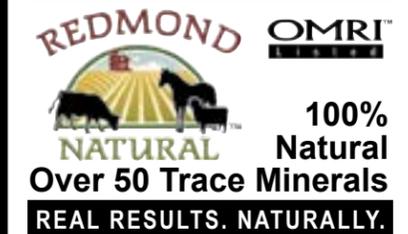


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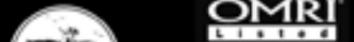
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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

November 2012 Feed & Pay Price Update

Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

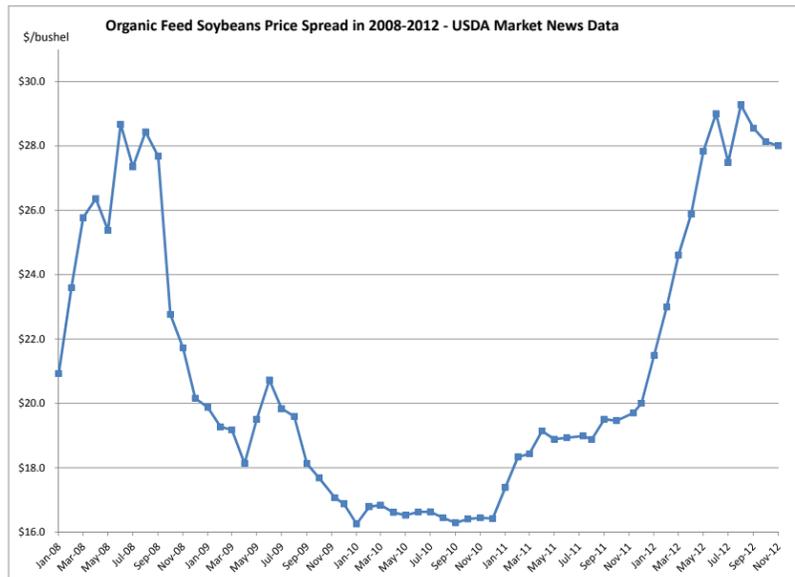
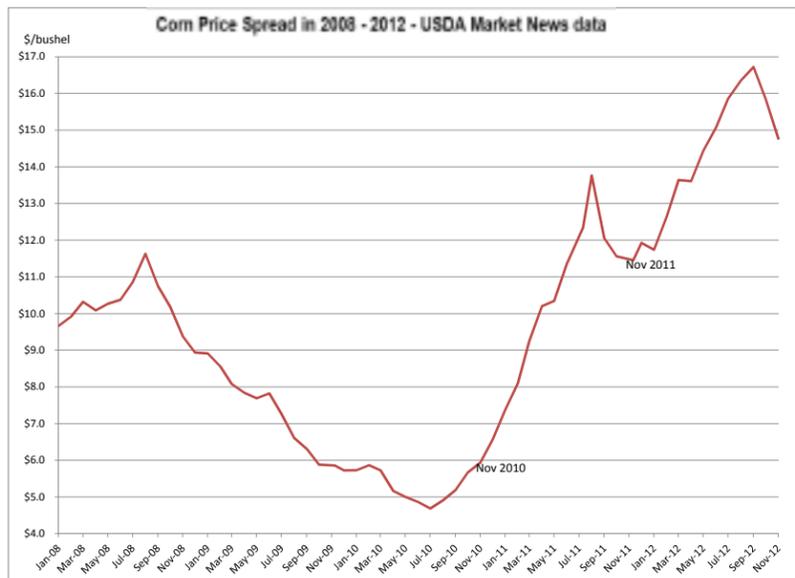
With gridlock in Washington DC, dairy farmers may be the only group that could benefit from Congress dropping over the financial cliff (perhaps they could be composted when they hit the bottom!). With no Farm Bill in January 2013, the USDA Secretary would be legally obligated to support a pay price equal to parity price which would be \$40 + per cwt. In anticipation of this possibility (although there seems little chance that it will happen even without a Farm Bill) and to highlight another way in which it is apparent that pay price is too low, the January 2013 NODPA News will have an article on parity pricing.

The current reality is that processors are not offering any increases in pay price but now would be the time for Organic Valley producers to press their case to their representatives before their Board makes any decisions in December/January. NODPA has been educating WhiteWave [Horizon] on high input costs in all areas and will meet with their management in early December. With no MILC subsidies to rely on, processors need to take responsibility for supporting their producers with a higher pay price plus pay the seasonal Market Adjustment Premiums (MAPs).

The trend towards an increase in retail price for store brand organic milk and a shrinking gap between the store brand and branded product continues. USDA AMS reported that the national weighted average advertised price of organic half gallons of milk is \$3.48, with a price range of \$2.99 to \$4.89; the highest price, \$4.89, is for a store brand and the lowest, \$2.99, is for both store brands and national brands. The weighted average advertised price for national brands is \$3.60 and for store brands \$3.25. The advertised price spread between organic and conventional half-gallon milk is \$1.27. The average price spread this year has been \$1.31. Despite the increases in retail prices, sales of fluid product in August 2012 has continued to increase, up 10% from August 2011 and a year to date increase over last year of 5%, with a surprising increase in sales of Whole milk over Fat-Reduced milk.

There's not much change in the price of corn and soybeans, but many project an increase in product from

*continued on page 32*



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RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

**Upcoming Winter Conferences in Northeast and Upper Midwest**

This time of year brings us shorter days and (hopefully) some time to ruminate over the previous growing season and start to plan for the next. If a farmer is ever to leave the farm, wintertime is usually the time to get away – if only for a couple days. And what better place to vacation than to a conference where you can mingle with your peers, get inspired by new ideas, and connect with various resources/consultants that you have been meaning to contact for ages. In the November and January NODPA Newsletter we like to highlight some of the many conferences that are coming together. Some of these might be in your back yard, and others might be interesting enough to warrant a little traveling. If you have a conference that you attend or are planning to attend in the coming months, please tell us about it so that we can spread the word!

**26th annual NOFA Mass Winter Conference, Saturday, January 12, 2013, Worcester State University, Worcester, MA**

The 2013 NOFA Mass Winter Conference will be hosted at

Worcester State University. Conference attendees register for a whole day of workshops, a keynote speech, over 75 exhibitors and vendors, a children's conference and all-local organic meal catered by Worcester State University Dining Services.

The 2013 keynote speech will be given by Karen Washington, a New York City native who has been striving to make New York City a better place to live.

Workshops focus on a wide variety of topics including, but not limited to, farm and fiscal management, animal husbandry, vegetable and fruit production. One workshop of particular interest to dairy farmers is focused on Raw Milk Dairy Production. This session will be based on the recently published "Massachusetts Raw Milk Producers' Handbook," and will take participants step-by-step through the processes and regulations involved in producing, handling and selling raw milk to consumers in Massachusetts.

For more information: <http://www.nofamass.org/>, [wc@nofamass.org](mailto:wc@nofamass.org) or call 413-387-2316.

**17th Annual VT Grazing & Livestock Conference: 'Global Grazing: Lessons Learned From Around the World'**

**Friday and Saturday, January 18 & 19, 2013, Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee, VT**

The Vermont Grazing and Livestock Conference will be offering two day-long intensive workshops on Friday, and twenty four workshops on Saturday, January 19th for all types of livestock including a dedicated dairy track. The weekend will highlight local and organic foods, great company from over six states, and plenty of new ideas to take home. There will also be a kid's conference for ages 6-12 on Saturday.

On Saturday, the conference will feature Keynote Speaker, Dr. Abdon Schmitt, professor at the University of Santa Catarina, Brazil. Dr. Schmitt teaches and researches topics that focus on agroecological systems; interconnecting ecosystem restoration, rural livelihoods and renewable agriculture. The conference will also feature many local and regional experts including sales coach Fred Ashforth, animal behavior expert Kathy Voth, nutritionist Jeff Mattocks, forage comparisons, research, and much more.

Contact conference coordinator Jenn Colby at [jcolby@uvm.edu](mailto:jcolby@uvm.edu), (802) 656-0858 with any questions.

**MOSES Organic Farming Conference**

**Thursday, Friday and Saturday, February 21 – 23, 2013 in LaCrosse, WI**

The MOSES Conference draws more than 3,000 attendees to

70+ workshops with locally and internationally known presenters. Workshop categories include dairy, livestock, crops, soils, vegetables, fruits, marketing, finances and more.

The 2013 keynote speakers are award-winning filmmaker Jeremy Seifert, known for his recent documentary "Dive! Living Off America's Waste," and long-time organic activist Carmen Fernholz, owner of a 400-acre certified organic farm (A-Frame Farm, Minn.) and Organic Research Coordinator for the University of Minnesota.

The pre-conference MOSES Organic University, taking place on February 21st, includes 'Breeding a High-Profit Herd' with Gerald Fry; 'Small-farm profitability' with Josh Volk; 'Increasing Crop Yields' with Gary Zimmer and Jeff Moyer; and Value-Added Products' with Jim Riddle and Carla Wright. Details about the MOSES Organic University are online at [www.mosesorganic.org/ou.html](http://www.mosesorganic.org/ou.html).

There will be a debate on the Organic Trade Association proposed mandated federal organic check-off program on Saturday the 22nd that will show the benefits and difficulties of establishing a multi-commodity federal program and the advantages of more regional models to support organic research and promotion. A sign up button is on the MOSES website homepage or sign up by calling the MOSES Organic Info Line: 715-778-5775. Learn more at [www.mosesorganic.org](http://www.mosesorganic.org).

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## ORGANIC PRODUCTION

## NODPA Website – A wealth of Information

By Lisa McCrory, NODPA News and Web Editor

Over 11 years ago, the Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance was formed with the mission: ‘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.’ In order to see this mission through, it was necessary to create a mode of communication that could reach all organic producers.

In order to effectively communicate to all organic dairy producers in the Northeast, NODPA decided to publish a regular print newsletter, complete with industry updates, and organic production articles; livestock health, crops and soils, research and education, and a calendar and classified section. Our newsletter has grown from a 4-page quarterly newsletter in 2002 to a 40-page bi-monthly publication today.

Shortly after the start of our NODPA Newsletter, we developed a website where we could store a growing number of our timeless and historical NODPA News issues, communicate to a larger network on a national and international scale, and share a broad assortment of important resources and hot-off-the-press industry updates. Over the years, NODPA staff have written and published hundreds of timeless articles and stories on a range of topics, from certification to livestock health, from parasite management to genetics, from forages and grains to the economics of organic dairy farming.

To find these FREE articles, go to [www.nodpa.com](http://www.nodpa.com) and click on Featured Farms or Resources, located on the left hand menu bar. There you will find a number of article categories to choose from:

- Over 40 Featured Farm articles
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- Production Resources
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  2. Grazing
  3. Forage & Grains
  4. Soil Health
  5. Parasite Management
  6. Animal Welfare

7. Livestock Genetics
- Economics of Production
  - Organic Dairy Webinars
  - Recommended Books
  - Research Updates
  - Renewable Energy
  - Organizations & Links
  - Business Issues

Each year, NODPA hosts a two-day NODPA Field Days in one of the Northeastern states. In the Field Days Archives you’ll find great photographs for many of the years the event has been held, along with associated articles.

For those interested in communicating with a network of organic dairy producers, veterinarians, certifiers, processors, educators and other service-providers we encourage you to join our Organic Dairy Listserv called NODPA-Odairy. To subscribe to this FREE listserv, please go to [www.nodpa.com](http://www.nodpa.com) and click on Odairy Listserv located on the left hand menu bar for instructions on how to join. We have stored all the posts in NODPA’s Odairy archives and our NODPA President and Newsletter Associate Editor, Liz Bawden, writes a regular NODPA News column for us summarizing the high points. Perhaps some of her articles will help you search out pertinent discussion threads.

A few years ago, we started sending out a monthly e-Newsletter, which has been very well received. We have a list of over 1100 subscribers and the numbers are steadily growing. The e-Newsletter includes some of our NODPA News articles, including our Feature Farmer piece, up-to-date Feed and Milk prices, organic production pieces, calendar, classifieds, and relevant and timely industry news. To sign up for our E-Newsletter, you can find ‘E-Letter Signup’ just below NODPA’s banner on our home page.

If you find these on-line resources useful to you, please let us know! If there are subjects that have not been covered, please let us know what they are and we will try to have an article on the subject in a future issue of the NODPA News. If you have articles you’d like to be considered, please send them our way. If you have not renewed your NODPA News subscription recently, please do so. Your generous annual contribution helps cover the costs of growing and maintaining our website and continuing to publish the bi-monthly NODPA News and the monthly NODPA E-Newsletter. ♦



## The 12th Annual NODPA Field Days & Annual Meeting: Summary Report

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The weather was beautiful for the two farm tours that opened the Field Days, and the hosts were generous in sharing their experience and production practices, as well as some excellent snacks. Many of the presenters of Field Day workshops, plus experienced graziers and organic dairy farmers were on the tours and were able to increase the educational value of the experience by highlighting the importance of different practices and some common challenges. Sarah Flack (Vermont), Dr. Cindy Daley (Chico University, California), and Kathy Soder (USDA Pennsylvania), continued the education at the first formal session of the Field Days with a great and comprehensive presentation on the challenges and mistakes that can easily be made when working with pasture. They compiled their own top 10 grazing mistakes:

1. Badly designed grazing system & infrastructure
2. Poor grazing management
3. Pasture plants being damaged by overgrazing
4. Low DMI from pasture
5. Poor plant species selection or diversity
6. Overfeeding Protein
7. Poor forage quality due to wrong species, low diversity or over mature plants (low digestibility)
8. Poor soil fertility
9. Inadequate records to keep the certifier happy
10. Overgrazing damage!

Bob Parsons (UVM Extension), Les Morrison (Morrison Custom

Feeds) and Travis Little (Green Mountain Feeds) continued the theme of maximizing farm profitability with a very honest, if depressing, assessment of the next few years’ outlook for purchased feed and the impact on farm profitability. Luckily, in New England we have feed dealers that are committed to the future of organic livestock family farms and will do everything they can to mitigate the effects of the marketplace. The message was very clear – if you don’t have enough feed, don’t expect to find it easily or buy it at a reasonable price. And if you can, develop more productive grazing crops as the outlook for purchased feed will not be changing in the next few years.

The Field Days continued into the evening with networking and socializing prior to dinner and, after a brief welcome from NODPA President, Liz Bawden, and an update from the NODPA Executive Director, Ed Maltby, Cheyenne Christianson gave a great presentation of his and his family’s life on their Wisconsin farm. With some wonderful photos he was able to illustrate the practice and philosophy of his production methods and how he operates his grass based, no-grain organic dairy. With the cost of purchased and conserved feed rising, Cheyenne’s speech was very relevant and held the attention of all those in the room for over an hour followed by many questions from interested producers.

### Our Annual Producer Meeting

It is a long held tradition at NODPA Field Days that there is a two-

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NODPA FIELD DAYS 2012 SUMMARY REVIEW



Jon Franklin looking over farm financials with Dr. Bob Parsons



Milking parlor at Miller Farm



Heifer calves at Franklin Farm

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hour producer only meeting on the second day of the event, where farmers can freely express their successes and complaints without fear of reprisal from their processors. As NODPA deliberately rotates the location of their Field Days in different parts of the Northeast, these sessions attract producers who are new to NODPA plus experienced NODPA members. Pay price was a major point of discussion, especially the lack of leverage that producers have and how farmers could increase consumer support without adversely affecting consumer confidence in the integrity of certified organic. Producers also had many excellent ideas for possible improvements to how NODPA does its work and the need to increase diversity of NODPA Board members and Representatives. Producers were very clear about the need for a final rule on the Origin of Livestock and equally demonstrative over the need to simplify and standardize certification paperwork, especially when it comes to documenting livestock. The producer-only meetings are never long enough and always allow for free flowing and articulate conversations plus they give direction for NODPA staff for the upcoming year.

It's always a pleasure to listen to Jack Lazor as he shares his ideas and philosophies, especially on whole farm health, and this Field Day's Friday morning ses-

sion was no different. Jack presented his own experiences on his farm and was followed by Cindy Daley and Heather Darby (UVM, VT) who presented their research, with Cindy ensuring that her work was done within the context of farm profitability.

Annette Higby (New England Farmers Union) and Dave Rogers (NOFA VT) followed Jack, Cindy and Heather, giving information on the continuing gridlock in Washington DC around the Farm Bill and the perspective of how it affects Vermont, plus what Vermonters can do to influence key, prominent legislators. The "diversification and your farm's future" was a great session, which was moderated by Fay Benson. Jeannette and Mark Fellows explained how they had achieved profitability by developing different profit centers over the last twenty years on their Massachusetts farm and Henry Perkins was his usual ebullient self, painting a forceful picture of his experience diversifying his dairy farm and the opportunities that are available after you sell your milking cows. Last but not least, Dave Johnson posed many questions about the economics of growing feed and the increasingly difficult challenge of making organic farming pay, reminding us there is no one silver bullet to a profitable and sustainable family farm.

The final session of the day featured the Organic Trade Association's (OTA) proposal for an Organic Check-Off. The OTA presenter, Laura Batcha, presented the idea and process of setting up a mandated, federal organic check-off and answered questions raised by Ed Maltby's presentation and by farmers in the audience. This format was very effective in allowing OTA to lay out their ideas and explain how they are going to achieve them with an immediate opportunity for dialogue on the major issues. There were many questions and comments and the session stretched out for 2 1/2 hours and would have gone on longer if the manager of the facility hadn't wanted to lock up the hall!

NODPA Field Days, by design, varies in content, attendance and location year by year. While it always provides a forum for producers to meet and exchange ideas, gossip and plan for the

*continued on page 22*



Admiring the pastures at Miller Farm

# Thanks To All Our Sponsors & Supporters!

This is a major fundraiser for NODPA and we had a great group of sponsors, supporters, presenters and trade show participants that contributed to the success of the event. Thanks to our many vendors and friends who made this event possible and subsidized the cost for producers to attend:

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**NODPA FIELD DAYS 2012 SUMMARY REVIEW**

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future, some have lower attendance and some workshops in retrospect lack relevancy and interest to producers. This year's Field Day was blessed with good weather and a fine array of presenters that freely gave their services to educate producers and share their ideas. Under the excellent organization and coordination of Nora Owens, this year's event was judged by everyone to be a unqualified success and for some it was 'the best ever.' Plan to attend the 2013 NODPA Field Days next September and help make that one the 'best ever.' ♦



**NODPA President's address**



**Keynote speaker, Cheyenne Christianson**



**David & Mary Ellen Franklin discussing their grazing chart, with Lisa McCrory holding.**



**Ed Maltby with Kathy Soder, Dr. Cindy Daley and Sarah Flack**



**Organic dairy farmers Lisa Engelbert, Liz Bawden (NODPA President), and Linda Wright**

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

**What kind of soil fertility should be expected for the best forage in terms of quality and yield?**

*By Neal Kinsey*

Most dairymen have land that has been in pasture for a long time. As a rule that land will have received at best N-P-K and lime over the years. In spite of new seed varieties and good management practices, farmers tell us that expected results have either stagnated, or gotten worse over the years. Whether it is concerning production or feed quality, this has become the case in spite of using organic methods and fertilizers. Numerous farmers tell us at the start of using our program that they just want to achieve what they used to achieve in terms of the crops they are growing. But as expenses rise will even those past levels prove sufficient to maintain profitable organic dairy production?

Correctly restoring soil fertility levels has been the greatest key to restoration of soil health, plant health and herd health for organic dairying. And an increase in productivity should be evident the first season. Dairymen in the U S, Australia, Europe, New Zealand and South Africa have all reported such results. Even on their "best soils" the results show improvements over the next three years by sampling and properly following the recommendations for improving those soils. For yields to reach this point we find there is more required for increasing the fertility than just adding sources of organic nitrogen, phosphate and potassium even if that is from compost and the manure deposited on the pastures. The higher the expectations for production and quality have been, the more this proves to be the case.

Even on some of the best organically farmed soils a detailed soil analysis has shown there is rarely a case where all needed nutrients to obtain top milk production and herd health are there in adequate amounts. Think about how much milk is being produced and the nutrients it contains that is sold off the farm. Soils do not have an endless supply of the required range of nutrients in a form that is available for plant use. We find this to be particularly true of nutrients like sulfur, boron, copper, manganese and zinc.

Contrary to what some would have farmers believe these deficiencies can be so seriously lacking that they are major limitations to soil, plant and herd health. This can be determined by proper interpretation of a detailed soil analysis. Based on such tests from actual dairy pastures those results have shown that using a very small amount of these elements in a fertilizer mix will not make up for the greater lack shown to be needed in the soil. When what is being applied does not sufficiently reach the level required by the soil the problems being caused will continue to be problems until enough is used to resolve the deficiency.

Most growers will not be so blessed as to have soils that can be built up or restored to excellent fertility levels on the same fertilizer budget they have been using year to year. The exceptions would be those who have maintained an excellent liming program and successfully built up phosphate and potassium. On a large acreage, just expect that in the beginning implementing the entire program may cost you more than a "sensible" budget will allow. That is - until you verify on some of your own land that such expenditures will truly pay for themselves.

Whether this or any other soil building program sounds appealing, if it also sounds like the costs may be far higher than those on a sensible budget can afford, then consider what a limited approach could pro-

vide. Determine to set aside enough of your fertilizer budget to split a small pasture or two, then follow through with the program on that acreage each year by testing and fertilizing as shown to be needed for the next three years. Make the acreage large enough to buy the required materials in economic quantities and small enough so as not to cause economic hardship for your overall operation.

But when you split the fields, consider it as best to sample both sides separately each year in order to document what is happening in terms of the fertility and yield each side is providing. Doing this is a small price to pay for the information and confidence to be gained from what you have learned about the soil as well as the quality and quantity of what it is growing based on the nutrients that are being supplied there. The objective here is to select an area that is substantial enough to validate whether the benefits of fully implementing the program will justify the fertilizer costs and how soon.

Regardless of how many other trials you may choose to do, the following information is provided to help determine if the soil fertility program we advocate could be helpful enough to justify the time and money required to test it out. The Kinsey/Albrecht Model of Soil Analysis & Recommendations is a soil management program designed to build fertile soil that requires the least expense to effectively reach the desired nutrient levels for the least expense required to maintain top yields and the highest quality feed value.

Such results are possible, but only if the testing being done can correctly show what is needed. Once the test is correctly run then the interpretation of those tests must be done by someone who has been specifically trained to understand what nutrients are shown to be needed from those exact results. This means knowing what materials will best supply those needs and having the ability to recommend them in proper amounts so that their addition builds those nutrients up to the required levels in the soil.

The soil analysis we use is unique to our program. It measures the nutrients available to the plant from the soil by performing a specific set of tests designed to provide a specific number to reflect how available each nutrient is in that soil. Such measurements, related back to soil chemistry, allow interpretations that effectively forecast the soil's ability to provide the elements (in the form the plant requires) for both top production and top quality. The test results are designed so as to reflect the correct correlation between yield and the balance between the required soil nutrient levels.

Seemingly small variations in CEC or nutrient percentages from different soil laboratories can change the need for various materials drastically. Can those who tell you what fertilizers to use evaluate productivity by identifying which fields provide poor versus good production based on the soil analysis they advocate? We can!

Our specialty is improving problem soils, normal soils and those most consider their very best.

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## ORGANIC PRODUCTION: FEATURED FARM

## Moore Farms, Nichols, NY

### No Grain, Grass Intensive Seasonal Dairy

*continued from page 1*

Some key points about their operation which contribute to its efficient grass-based design include: 1) Spring seasonal dairy, 2) They haven't fed grain to their cows since they transitioned to organic over 15 years ago, 3) All their harvested forage is taken care of by custom harvesters, 4) All animals stay outside 365 days a year; the young calves get access to a run in area under one barn in winter, 5) They use bulls for natural breeding, 6) Calves are raised using nurse cows, 7) During the winter months (while the cows are dry) they do their farm and financial planning, and have more time for conferences, farm visits and family.

The Moores operate their farm as a living biological system; there are always changes and adjustments being made. They'd like to invest more resources into the farm when finances allow, such as applying minerals directly to their soils. They are currently searching for some energetic farmers interested in continuing their grass-based organic operation, as some physical issues are limiting the amount and kind of work that Rob can do. Finding that individual or team might be challenging with the current state of the organic dairy market. Can you still make money producing organic milk to a wholesale market? What are the options? Does the current model still work?

#### Transition to Organic and Beyond

Rob's move towards organic farming started in the 1970's when his father got very sick from inhaling fungicide while treating corn seed. Changes in management over the last 20 years included intensifying his grazing, kicking the cows out of the barn, turning all the farmland to perennial sod, getting rid of all the field equipment, and giving up grain feeding and winter milking. Friend and neighbor, organic dairyman, Kevin Engelbert, was another big influence and mentor, convincing him to certify his farm and livestock organic. Rob continues improving the herd genetics, selecting for reproduction and good temperament; breeding cows that maintain good body condition and reasonable milk production while living outdoors year round on an all forage diet.

The farm was certified organic in 1996 and soon they started shipping milk to The Organic Cow of Vermont. When the Organic Cow of Vermont was sold to a national processor, Rob decided to join the

Butternut Coop and suffered with fellow producers for 3 years of milk prices that often dipped below the conventional milk price. They left Butternut in 2000, shipped milk conventionally (while maintaining their organic status) and worked on ways to market their own organic meat and milk products. With their herd genetics, they started shifting to a more dual purpose cow, to develop an organic beef market. With a cheese plant nearby, they started having a small volume of their organic milk processed into artisanal cheeses. Marketing and selling their cheese became another full time job; managing wholesale accounts and making deliveries up to 4 hours away from their farm. When the compressor in their cheese cooler blew, it was the final straw in a series of challenging events and they decided to shut the door on their cheese business, and started shipping milk to Organic Valley in 2003. After seven years without a premium for their organic milk, the higher and more stable commodity price from OV was a welcome change.

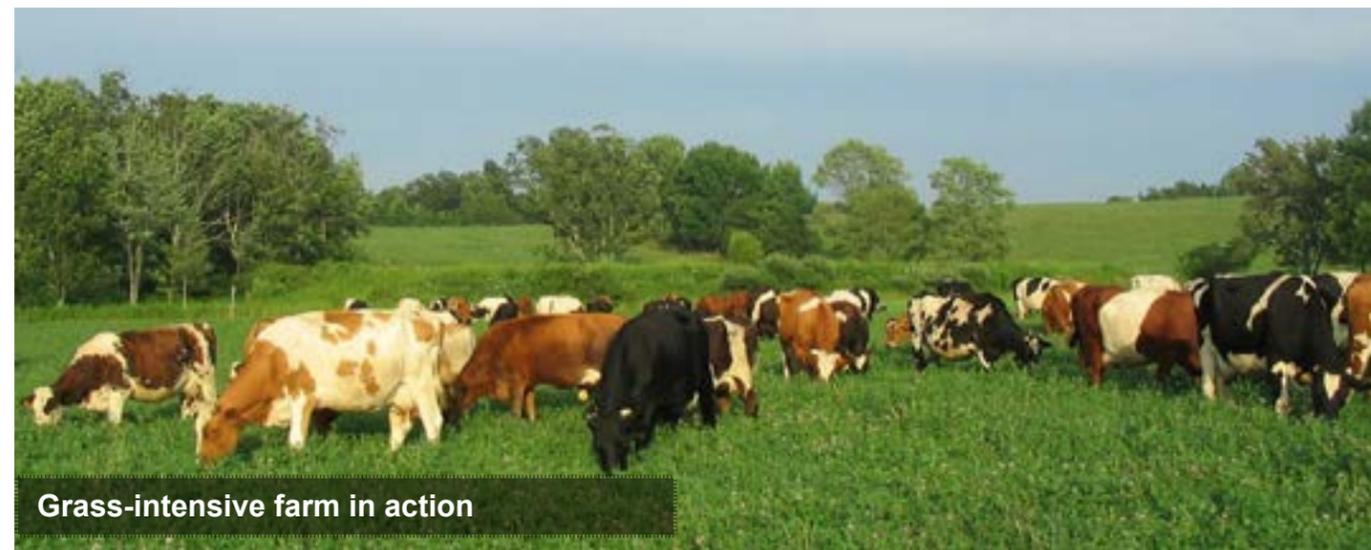
#### The Cows, Nurse Cows, Calves and Replacements

The Moores calve 60-80 crossbred dairy cows each season. With a spring seasonal herd, their cows freshen in late April through May, and are dried off by the end of December. They typically ship milk from 50 to 65 cows, with another 10-15 becoming nurse cows that raise their batch of replacement heifers. This year they were shipping milk from 50 cows with 10 nurse cows raising 22 calves.

Milk quality and components tend to run under 200,000 SCC with a Butterfat of 4.2 %, Protein of 3.3%, and other solids of 5.7%. Components increase when they switch to once a day milking, the time of which varies from year to year based upon weather, feed availability and body condition.



**Pam and Rob Moore**



**Grass-intensive farm in action**

All animals are fed a mixed pasture sward of perennial grasses, clovers, herbs and forbs. In the late fall, winter, and early spring the groups are fed baleage and/or round-bale hay. Once the cows are dried off they are combined with the bred heifers.

Calves are weaned from their nurse cows at 6-8 months of age. They are offered second cut hay or baleage during the winter months and have access to a 3-sided shed with a bedded pack system and a few acres of pasture. The biggest challenge with raising calves on cows has been the weaning process, but they may have solved this issue with a new approach last year. Instead of taking all the nurse cows away at the same time they removed one third of the cows, then another third two weeks later and the last third two weeks after that.

#### Breed(s) of cow:

Rob and Pam are very happy with their current breeding program and choice of dairy genetics. They use natural service exclusively, obtaining bulls with New Zealand genetics from farmers with low grain, grass intensive operations. Cows in their crossbred herd are bred to NZ Friesians, and heifers to NZ Jersey. Until about 5 years ago cows were bred to Normande for a number of seasons.

#### Grazing System

The Moores don't own a manure spreader; the animals deposit most of their nutrients on the pastures and hay land year round. The only exception would be the manure that accumulates in the 3-sided bedded pack which the calves use in winter. One time per year they rent a dump truck and skid steer to clean out the bedded pack and use a rented spreader to put the manure where it is needed the most.

"Committing the entire farm to pasture and hay in 1989 eliminated most chemical use, ended plowing on the highly erodible hill top soils, and enabled Rob to focus on the cows and milking," says Pam; it is truly what he loves. The Moores treat their pasture forage as a crop. "Why don't [more] farmers treat their pastures the way they treat their forage crops?", Rob asks. Most of the best organic graziers that Rob interacts with were graziers first before they were organic – perhaps it is a mindset.

"The ideal pasture forage height [for our farm] is boot stage, around 2 feet tall" explains Rob. "No lush 6 to 8 inch rocket fuel; we are a no-grain dairy so it takes a mature plant to balance a cow's diet." The Moores graze their pastures 'tall' (12 - 24 inches) with a post grazing height of about 6-8 inches. They delay the onset of grazing in the spring to make sure that the plants are creating energy through pho-



**Rob and his grazing chart**

tosynthesis rather than pulling energy from the root reserves.

There are typically three groups of animals being managed on the farm during the grazing season: 1) Yearlings and bred heifers are in their own rotation, moving to a new pasture every 2-3 days.

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FEATURED FARM

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2) Nurse cows and calves are grazed in paddocks close to the parlor until they have bonded. Then they are moved to more distant pastures, rotated every 5 days. 3) The milking string, which is moved to new pasture 2-5 times a day.

All the livestock groups are pastured day and night, year round, with a grazing season that starts about May 1st and runs until at least October 31st. This season, good grass will last until late November. Rest between grazings starts at about 25 days and increases to 45 days by the end of the grazing season. In a season with adequate moisture and sun, the Moores get 5 to 6 grazings (or harvests) per paddock, with an average of about 40 lbs dry matter harvested per cow per day, as they consume about 4% of their bodyweight.

Rob and Pam began practicing Holistic Management © eight years ago. Using Holistic Management's © Planned Grazing Chart allows them to plan and track the number of days that it takes their animals to go through a particular field, the days rest in between grazing, the volume of feed harvested each grazing, the amount of rainfall (or lack there of) over the growing season and which pastures or hayfields will be used for out-wintering their livestock.

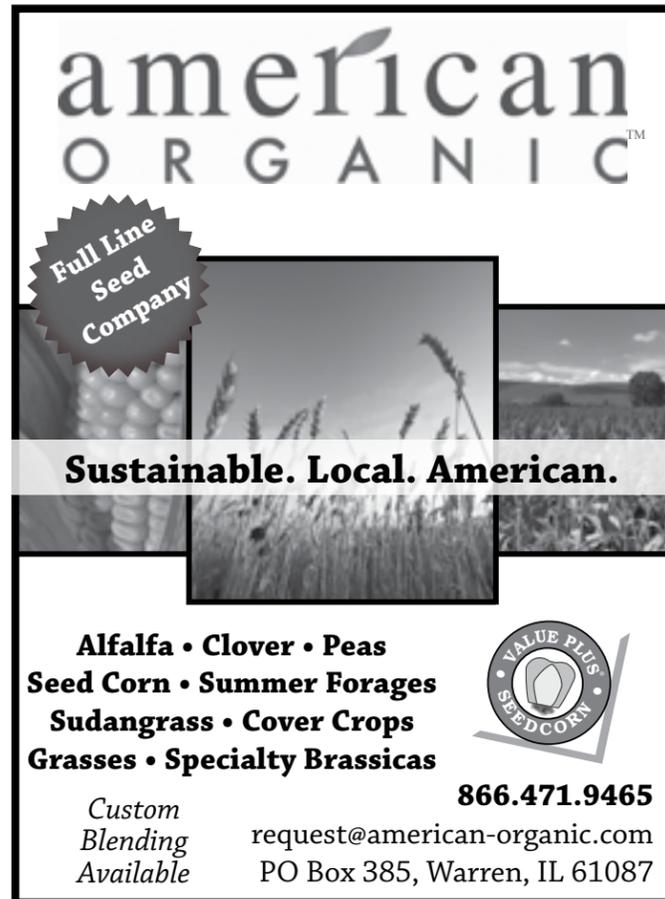
Fertility is managed on the pastures and hayfields through the

urine and manure that the animals leave behind in their grazing rotation and from feeding of round bales. Determining where the animals will be out-wintered from December through April depends upon animal comfort, fertility needs, water availability and frozen ground. The cows have access to the woods and hedgerows to protect them from harsh weather, and placement of round bales directs most of the fertility where it is needed most.

**Livestock Health**

The biggest, most positive shift to livestock health came with the conversion to spring seasonal production with no barns. "When I got rid of the barn, I got rid of two things. I got rid of the vet and I got rid of the work," says Rob. "Our basic preventative health plan is having cattle born when there's grass: outdoors, on pasture, running with their own mothers for the first couple weeks, grafted onto nurse cows, grazing on the pastures where their mothers were raised and where they will spend their entire lives." Rob feels that livestock raised in this system/model builds a strong healthy immune system. "The calves", he explains, "receive nature's vaccinations through colostrum and living in their own natural environment; eating all the herbs, forbs and weeds with their pasture while getting grass-fed milk for the first 6-7 months on nanny cows."

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RESEARCH & EDUCATION

**You Can't Manage What You Don't Measure**

By Fay Benson – New York Organic Dairy Initiative

The two best days of the month on my dairy farm happened on the 5th and the 21st; the milk check arrived. For a brief time I felt I had money. It was hard to believe that all those thousands of dollars would disappear in a matter of days and I would be waiting for the next check to arrive. When my wife and I first started farming on our own this flush to broke feeling happened sooner and sooner each month. When we heard about an Extension series of workshops which would help us manage our "Cash Flow" we both decided to take it. This was back in the early 80's, the workshop was called Managing For Success. It had a number of segments that broke out pieces that go into managing a dairy farm such as: Labor management, financial management, and time management. Our farm benefitted a lot from that workshop, it made both my wife and I better managers. I learned the importance of setting goals and then developing activities and a time table to achieve those activities. My wife was introduced to the Cornell Dairy Farm Business Summary (DFBS). Now that I look back on my

farming career, I think much of our success was based on things that we took from those workshops.

What Is the Cornell DFBS? The information for the DFBS comes from cash flowing into the farm and cash flowing out from the farm. For dairy farms most of the inflow comes from the milk checks but also includes other income streams such as direct sales, custom work performed for others and government payments to name a few. The outflow is tracked through the farm's check book. Most farms using the Cornell DFBS adopt an account book or computer program that track the same 22 items. These are things such as: labor, machinery repair, field expenses, utilities, etc. Since all the farms using the DFBS track the same items, this allows for benchmarks to be established. Whether it is cost of labor per cow or cost of labor per cwt, the DFBS allows you to compare your farm's performance not only to your previous years but how your farm compares to other similar size dairies.

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## RESEARCH &amp; EDUCATION

## Managing for Success

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To get the best information to help manage a dairy farm it is important to keep good records and once a year that information is uploaded into the DFBS website. This all takes time and is not the favorite chore of most people on the farm. The time also doesn't yield immediate results, but does pay off in the long run. As my wife and I reviewed our DFBS report we could compare how we did compared to last year, make goals that we would like to achieve for next year and also compare our farm to other similar dairies. Comparing our farm to others help identify weakness in our business whether it was total cost per cwt., feed cost per cwt., or machinery expense. Any weakness became a goal for next year and we then chose activities to obtain those goals. Without measuring the individual pieces of our dairy we couldn't establish goals or realize when we achieved them.

## Cornell publishes the second year of New York Organic Dairy Farm Business Summary

The Cornell DFBS Group now publishes seven different dairy size or regional summaries, including one which covers the data from 17 organic dairies. It is important to identify the differences

in how the Cornell Summary and the University of Vermont Summary are put together to help explain differences and similarities. Most notable in those differences is the selection for the dairies included in the summaries. Cornell took information from 17 dairies or 2% of New York's 400 organic dairies. These dairies have voluntarily participated in the summary for many years, even before they transitioned to organic. Generally the farms that have the records required for the DFBS tend to be more profitable. UVM worked to get a cross section of the organic dairies and is working with 20% of the organic dairies in Vermont.

The table shows summary information for two different farm sizes, those with less than a 100 cows and those with more than a 100 cows. It is interesting to see that the smaller farms had a \$1.70 lower cost of producing a cwt. of milk than the larger dairies. Yet the larger dairies were much more profitable. The benefit of scale even affects organic dairies.

## Managing For Success for Organic Dairies

This winter we are planning to offer a 2-day workshop on managing an organic dairy farm at 6 sites across New York. To see a copy of the workbook go to: <http://cuaes.cornell.edu/cals/cuaes/organic/projects/dairy/dairy-initiative/resources.cfm>

Contact Fay Benson @ [afb3@cornell.edu](mailto:afb3@cornell.edu) if you would like more information.

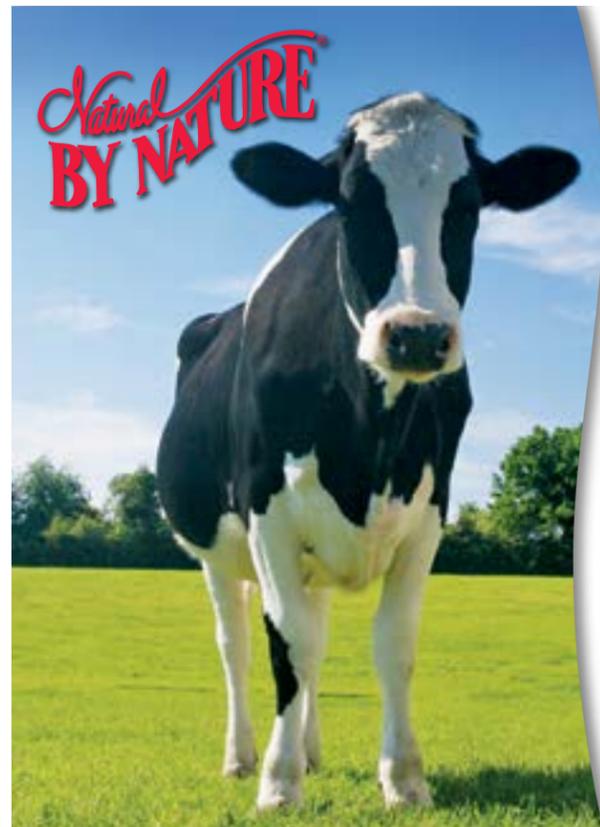
## Looking for an Organic Milk Market?

Natural Dairy Products (NDP) is actively seeking organic dairy farmers in the southeastern Pennsylvania area. On September 1st, 2011 the organic dairy farms producing milk for the Natural By Nature brand of organic dairy products started receiving more money for their efforts.

Natural Dairy Products Corporation (NDP), who produces a full line of organic dairy products under the Natural By Nature name, increased their base pay price by \$2/CWT and is also offering an extra \$2/CWT for 3 months over the winter to help offset the high cost of organic hay. The extra \$4/CWT over last year's pay price during the winter will provide welcome relief to NDP farmers.



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## ORGANIC PRODUCTION

## MYCOTOXINS

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York State has just issued an official warning regarding aflatoxin levels in feed, stating that, according to FDA law, feeding dairy animals grain testing over 20 parts per billion is technically illegal. One reason for this lower tolerance level is that aflatoxin can be present in the milk of a cow fed contaminated feed. For more information on New York's recent communication on mycotoxins, please see - [www.agriculture.ny.gov/aflatoxin\\_letter\\_to\\_feed\\_manufacturers.pdf](http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/aflatoxin_letter_to_feed_manufacturers.pdf)

It is important for livestock farmers to recognize that as far as the animal is concerned, it is the total cumulative intake level of all mycotoxin-infected feed that counts. Even if each individual feed/forage item tests 'below threshold levels' (including baleage, silage, grain, ground feed, high moisture corn etc), if eaten together by one animal, the overall level may exceed the threshold and adverse effects will be seen. Also, frequently contaminated feed/forage contains more than one toxin, further complicating the decision of whether you have reached a level for concern.

While there are products available to 'bind' or adsorb toxins, none are 100% reliable, so it is best to avoid feeding suspect feed whenever possible. If you need to use a toxin binder, try to match the

correct binder to the toxin present. In the feed industry, mycotoxin binders are often termed 'flow or anti-caking agents' to avoid making actual efficacy claims.

Those allowed under organic standards fall into 2 primary categories - the clay (or silicate/montmorillonite)-based products (Desert Dynamine, Redmond Conditioner, bentonite etc) which are most effective against aflatoxins; and the newer lower-inclusion rate oligosaccharide/beta-glucan yeast cell-wall products (Check M, Immunowall, FloMatrix, Fuse 207, Mycotex, BioMos etc) which are much more effective against the Fusarium toxins. If you suspect a mycotoxin problem and can't avoid using the feed/forage, the best approach would probably be to use a 'combination' type product (i.e. FloMatrix) or use a couple of products with different efficacy (i.e. Fuse 207 + Mycotex).

## Steps to minimize mycotoxin levels in grain and feed

1. Always use cleaned, high quality seed that is not carrying seed-borne diseases. If you plant back your own seed, make sure it was not infected with scab or head blight (Fusarium) the previous year. Even if seedborne diseases that do not produce mycotoxins can weaken the plant, making it more vulnerable to mycotoxin-causing fungi. Whenever possible, use scab resistant varieties.
2. Harvest at maturity, as soon as the moisture content allows minimum grain damage. This means harvesting shelled corn at 23 - 25%

*continued on page 37*

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## ORGANIC PRODUCTION

## Featured Farm

continued from page 26

The main supplement to their grass-based system is free-choice kelp and Sea Agri 90 Sea Minerals.

For mastitis, they turn to Phytomast and Udder Comfort and cull problem cows that have chronic issues. They haven't had a retained placenta for over 10 years and attribute some of that success with the fact that the calf remains with the cow and the cows are not fat when they calve. They have had only two cases of milk fever in the past 2 years and address cases with electrolyte treatments. As for reproductive health, their conception rate is about 70%, first service. Any cow that does have challenges breeding back would be culled, thus leaving their gene pool.

## Apprenticeships and Transferring the Farm

Rob loves to pass on what he has learned about grass farming, and has mentored and taken on apprentices for a number of years. Some apprentices decided that dairying wasn't for them (too much work). Rob feels that what an apprentice learns by farming with them for a season does not necessarily equip them for all that can happen on a typical dairy. Their farm tends to be relatively 'uneventful' when it comes to livestock health issues, breeding, and daily chores, but that is because the farm has been thoughtfully designed with a goal that the animals

are comfortable, and capable of living well in their natural environment. Plus, there are lots of things that Rob doesn't need to do as a result of their farm design, such as feeding calves, breeding cows, cleaning the barn, spreading manure, etc.

Since none of their 3 children have chosen to continue the farm, they are always keeping their eyes and ears open for young farmers who might be interested in making a long term commitment to their operation. They hope to find an individual or team to take over management of the farm one day.

## Profitability and Budgeting with a Seasonal Dairy

About 15 years ago, Rob was floating a huge amount of debt, but the grass-based, no-grain organic dairy has been profitable. While their debt to asset ratio improves each year, Rob and Pam still feel like they are losing ground. As they pay down their long-term debt, their short term debt is starting to climb and most of it is for feed costs that have accumulated over the past couple years. Their hay costs doubled in 2011, when annual rainfall nearly doubled leaving pastures incredibly wet and damaged. Then in 2012 with drought conditions and an extraordinary heat wave for 2 months, conditions were hard on the cows and on the pastures necessitating supplemental hay feeding beginning in July.

The tail end of the grazing season has been good to them now that the rains have returned and the temperatures have been mild. With

increased feed quality in their pastures for September and October, the fall milk production is proving itself to be as high as their spring and summer production. Their milk quality has also been excellent providing an extra bonus to the milk check.

With a seasonal herd, there are 4 months each year where the Moores do not see a milk check. In order to stay healthy financially it is important for them to monitor and manage their income and expenses carefully. The budget they work from is based largely on the previous year, with anticipated expenses and conservative income estimates. "Most bills, and all of our big bills, come due when income is highest (taxes, principal/mortgage payments, custom operators, minerals)," explains Pam. To cover the bills in the off season (February - May), they save money, sell cull cows going into winter, bring in some lease income, sell some retail beef, and earn some coop dividends.

The time off from milking cows allows them the opportunity to take care of other necessary projects on the farm and to continue learning from their peers; implementing new ideas to their farming system. Rob is a frequent contributor to Graze Magazine, a popular publication out of Wisconsin, has been a speaker at a few conferences, and enjoys pasture walks where he can participate in a farmer to farmer exchange of information and experience. Conferences or meetings he and Pam enjoy attending include the Lancaster Grazing Conference, a private grazing group's informal gathering in New York, and an occasional out of state conference if there is a speaker that they really want to hear (such as Ian Mitchell Innes).

## How can organic producers be better served

## MANAGER, ORGANIC DAIRY RESEARCH FARM

The University of New Hampshire College of Life Sciences and Agriculture is seeking to hire a Manager for its pasture based Organic Dairy Research Farm. The Manager will have overall management responsibilities of the organic dairy research farm to ensure timeliness and success of all operations. The Manager will coordinate farm production activities with research projects and education programs.

**How to Apply:** A full position announcement and instructions on how to submit an application can be found on-line at <https://www.unhjobs.com>. Applicants will need to attach to the online application a cover letter, resume and three professional references' contact info and two professional letters of reference in order to apply for this position. Computer access/assistance is available at the Human Resources Office, 2 Leavitt Lane, Durham, NH 03824 or call 603-862-0501 (TTY Users: 603-862-3227).

UNH is an AA/EEO Employer. UNH is committed to excellence through the diversity of its faculty and staff and encourages women and minorities to apply.

When asked what they feel needs to be addressed in order for organic dairy producers to be better served, Rob and Pam feel enforcement of the Pasture Rule and the Origin of Livestock rule by the USDA NOP and all certifiers, and compliance by all dairies, is key. "All organic dairies are supposed to meet minimum pasturing requirements, yet selective non-enforcement of the Pasture Rule continues to depress organic milk prices while undermining the integrity and credibility of the organic label. And, after more than a decade of debate, finalization of the 'Origin of Livestock Rule' is still being stonewalled. This rule, which should clearly require organic management of dairy replacement from the last third of gestation, needs to be published. Both rules need to be enforced to create a level playing field and a more sustainable future for all organic dairy producers."

Rob and Pam's involvement with NODPA dates back to the 2001 Organic Dairy Summit Meeting that was held in VT, from which NODPA was formed. Rob was one of our speakers at the first NODPA Field Days, held at Roman Stoltzfoos's farm in 2001, where he talked about his no-grain dairy. The Moores have managed to attend almost all of the NODPA Field Days and even co-hosted the 2005 NODPA Field Days with Kevin and Lisa Engelbert. Rob has recently agreed to be a NODPA State Representative, an important role within the organization. NODPA State Reps 'maintain communication with organic producers, act as a contact for interested producers, collect state sentiment and concerns, as well as participate in conference calls for the business of NODPA.' If you have any thoughts, questions, concerns or feedback, please feel free to contact Rob or a Representative in your area (see our list of Board and State Reps on page 2). ♦



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## The Netherlands: a country known for dairy and now CoPulsation™

Wim Bakker of Harde Netherlands reported his success with CoPulsation™ in a recent article in Melkvee, Netherlands dairy magazine.

*"The udderhealth of the cows improved. Since the end of April there is one cow that had mastitis after calving, no other one," said Bakker. "The teats are thin and healthy after being milked. The closing holes you cannot actually see anymore. That was noted when we were recently drying off ten cows. Bakker believes that the improved udder health is caused by the improved condition of the teat orifice. They close better and therefore there is less chance of infection."*

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**ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS**

**Pay & Feed Price**

*continued from page 14*

Canada, China and South America to provide for the US livestock market. The bushel price for corn and soybeans has dropped slightly from August 2012 with the harvesting of this season's crop and is \$15 and \$28 respectively. The price of soybean meal is about \$100 lower than August 2012 at \$1,175 per ton, but still \$400 higher than last year. The silver lining is that the cull cow and beef prices still remain high so those that do not have enough feed on hand can lower their cow numbers to match their feed inventory. In the northeast there are now two buyers for organic cull cows, Organic Prairie and Delft Blue and there are rumors that a meat packer in southern Vermont is interested in buying more organic livestock. ♦

**RESEARCH & EDUCATION**

**Conferences**

*continued from page 17*

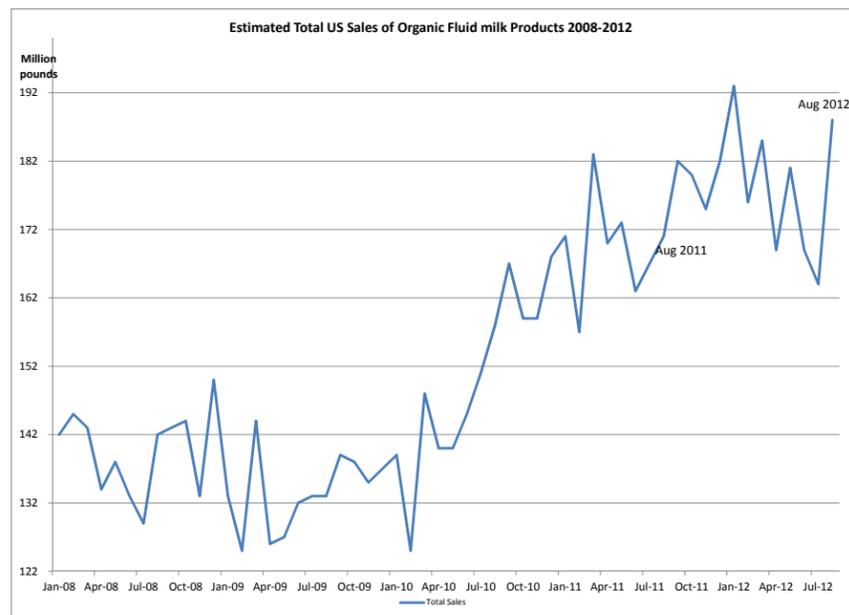
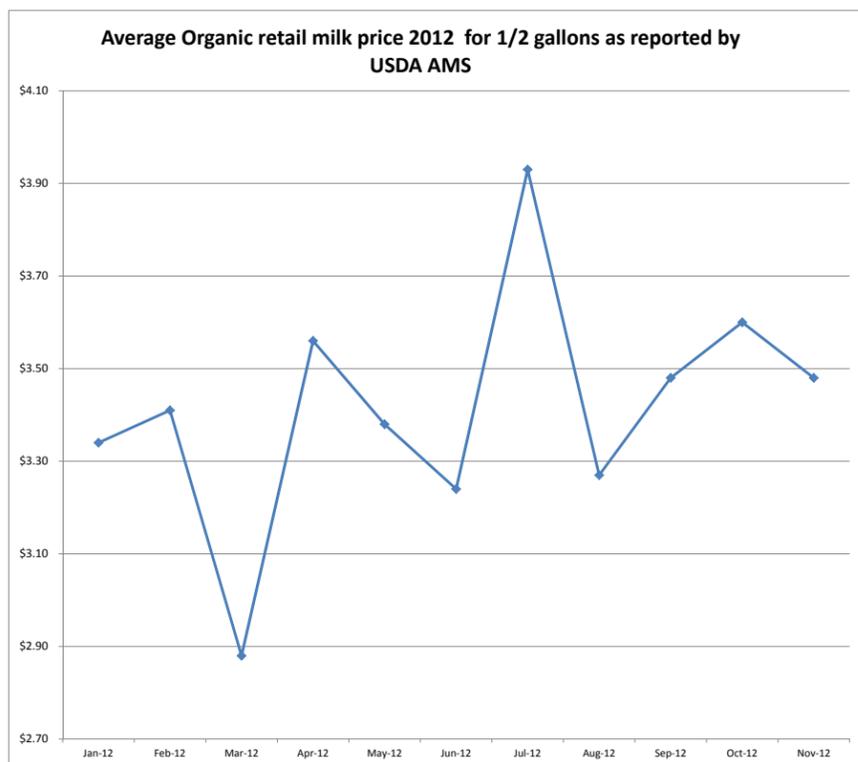
**33rd Annual Eco-Farm Conference: 'Feed The World You Want To Live In'**

**Wed. – Sat., January 23-26, 2013, Asilomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove, CA**

The Eco-Farm Conference offers more than sixty workshops featuring an array of educational sessions for farmers, ranchers, distributors, retailers, activists, consumers, students, and educators.

This year, activist and artist John Trudell will launch the opening plenary session, "Cultivating our Capacity to Feed the World." Denise O'Brien, Iowa farmer and organizer will follow with Brian Halweil of the Worldwatch Institute and Edible Magazine. They will examine how we can create a food system where we restore the landscape, bolster rural economies, and actually nourish people. In addition to the plenary speakers, a variety of workshops will be led throughout the weekend by such ecological farming leaders as Dennis Klocek, Sandor Ellix Katz, and Penny Livingston-Stark, among others.

At a pre-conference session on January 22, The Ecological Farming Association (EFA) will be hosting a Butchery Skills Seminar with master butchers Rian Rinn of Wyeth Acres and Loren Ozki



of Flea Street Café/CoolEatz.

To learn more: visit [www.eco-farm.org](http://www.eco-farm.org), write [info@eco-farm.org](mailto:info@eco-farm.org), or call 831.763.2111.

**NOFA New York Winter Conference  
Friday – Sunday, January 25-27, 2013, Saratoga Hilton and City Center, Saratoga Springs, NY**

The weekend program will feature a multitude of workshops

*continued on page 37*

**How a healthy immune system helps reduce SCC and mastitis**

- 1 Pathogens enter the udder through the streak canal and create infections.
- 2 Macrophages identify pathogens, engulf them, and then use cytokine signaling proteins to recruit neutrophils as pathogen-killers. Neutrophils roll along blood vessel walls by L-Selectin adhesion proteins and then migrate through the vessel when signaled.
- 3 Neutrophils engulf pathogens by a process called phagocytosis, and then kill them using enzymes and reactive oxygen species (ROS).

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- Pathogens in the environment
- Changes in weather or cow comfort
- Milk production and reproduction
- Molds and mycotoxins in feed or pasture

**Maintaining a healthy dairy cow immune system can help:**

- Reduce somatic cell count (SCC)
- Reduce cases of mastitis and metritis
- Reduce cases of milk fever
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## 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 ([http://nodpa.com/list\\_serv.shtml](http://nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml)); visit our web page ([www.nodpa.com](http://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	_____ \$300 to \$500 to become a Friend
_____ \$50 to become an Associate member (open to all)	_____ \$500 to \$1,000 to become a Patron
_____ \$100 to become a supporter of NODPA	_____ \$1,000+ to become a Benefactor
_____ \$150 to become a Business Member	

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](mailto: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*

#### Robust discussions about high feed costs leading to shrinking margins ... and preparing a laneway.

The most consistent thread over the last month was farmers' concerns with shrinking margins due to the high costs of purchased feeds. Even for farms that are relatively self-sufficient, this year's drought brought reduced yields in widespread areas of the country and the shorter grazing season meant that most organic farms began feeding out stored feeds earlier than normal. One farmer wrote a plea for a 10% increase in the retail price of organic milk this winter. Another farmer offered his updated and revised calculations on feed costs -- he reported that the feed costs alone for organic milk would be an average of \$22.50/cwt. Another producer reported that the parity price of conventional milk has risen to \$52.50; so it is no wonder that everyone feels that costs have surged ahead of pay prices.

One farmer suggested that not enough attention is paid to getting soils balanced; he recommended the Albrecht/Reams systems to maximize the nutritional content of crops.

A producer asked for advice on preparing a laneway. His contractor recommended using recycled, crushed concrete as a base, then covering with coarse sand. He wondered if the sand would be too difficult for the cows to walk through, and if he will have some erosion problems after a rain. Another farmer reported that she has used stone dust as the top layer, and it has packed well. She installs diverters in areas where there is erosion potential to keep the water from running down the laneway. Her diverters are made from old pieces of baler belting sandwiched between 2 pieces of treated lumber laid at an angle to run the water off. The diverters are laid so that the lumber is completely buried, but the belting sticks up 3 to 4 inches to divert the water. Another producer has recommends getting help from the NRCS staff in planning laneways; he has been very happy with the materials they specified. ♦

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## 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 \$150 per month.

### E-Newsletter Advertising

Two ad spaces are located at the top of each E-Newsletter, going out monthly to over 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 \$125 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](mailto:Lmccrory@hughes.net)

**Phone:** 802-234-5524

Go to the following web page for more information:

[http://www.nodpa.com/web\\_ads.shtml](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](http://www.nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml)

# Calendar

December 4-8, 2012

2012 Acres U.S.A Conference, Louisville, KY

The annual Acres U.S.A. is where you find farmers and consultants from every side of eco-farming who come together to share their experience and expertise. Attend the non-stop event, learn the latest in cutting-edge technology and methods, and return home ready to make your farming operation the best it can be. Website: [www.acresusa.com/events/events.htm](http://www.acresusa.com/events/events.htm) or call: 800-355-5313

December 12-13, 2012

Midwest Value Added Agriculture Conference

La Crosse Center, La Crosse, WI

For more information Erica Zerr at (715) 579-5098 or [erica@rivercountryrcd.org](mailto:erica@rivercountryrcd.org). Or go to <http://www.rivercountryrcd.org/valad.html>

December 12-13, 2012

National Young Farmers Conference, Pocantico Hills, NY

Stone Barns Center will host the fifth National Young Farmers Conference, providing participants with access to inspiring keynotes and more than 50 unique workshops that address soil science, technical skills, agricultural policy, farm business management, marketing, and more. Call: 914-366-6200 or go to their website: [www.stonebarnscenter.org](http://www.stonebarnscenter.org).

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Ad rates and sizes listed below.

**Deadline for advertising in the  
January, 2013 issue is December 20, 2012.**

**Full Page Ad (7.5" W x 10.25" H) = \$550**

**1/2 Page Ad (7.5" W x 4.5" H) = \$275**

**1/4 Page Ad (3.5" W x 4.75" H) = \$150**

**1/8 Page Ad/Business Card:**

(3.5" W x 2.25" H) = \$80

**Classified Ads:** Free to organic dairy farmers and business members. All others \$20 for the first 30 words; \$.20 per word over 30

For advertising information call Lisa McCrory:  
802-234-5524 or email [Lmccrory@hughes.net](mailto:Lmccrory@hughes.net)

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

December 9-12, 2012

5th National Conference on Grazing Lands

The Caribe Royale, Orlando, FL

"To Heighten Awareness of the Economic and Environmental Benefits of Grazing Lands", Come learn how sound, scientific technical assistance can help you improve your management systems and how you can increase public awareness of the economic and environmental benefits of grazing. Visit <http://glici.org/5NCGL.html> for more information and registration.

January 18 & 19, 2013

17th Annual Vermont Grazing & Livestock Conference

Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee, VT

Plan now to make a weekend of this popular event – now located at Lake Morey Resort for a whole family experience with workshops, speakers, networking, trade show and a great grass-based menu.

CONTACT: Jenn Colby, 802-656-0858, [jcolby@uvm.edu](mailto:jcolby@uvm.edu), [www.uvm.edu/pasture](http://www.uvm.edu/pasture)

January 23-26, 2013

Eco-Farm Conference: "Feed the World You Want to Live In"  
Asilomar Conference Grounds, Pacific Grove, CA

For more: [www.eco-farm.org](http://www.eco-farm.org); email: [info@eco-farm.org](mailto:info@eco-farm.org); phone: 831-763-2111.

January 25 – 27, 2013

NOFA NY Winter Conference: Resilience

Saratoga Hilton & City Center, Saratoga Springs, NY. For more information, please go to: [www.nofany.org](http://www.nofany.org) or Phone: (585) 271-1979.

January 25 & 26, 2013

5th Anniversary Winter Green-Up Grazing Conference

The Century House, Latham (Albany County)

Steve Kenyon, a Holistic Management Educator/practitioner from Saskatchewan, Canada will discuss, in two separate sessions, the business and the practice of custom grazing cattle for profit, plus winter management techniques that will have direct application to those of us in the cold Northeast. Also on the agenda is Jerry Brunetti, founder of Agri-Dynamics and a dairy nutritionist and expert in human nutrition too, is going to discuss these two intimately related topics of animal and human health. For more information please contact Gale Kohler at CCE Albany County by phone at (518) 765-3500 or [gek4@cornell.edu](mailto:gek4@cornell.edu) or Morgan Hartman at [blackqueenangus@yahoo.com](mailto:blackqueenangus@yahoo.com).

Feb 6 - 9, 2013

PASA's 22nd Farming for the Future Conference,  
State College, PA

Starting Fresh, Starting Local, Starting Now is the theme. For more information, contact Kristin: [Kristin@pasafarming.org](mailto:Kristin@pasafarming.org) or call (814) 349-9856.

February 16 – 17, 2013

NOFA VT's 31st Annual Winter Conference:  
"Generations of Innovations"

University of Vermont, Burlington, VT

For more information, go to: <http://nofavt.org/annual-events/winter-conference>, or call: 802-434-4122.

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### Conferences

*continued from page 32*

relevant to organic dairy farmers. Here is a preview of some of the many workshops to look forward to:

**Farm Facility Improvements:** Join farmers Vaughn Sherman, Paul Tillotson and Jason Karszes, Cornell University, and learn how to determine the best return on your investment.

**Animal Processing for Organic Farmers:** Dave Hardy of Organic Valley, Bill Eklund of Eklund Farms and Richard Beckwith of Hilltown Pork, Inc. will participate in round table discussion about processing options.

**Principles of Grazing Livestock:** Listen to Dave Roberts of NRCS as he explains techniques to improve pasture quality and forage quantities, enhancing desirable forage plants while decreasing weeds and other poorer quality forages.

**Finding the Bottom Line:** Hear Anne Phillips describe how Triple 3 Livestock uses a low grain diet to managing a seasonal herd.

**Innovative Dairy Marketing:** Milk Not Jails is a grassroots, statewide campaign for sustainable, regional and a dairy marketing and distribution company.

**Grazing through Uncertainty:** Good pasture management can determine livestock stocking rates, paddock residency periods and lbs. of forage produced but how do you manage when the forage is simply not there? Join Dave Roberts of NRCS and learn how to be prepared for the unexpected.

**Breeding for Great Grazers:** Join Paul and Phyllis VanAm-burgh of Dharma Lea LLC. to learn how to develop a breeding program that focuses on pasture based genetics.

**Cream of the Crop, No Kidding:** Joyce Henion of Acorn Hill Farm will explain how she began processing goat milk in a certified home kitchen while establishing her market and building an on-farm creamery.

For more info: [www.nofany.org](http://www.nofany.org), 585-271-1979 ext. 513, or email: [conference@nofany.org](mailto:conference@nofany.org)

## ORGANIC PRODUCTION

### MYCOTOXINS

*continued from page 29*

moisture, ear corn at 25-30%, small grains at 12-17%, and soybeans at 11-15%. The longer grain is left in the field after maturity, the higher the likelihood of fungal contamination. Dry suspected grain to at least 14% moisture as rapidly as possible, at least within 24 - 48 hours after harvest. Safe, long-term storage can only be achieved at a moisture level of 13.5% or below. Cool grain after drying so hot grain doesn't absorb moisture from the air.

3. Adjust the harvesting equipment for minimum grain damage and maximum cleaning. Especially where scab/head blight is evident in the field, the combine should be set for maximum cleaning, with higher blower speeds to remove the small shriveled diseased kernels and broken grain.

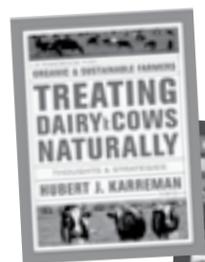
4. If harvested grain contains wet weed or plant material, run it through a rotary cleaner soon after harvest so the moisture doesn't migrate into the grain. Rotary cleaning also will remove broken and diseased kernels and fines which are more vulnerable to insect and mold damage in storage, and removal of chaff and debris will reduce the possibility of dryer fires. During harvest, we routinely use the rotary cleaner between truck/wagon and grain bin to make sure that grain goes into storage as clean as possible.

5. Roasting does NOT deactivate mycotoxins, but it may reduce the level by blowing off surface mold. If you roast moldy grain, make sure you run a mycotoxin test after roasting to check if the level is safely reduced.

6. Thoroughly clean all bins before storage to remove dirt, dust, and old grain. Store in water-, insect-, and rodent-tight structures. Keep grain well-aerated and monitor regularly.

*continued on page 40*

## Healing your Organic Herd



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# Classified Ads

## Feed and Bedding

**Certified Organic Hay in Cornwall, VT** (Addison County) 4 X 5 Round Bales, net wrapped. First cut bales \$35. Top quality second cut bales \$75. 4 X 5 wrapped 2nd and 3rd cut bales \$60. Contact Dan Rowe at 802-349-4530

**NOFA-NY Certified Organic Hay** (Timothy/grass) 4 1/2 X 4 Round bales stored inside and out. Also BALEAGE 1000# bales. Clover/Timothy, Alfalfa/Timothy, or Wheat baleage. Contact Jeff @ 607-566-8477 or Mitchellorganics@hotmail.com (Avoca, NY)

**Organic Livestock Feed and Straw:** Certified organic wrapped round bales of timothy/red clover new seeding—1st, 2nd and 3rd cut. Also have some very reasonably priced good hay left over from 2011. Also brokering organic large square bales of oat and wheat straw from Québec. I speak French and can arrange purchase and trucking. Contact: Jack Lazor, Butterworks Farm, Westfield, VT, (802) 744 6855 or (802) 999 7722, jack@butterworksfarm.com

**NOFA certified organic grass hay**, 4,000 square, 40-pound bales. Canary grass/timothy/bromegrass mix, virtually weed free, 2012 first cutting. Prices from \$3.00/bale depending on quantity. Contact: Kirk Fletcher, Email: rlb14@cornell.edu, Phone: 518 239 4334, Location: Sidney Center, NY.

**Hay, Corn and Seed for Sale:** 2012 corn crop, appx 6000-7000 bu. Could be HMSC if spoken for soon. **2012 triticale, appx 500 bu.;** cleaned for seed or sprouting. 2011 dry hay, good for bedding, dry cows and heifers. 2012 triticale chopped straw and chopped bedding hay, and 2012 dry hay and baleage, dairy quality. Contact Dave Johnson, Liberty, PA, 570-324-2285 or email: provident@epix.net

## Livestock

**30 shortbred crossbred heifers, due spring 2013.** Taking offers for the group. Contact Dave Johnson, Liberty, PA, 570-324-2285 or email: provident@epix.net

**Organic dairy herd for sale:** 25 milking cows (22 first lactation) parlor trained, \$1750 each. 17 short bred heifers, \$1600 each. Jerseys crossed with red breeds. Bred for spring/summer calving. Healthy young grass-based herd without feeding corn (small amount of extender pellets are fed). 740-326-2600 or email wcpastures@yahoo.com

**15 Registered Holstein Cows and 5 Bred Heifers for sale.** 60# herd average. Super Milk Award herd. \$2000 each. Contact: Scott & Traci Laing, Email: tracilaing@aol.com. Phone: 315.261.2212, Location: Potsdam, NY

**Three Holstien heifers,** due in October. Two are certified organic. Call for prices. 802-254-6982, Guilford, Vermont

**Three organic, mastitis-free Holstein cows.** Also one ready to breed Holstein heifer. \$5000 for the group. Call 802-433-5837. Email: berryalston@yahoo.com, Williamstown VT

**Excellent herd of organic Holsteins** looking for the right family to own them and rent our modern free stall facility and purchase feed. This is a wonderful chance for a neat, knowledgeable family to increase the size of their herd and get on their own size for more family participation. Organic Valley or Horizon milk pickup trucks both drive by the farm. Would be interested in talking to see if we have common interests. Phone: 207-754-3871, Maine.

**Organic Dairy Cows:** Four Jersey cows from the Butterworks herd. We

are overstocked right now. Contact: Jack Lazor, Butterworks Farm, Westfield, VT, (802) 744 6855 or (802) 999 7722, jack@butterworksfarm.com

## Services

**Agricultural trucking services** for Hire by Jim Weiss Trucking. Flatbed, low-boy and van trailer services. Custom hauling or regular deliveries. Equipment or any ag commodities. Reasonable rates, great service, and always on time. 30+ years experience in the ag industry. Call anytime 607-725-1760.

## Positions Available

**Self-Directed Herdsperson wanted** - Willow Creek Farm, a robotic, certified organic dairy, shipping to Horizon Organic, and located in Allegany County (Western New York), is looking for a self-directed, full-time herdsman to assist with all daily farm operations. Applicant must have a valid driver's license and be familiar with cattle and equipment. Computer experience helpful. Must be willing to alternate weekends and work longer hours during crop season. Salary depends on experience and/or ability. Mechanical aptitude, ability to drive tractors and operate heavy equipment required. Ability to lift at least 60 lbs and read and interpret written instructions required. Call for interview 585-268-5489. All applicants must submit resume with references.

**Assistant Herdsperson** - Large diversified farm, located in Canterbury, NH, consisting of 50 dairy cows, 300 hogs and 1000 laying hens. Looking for a detail oriented individual with prior experience working with dairy cows. Will be working together with the farmer owner. Maintaining herd health will be his/her primary responsibility. Additional responsibilities include a record keeping, breeding, milking, barn chores, tractor maintenance, pasture maintenance, and fencing. Email: brookfordfarm@gmail.com, phone number 603-742 4084. Please attach your resume with references.

## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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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**

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### From The MODPA President

WOW, another crop year is done; in our area it is definitely one for the record books. Farmers are struggling with how to deal with the weather related issues as the heat took a toll on both the feed supply and the breeding schedule. We have had farms reporting issues with things that they haven't ever had to deal with before. In our area, creeks have gone dry - something that hasn't been seen in my memory. Crops have, in some cases, given up before reaching a level of maturity to make grain and or yield enough to satisfy the need. This has led many producers to feel the pinch of increased costs and the need to source feed stuffs without the means to pay for them. This is leading some conventional and organic dairy producers to extreme measures to survive on the farm. They are culling, selling animals, and abandoning organic certification as the necessary feed supply is too expensive or nonexistent.

### 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

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#### Ohio

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

As the drought has caused some normally self-sufficient farmers to also need feed, the supply is even more in question. Both conventional and organic dairy producers need some relief in the form of increased farm gate milk prices. With no increases on the horizon, this forces dairy producers to attempt to secure the needed funds in the form of a loan. This loan would need to cash flow without the help of a government program (MILC) or any other government program as the farm bill hasn't been passed and lenders won't consider any payment not approved when financing a dairy. This leaves many without a choice except to sell all or part of the herd, farm or whatever they can. It is hard if not impossible to tie those ends when the ends keep moving.

Quality of feed stuffs and ultimately milk quality and quantity also become a question as producers are forced to take whatever feed is available if they can afford and find it. This lower quality feed can further stress cows, causing milk quality and quantity challenges and more stress on the farmer. This brings in the plant quality programs/deducts and also the animal welfare issues as cattle tend to get thin when the ration isn't right. Just a little more stress!!!!!!!!!!!!

All of this piling on needs a little relief in the form of a price increase so that farmers can start to shovel out before they are totally buried by the load. It is easy to ignore it when it is someone else and for some who always buy their feed, the thought is that it is time the crop/dairy farmers feel the same pinch but, one needs to remember that the crop/dairy producer has already spent his feed allowance purchasing seed, fertilizer and equipment to put in his crop. Now he is short feed and the funds and when he loses his land base, it generally doesn't stay organic. IF we want a future as Organic Producers we must fight to keep all the organic sectors profitable and our consumer satisfied. As smaller dairies are forced out of business, it becomes more difficult to satisfy the organic consumers' perception of organic dairy. When we lose our connection to the consumer, we also lose the opportunity for organic premiums that will support our farming operations. I urge you to do all you can to maintain your farming operation. Push for the necessary increases in pay price to keep your operation viable. Be proactive in addressing milk quality and animal health issues, work with your lender and your suppliers before your account is in question.

May you have much to be thankful for this holiday season and may God bless you with Enough.

**Darlene Coehoorn, MODPA President  
Rosendale, WI**

## Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA)

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

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### ORGANIC PRODUCTION

## MYCOTOXINS

*continued from page 37*

7. For ensiled forages in bags or silos, make sure forage is at the right moisture level, is tightly packed, that oxygen is excluded and the 'package' is kept sealed since mycotoxin-causing fungi require oxygen to live. Be prepared to discard forage from around torn areas of ag bags, as it are more likely to be contaminated. Avoid harvesting dead or moldy plant material in the field.

8. Use extra care and watch more closely when you harvest grain or forage that you know grew under stress, including grain that is low test weight, frost, insect or flood damaged, harvested immature or at high moisture, or forage or silage that may have been harvested too wet or too dry, dirty or containing significant levels of dead material, or that may not have fermented correctly. Or any feed that just doesn't look or smell right!

9. If you have reason to suspect mycotoxin problems, contact a forage testing lab and test before feeding it or representing it to a buyer as sound grain. If you must feed contaminated grain, identifying the toxins present will help you choose the most effective toxin binder.

*For more information, contact Mary-Howell Martens at [mh@lakevieworganicgrain.com](mailto:mh@lakevieworganicgrain.com).*



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