

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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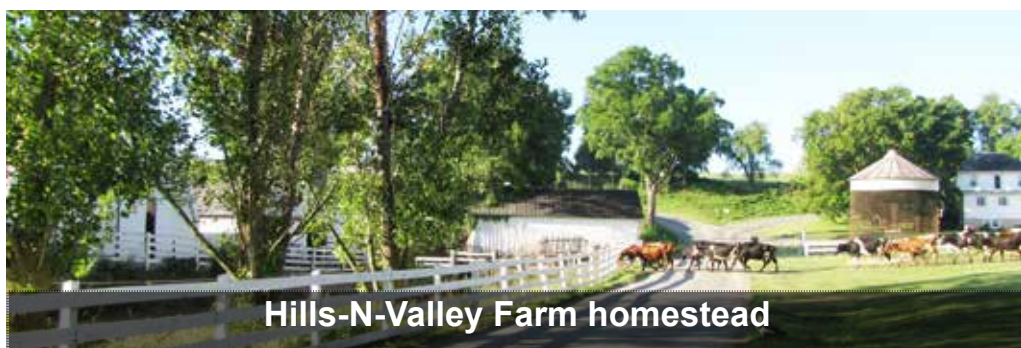
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Hills-N-Valley Farm homestead

Grain-Free and Once-A-Day: Hills-N-Valley Farm, Walnut Creek, Ohio

by Sonja Heyck-Merlin

In 2011, I attended a local grazing conference,” said Amish dairyman Andrew Coblentz. “Cliff Hawbaker, a Pennsylvania farmer, spoke about once a day (OAD) milking. I went home and told my wife that it might work in some neck of the woods, but not here. Ten months later I was ready to give it a try. I was tired of being tired.”

Andrew, his wife Mary Ellen, and their four children, Adam (8), Elias (6), Amelia (3), and

Elliana (9 months) make their home at Hills-N-Valley Farm in the town of Walnut Creek, Ohio. The town is located in the rolling hills of Holmes County in the east central region of the state. Etched in one of their barns is the year 1889, a testament to the rich agricultural history of the region, which began when Ohio’s first permanent settler, a Pennsylvania Amish farmer named Jonas Stutzman, traveled to the

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Organic Checkoff Update: Letter from the No Organic Checkoff Coalition to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Opposing OTA’s most recent Proposal

The following letter, which was submitted by the No Organic Checkoff Coalition to the USDA, in which they oppose the Organic Trade Association’s recent proposal, is included in its entirety. While a bit long, it was clear that there is so much significant information in this letter that is not published anywhere else that editing it down to a shorter version would diminish its value.

Dear Ms. Bailey and Ms. Pichelman:

On behalf of the No Organic Checkoff Coalition, representing 1090 signatories opposed to an organic checkoff, including 25 organic farmer organizations and businesses, this letter responds to the recently revised Organic Trade Association (OTA) Proposal submitted May 3, 2016. The revised proposal discusses ideas for a new industry-funded promotion, research and information order for organic

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the NODPA President

Most of us have experienced very dry conditions this spring and early summer. The drought has been tempered on our farm with a few scattered showers and thunderstorms; I hope you have received the same. Still, forage harvests remain less than normal.

We have been busy, partnering with the Western and Midwest organic dairy farmers (WODPA and MODPA), to create a response to NOP's proposed Animal Welfare Rule. Special thanks to Kathie Arnold, Richard Matthews, and Ed Maltby for their expertise in writing, rewriting, and rewriting again the very specific language that was required to incorporate all the recommendations made during a series of conference calls with organic farmers across the country. You can read more about this in Ed's column.

The 16th Annual NODPA Field Days agenda has been finalized, and we are grateful for the hospitality of the Chambersburg Menonite Church and organic no-grain farmers Cliff and Maggie Hawbaker. We are fortunate to have John Kempf, the founder

of Advancing Eco-Agriculture, to be both our Keynote Speaker and a workshop presenter. John has developed a comprehensive, systems-based approach to plant nutrition. You can see the line-up of the other fine speakers, panelists and the full program in Nora's 16th Annual Field Days article in this issue. We hope to see as many of you as can make it on September 29th & 30th in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania!

Liz Bawden, NODPA President

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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: July 2016

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

“The Organic Trade Association does not speak for the organic community and definitely not for organic producers.”

These last few months I’ve wanted to shout that from the rooftops, not through any personal dislike for the members of OTA but because from the Halls of Congress to the streets of Deerfield, MA, OTA has purposefully created the impression that they do speak for all organic producers. The soundbite that “OTA represents organic” may allow politicians, regulators and the media to claim the high ground of safeguarding organic integrity but it denies the real complexity and diversity of the organic community. OTA is a trade organization and therefore represents the interest of the marketplace for organic manufacturers. They have energetically driven more organic international trade that is now denying domestic producers a reasonable pay price and slowing domestic transition to organic. They revel in ever-increasing organic retail sales with no account for how that size industry can be policed. They, in fact, do a great job as a trade organization with very effective lobbyists that use the system to benefit their members, unfortunately at the expense of organic producers and organic integrity.

The last few weeks have been consumed with fighting for the right for everyone to know what’s in their food; fighting the Senate bill that would essentially negate any on-product labelling and would override any state initiatives. This so called “compromise” was pushed forward with a parliamentary tactic that hadn’t been used in over a quarter of a century and was supported by OTA and Organic Valley. OTA negotiated a provision that allows organic to be labelled GMO-Free automatically without testing (even though we now have increased testing of organic products), and OV protected organic milk with the inclusion of language that does not allow product to be labelled GMO-free simply because it is not required to under this law (milk and meat are excluded from the law). But in their haste to secure a small win, OTA threw the baby out with the bathwater. Even the FDA agrees that the law is riddled with ambiguity, and we have had a lot of experience with ambiguity in laws with organic certification. The definition of “bioengineering” in the bill is much weaker than other definitions of genetically engineered foods, including the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) definition. If the USDA decides that this is the definition they want to use in all regulation it would weaken the definition that the NOP now uses. A provision in the Senate bill prohibits states from requiring clear labeling of GE seeds (as Virginia and Vermont now do) but doesn’t provide any federal standard to replace state labelling. Organic producers need to be able to know what type of seeds they are buying, so they don’t plant GE seeds. Since this bill, with its definitions, begins to blur

the lines between what is GE and what is not, it may be important for more states (or the federal government) to start requiring transparency on seed labels. This bill would prohibit that. The bill allows companies to use “quick response” or QR codes (a machine-readable code that can be read by a smartphone camera), 1-800 numbers and websites rather than fully transparent, on-package labels. Many consumers do not have access to smart phones or the ability to call multiple 1-800 numbers while shopping in search of information. The Bill has no enforcement provisions: companies that do not comply face no penalties and, finally, this bill is unnecessary. Many companies, including Kellogg’s, Frito Lay, General Mills, Mars, ConAgra, Dannon, and Campbell’s are already labeling genetically engineered products in response to the Vermont labeling law, which goes into effect on July 1. This bill would block Vermont’s law and give the USDA two additional years to set labeling rules under this weak and meaningless framework.

Perhaps the most frightening aspect is that the Bill would give the USDA the role of writing the regulation and monitoring its implementation. We all know who controls the USDA and how any ambiguity in the law would be pushed to favor those that don’t want labeling and want organic standards to be less restrictive. Look forward to many years of arguing about this issue

OTA has also gone to the USDA, representing the organic community, to set up a national transitional program under USDA’s Process Verified Program (PVP). The program cannot use the word organic and there will not be any national label. What there will be is an infusion into the marketplace of transitional products using the labeling supplied by the accredited organic certifier who will be authorized by USDA to run the program. Many different labels in many different states, much consumer confusion but with little or no increase in pay price for transitioning producers. The confusion may also drive the price of organically certified raw materials down. We now have a mixture of transitional programs run by certifiers who are closely aligned with non-profit education resources to assist producers with transition. Under the OTA proposal, certifiers would also act as educators up until certification, creating more confusion for producers about the role of certifiers. We also have many companies who establish relationships with producers to assist with transition and then have a ready-made market for the product. This relationship marketing has always been the basis of organic buyers and can be useful to transitioning producers so long as there are clear contractual responsibilities on both sides.

Lastly, we have OTA’s proposal for an Organic Checkoff. The article on page one is very clear in spelling out the dangers of checkoff. Our petition opposing the checkoff now has 1230 signatures, more than OTA’s one supporting it. OTA’s slogan is that they can make the much disparaged checkoff program work for organic as a once in a lifetime multi-commodity program.

Experience tells us that with OTA its business as usual in Congress and the countryside; when OTA says, “trust us,” question their track record. ♦

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Checkoff Update: Letter from the No Organic Checkoff Coalition to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Opposing OTA's most recent Proposal

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products, which would be developed under the Commodity Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 1996.

The No Organic Checkoff Coalition was organized specifically to SUPPORT the FAIR Act that exempts organic farmers from conventional checkoff programs and to OPPOSE the creation of a new federal organic checkoff program. Together this coalition represents more than 6,000 organic farmers from the Western, Midwestern, and Eastern United States.

Our coalition members listed at the end of this letter and petition signatories opposed to an organic checkoff do not think a mandatory federal USDA checkoff program under the restrictions of the Commodity Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 1996 is the correct vehicle to address the obvious need for organic marketing and research. We have not seen any convincing evidence that such a program would support increased domestic organic production, which is one of our major concerns. While our members believe in the importance of organic research and promotion in helping to secure a stable and vibrant future for organic agriculture in the US, a USDA Generic Research and Promotion Order for Organic is not our vehicle of choice. There are other strategies that have been proposed and ignored. One successful alternative strategy to achieve the same outcomes could be a voluntary state or regional checkoff to raise money for on-farm research based on the direct needs of farmers in a given geographic area. Apparently, pistachio growers have been pleased with this approach.

This letter delineates issues in the OTA proposal where there is widespread disagreement within the wider organic community that would create conflict if implemented and which has led to a substantial lack of support for a mandatory checkoff proposal.

1. Lack of Industry Support for a USDA Organic Checkoff

OTA has largely misrepresented organic industry support for a USDA organic checkoff. Its Board made the decision to appeal directly to Congress for language to be inserted into the 2014 Farm Bill that enabled them to apply to USDA for a multi-commodity organic checkoff. This decision was not made in response to demands from organic farmers or even OTA members. Instead, it was based on a survey of Congress completed by the Podesta lobbying group. Retroactively, as an after-thought, OTA and its member-only GRO Organic Core Committee, began preliminary discussions with the organic sector participants to

determine the need for an organic promotion and research order. Moreover, as outlined in their original 2015 proposal, their summaries of those discussions did not accurately reflect the wide swath of farmer feedback.

Based on coalition member participation and attendance at the majority of OTA town halls and webinars, we can personally attest that there was significant farmer opposition to the OTA's and GRO Organic Committee's proposal, yet this opposition was not accurately recorded in the meeting notes. More recently in 2016, OTA called thousands of certified organic farmers asking them to sign-on in support of an organic checkoff. However, during those calls farmers have not been given the option to register their opposition to the checkoff. Coalition members who have contacted OTA representatives in an effort to record their "no" vote, have been strongly persuaded to support the checkoff or have been told their vote would be recorded as a "maybe," regardless of their consistent opposition. Thus, OTA data submitted to USDA on behalf of the organic industry support is inaccurate.

In contrast, our coalition has collected 750 signatures in opposition to the checkoff, without robocalls, without a well-funded organizational structure, and with limited producer exposure to the checkoff issue. Furthermore, this coalition in opposition to the checkoff represents over 6,000 organic farmers. See www.noorganiccheckoff.com where testimonials from hundreds of organic producers and consumers explain why they oppose an organic checkoff (See Attachment 1).

2. Organic is not a Commodity

While Congress agreed that all organic commodities could be lumped together as one organic commodity, this is a flawed decision and has negative implications for the future of organic agriculture and any proposed checkoff program. Organic is a system of production. Certification validates that the associated growing and handling practices comply with Federal regulations, dependent upon a process-based verification of those systems.

In contrast, a commodity is a product. If organic is re-classified as a commodity through the proposed organic checkoff, there undoubtedly would be important, unintended consequences of focusing on the end products rather than the systems of production. The impact would most likely adversely affect human health and the environment, which is what organic was expressly intended to protect with a deliberately designed systems approach to food production.

Furthermore, the organic agricultural market includes almost all agricultural commodities. Each commodity: corn, wheat, eggs, lamb, beef, Christmas trees, cotton, fluid milk, avocados, blueberries, mushrooms, dairy, honey, mango, peanut, pork, raspberry, watermelon, popcorn, sorghum, soybeans, potato, etc. have different research, marketing, and promotion needs. It is antithetical to the conditions set forth in the Commodity Promotion, Research, and Information Act of 1996 for a dairy farmer to pay into a checkoff program, for example, that would fund research

and promotion for blueberries. The reclassification of multiple organic commodities into one lump commodity simply makes no sense. It was done prematurely and without input or widespread support from the organic farming community.

3. Proposed Checkoff Assessments Are Burdensome for Farmers and Small Businesses

An organic research and promotion order should not impose arduous compliance requirements on small businesses. Organic certification already is taxing on farmers' time and a checkoff assessment would magnify this burden tremendously. The OTA's proposed producer assessments are burdensome, complex, and confusing. While on the face of it, the OTA proposal appears to reduce producer burden by exempting producers grossing under \$250,000, the reality of this exemption is much more complex, bringing to light the many problems and inequities embedded in the proposal:

- It automatically excludes 60% of all organic farmers – the grassroots base of the organic label and market – from the GRO Organic Program decisions, referendums, and leadership.
- The option to voluntarily be assessed for seven years in order to vote in the referendum creates additional inequities. Those who do qualify for assessment are not locked into being assessed for the next seven years, even if their gross revenue dips below \$250,000 the year following the

referendum. Those who volunteer to pay into the organic checkoff are committed to stay in for seven years no matter what their gross organic income is. Likewise, if a certificate holder is exempt at the onset of the program and thus does not get a vote in the initial referendum but then reaches the gross sales threshold the following year, they would be paying into a program which they were not entitled to vote on. If the USDA does proceed to a referendum on this checkoff proposal, the most equitable and transparent option is for all organic certificate holders to have a vote on whether to establish an organic checkoff, based on their analysis of the final proposal developed by USDA AMS. If that vote is in favor of a checkoff, future governance decisions should be made according to the proposal published by USDA.

- OTA's assessment proposal is inequitable across commodities. For example, dairy farmers have a high gross sales number, but typically low net profit, while other commodities like high-value fruits and vegetables typically have lower gross sales but higher net profit. They both would be classified as exempt or non-exempt under the unequal conditions of their individual commodity characteristics.
- How will USDA determine gross organic sales? Will USDA use cash based accounting system or an accrual one? Will all certified operations be required to file quarterly gross sales reports to prove they qualify or are exempt from paying into the organic checkoff? Will credit be given for an

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Checkoff Update

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inventory of inputs purchased in one marketing year but used in another? Requiring quarterly or annual assessment reports is overly onerous as it is unlikely that many small to mid-size farms have bookkeeping employees or staff to operate and manage their computer system.

- Farmers will have to pay into the organic checkoff within 30 days of the end of the marketing year. This will cause hardship for those small to medium size operations that lack the administrative support to have immediately updated accounts. It is also impossible as some farmers purchase inputs using charge accounts which are invoiced monthly in arrears.
- Farmers are likely to be hit with lost net income as processors and handlers pass the cost of the checkoff down to farmers with a lower pay price. OTA maintains that the majority of payments will be made by handlers, not farmers, because of the qualifying requirements. It is generally accepted in the agricultural market place that increased costs are not passed up the distribution chain to retailers and consumers because of tight competition. It is inevi-

table that any checkoff payment made by handlers would be deducted from the pay price of farmers. As an example, the recent exemption of all organic operations from paying into conventional checkoffs saved dairy processors approximately \$16 million annually. At the same time organic dairy processors are looking to lower the price paid to organic dairy farmers, despite their new windfall.

- Even those producers under the proposed \$250,000 gross organic sales designation would be required to submit financial documentation to the Secretary of Agriculture, at least annually, or more times if they desire to prove they are exempt. This would further burden small producers.
- OTA has not been specific about how paying into the checkoff will be policed to ensure that farmers required to pay into the checkoff, actually do. This situation would be aggravated by those organic commodities whose price fluctuates. For example, the price for organic corn is nearly \$10 a bushel lower in 2016 than it was in 2015, which represents a large difference in gross organic sales. Other checkoffs are based on volume of production and can be monitored, for example, sale barns or grain elevators. This is a process that could work when a single commodity is assessed. Will USDA AMS be responsible for vetting each submission from each organic producer, importer, and

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Diagram 1. ORGANIC PRODUCERS: HOW WILL YOU DETERMINE NET ORGANIC SALES?



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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Checkoff Update

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handler to validate their deductions from gross sales? The OTA Revised Proposal presupposes a high cost to reimburse AMS or the Organic Checkoff Board to administer the Organic checkoff fairly. In, sum, the process to fairly evaluate, monitor, and enforce this assessment seems most complex and unrealistic.

OTA's proposal outlines that qualifying organic certificate holders would be assessed based upon net profit; however, for small and mid-size diverse farming businesses, this is complex as many small businesses typically produce all their own farm inputs. Small to mid-size producers may rent or own more acreage to grow their own organic inputs, a strategy necessary in many parts of the country to maintain access to organic inputs. For example, many organic dairies are grass-based and do not purchase any feed. They have limited inputs but may have to pay a mortgage or rent to manage the land necessary to meet organic certification requirements. How would this cost be factored-in to make the program fair to all farmers? Furthermore, small to mid-size organic farms have high labor costs, an expense typical of farms who have not reached the scale requiring more mechanization. These costs would not be included in some definitions of net organic sales. Generating net profit numbers for the purposes of the GRO Organic Program would be overly onerous for small businesses, expose them to increased risk for financial audits by the Board, and open them to Federal penalties for any under payments.

The diagrams OTA included in their revised proposal in an attempt to better explain how net organic sales would be calculated grossly oversimplify the reality of the majority of small businesses in the organic sector. Many small businesses grow, process, store, etc. their own on-farm inputs. There are not off-farm sales receipts to simply subtract expenses from sales. How would this be calculated equitably across the different commodities included in the organic commodity umbrella? See Diagram 1, which illustrates the complexity of fairly and uniformly calculating net organic sales.

4. Organic Research is NOT a Priority in OTA's Checkoff Proposal

While U.S. certified organic farmers are mixed in their support and opposition to the proposed organic checkoff, the great majority of producers agree that there is a need for more agriculture producer-focused organic research. The proposed OTA research dollars for production agricultural research are much too low and fail to recognize this need and priority in the organic industry. The proposal to allocate 12.6% as the minimum starting point for all checkoff dollars to support agricultural research does not reflect this unanimous priority among organic farmers. OTA's research allocation is much less than the 25% they would allocate

to the amorphous "discretionary funds," which seriously undercuts the needs of the organic farming community and allows a quarter of the industry-generated funds to be spent on undisclosed expenses and in a non-transparent manner.

5. Farmers Don't Hold Enough Power in OTA's Proposal

Small- to Mid-size grassroots organic farmers built the U.S. organic label and market, yet they would hold only six reserved seats (37%) on the board of 16 members. It is clear that organic farmers are not determining the course of the proposed organic checkoff and will not determine the spending of checkoff funds if a checkoff is set up. As certified organic FARMERS comprise the majority of all U.S. certified organic entities, we feel this lack of farmer representation is egregious and disrespectful to the organic farmers that helped to build the organic market and movement to what it is today.

6. Referendum Voting Process Is Overly Burdensome

USDA should make participation in the initial Organic Checkoff referendum the simplest and easiest for all certified entities. There is no reason why the referendum should require that certified operations request a ballot in order to participate. The agency has every mailing address for every certified operation and should mail them a ballot with a self-addressed, postage-paid, return envelope to ensure highest rate of participation.

7. Checkoff Would Increase Organic Imports. Importers Would Not Contribute Their Fair Share

The U.S. domestic organic market has grown at such a rapid pace such that demand for organic products far outreaches the domestic supply. OTA's proposed organic checkoff priority "to promote and grow the organic market" would undoubtedly increase organic imports in the absence of a "made or grown in the US" market plan. Under the Commodity Promotion, Research, and Information Act a checkoff cannot promote just domestic sales of the commodity. The recent increased demand for organic products has increased the importation of organic commodities which are cheaper than domestic product. USDA ERS data currently shows that 60-70 percent of U.S. soybeans are imported with some knowledgeable industry people putting that figure at up to 90% and 40% of U.S. organic corn supplies imported. Recently, 3 bulk ship loads of organic grain were brought into U.S. ports in one week. This has caused the pay price offered to U.S. organic farmers to drop under this foreign competition. While the OTA Checkoff Proposal states that it would help support thousands of U.S. acres to transition to organic production, if farmer organic pay-price drops because of an onslaught of cheap

foreign organic imports, U.S. farmers would be unwilling and unable to financially afford to transition to organic.

According to page 19 of the OTA revised proposal, organic imports would get a break on their assessment by being allowed to subtract import costs such as freight charges—one of the largest costs in shipping products to the U.S. Moreover, organic imports would be assessed on the cost of the raw product—typically far cheaper than U.S. grown products. Subsequently, not only would this lead to an increase in organic imports, but it would also decrease overall checkoff revenue as cheaper imports substitute for higher-priced U.S.-produced organic products, making it even harder for U.S. growers to compete in the domestic organic market.

U.S. organic producers undergo the highest-integrity organic inspections and certification processes in the world. While the USDA National Organic Program strives to maintain this integrity across the globe, we know, realistically, that it is impossible to conduct the same type of rigorous organic inspection and traceability in countries at war, like Turkey and Ukraine, where most of our current organic corn imports are coming from. A checkoff campaign that encourages imports over domestic transition would serve to decrease consumer confidence in the USDA organic program and seal.

8. Organic Producers May Have to Pay into Multiple Checkoffs

Organic producers and organic handlers with dual-covered commodities must apply to their commodity checkoff boards for exemption from their federally mandated conventional checkoffs. There is no exemption from State based conventional checkoffs. This exemption has only recently been introduced and does not have a track record for how timely, complicated, or efficient these exemptions would be. In order to only pay into the organic checkoff, farmers will need to exempt themselves annually from paying into the conventional check off. Part of that exemption is providing proof that the operation has paid into the organic checkoff. According to the OTA, if a farmer already pays into a conventional commodity checkoff and wishes to be exempt from paying into the organic checkoff the farmer must:

Organic producers may apply to the Board, on a form provided by the Board, for a certificate of exemption prior to the start of the marketing year. This is an annual exemption and organic producers and organic handlers must reapply each year. Such organic producers and organic handlers shall certify that they have remitted an assessment for the dual-covered commodity pursuant to a commodity promotion law. Upon receipt of an application for exemption, the Board shall determine whether an exemption may be granted. The Board may request documentation providing proof of the remittance of the assessment for the dual-covered commodity. The Board will issue, if deemed appropriate, a certificate of exemption to the eligible organic producer or organic handler. It is the responsibility of the organic producer or organic handler to retain a copy of the certificate of exemption.

It is possible that while an organic producer is waiting for their conventional commodity board to determine whether or not they have submitted all of the correct paperwork to be exempted from their conventional checkoff payments, they may also be assessed under the organic checkoff. Many organic producers expect that it would be more complicated to apply for exemption, and end up surrendering to the double payment. It is likely that the small to mid-size producers, with little administrative staff would be hit the hardest with this possibility.

9. Projected Checkoff Revenue is Unverified

OTA has not provided any valid, independent research data that confirms the estimated organic checkoff revenue. Using net income as the value for assessments makes projection extremely difficult. While there are statistics and data on volume and sales for many organic commodities, there is no independent data on the cost of production. Therefore, there is no data on which to base an opinion of \$30 million in checkoff revenue. Most of the data necessary to assess net organic income is proprietary.

As you can see from the above concerns, there are many philosophical, economical, equality, structural, and transparency problems with establishing a mandatory federal organic checkoff. OTA's proposed checkoff would be complicated to administer and it is impossible for it to accurately estimate the dollar amount raised by their proposed program. Although in principal, the intent of an organic research and promotion program – more organic research, clarity of food labels, and organic technical assistance for transition – is a good one, most members of the organic farming community agree that they prefer a different solution than the proposed checkoff program.

The proposed mandatory organic checkoff would generate a limited pot of money from dozens of very different commodities within the organic community. Competing demands for the money would inevitably set farmer against farmer, further complicating the administration of the program and overshadowing any good the checkoff intended to achieve. OTA's proposals have already caused much emotion and conflict within the organic community. To take it to a referendum would do a disservice to the organic community. It would divide rather than unite us, ignite a firestorm of adverse media coverage and injure the organic brand in the process, defeating the purpose of an organic checkoff in the first place. A mandatory federal organic checkoff is not the right fit for the organic community. We urge you to outrightly reject OTA's proposal and encourage the organic community to explore other options.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on this important issue and for your thoughtful consideration of our remarks. We would welcome the opportunity to continue this discussion and evaluation with AMS at a mutually convenient time and place.

***For a list of signatories and more information please go to:
www.noorganiccheckoff.com***

Quality of Life and Milk Quality

By Jessica C. Scillieri Smith, DVM and Rick Watters, PhD, Quality Milk Production Services, Cornell University



A cow's quality of life or cow comfort has a huge impact on the overall milk quality achieved by the dairy operation. When it comes to milk quality we often get caught up in the numbers as it relates to bulk tank SCC, bacteria count and incidence of mastitis. As milk quality specialists we spend the majority of our time in the milking center, and it doesn't take long to realize that the cows will easily tell you when they aren't happy with their milking experience. Quality of life and quality of milk relate to the interactions between cows, people, milking equipment and facilities.

People are the most important part of the equation as they are the most variable. People are responsible for most of the weak links when it comes to poor milk quality. This also means that when superb milk quality is achieved the achievement is because of great people and great management.

It all starts with how cows enter the milking center. How are the cows being moved to the milking center? Are they being yelled at or whistled at? Movement to the milking center could be moving cows from a pen to the holding area, bringing cows in from pasture or getting cows up in a tie stall barn. Mechanical movement of cows with a crowd gate is more of a science than one would think. Cows that are overcrowded or facing the wrong way will not load into the parlor correctly and this can have a negative impact on the hormones required for proper milk letdown. The same patience and science holds true when cows are moved from the pasture or gotten up in the tie stall. Making the experience of entering the

milking center unpleasant will interfere with oxytocin letdown and ultimately the milking experience for the cows. Remember crowd gates, dogs, vehicles and canes are used to calmly relocate cows closer to the milking center and they are not designed to physically push or excite cows. Poor oxytocin letdown means longer unit on-time, potentially less milk and longer periods of no or low milk flow which could lead to damaged teat ends; not a good result for the cow or the dairy farmer.

Once cows have made it to the milking center, then the focus on the milking routine and milking equipment takes precedence. There are 11 tasks that Quality Milk Production Services (QMPS) monitors to improve quality in the milking center and they are as follows:

1. Udder hygiene
2. Teat end cleanliness,
3. Milking routine timing
4. Average claw vacuum during peak milk flow
5. Milking unit alignment
6. Milk flow rates
7. Post milking hand strip yields
8. Teat scoring, Graph pulsators
9. National Mastitis Council (NMC) equipment evaluation
10. Housing/facilities walk-through.

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The Albrecht Program or the Albrecht System? Part 1

By Neal Kinsey

At times those of us who have utilized the work of Dr. William Albrecht have referred to it as a program – The Albrecht Program. Based on one definition found concerning programs for computer science in The American Heritage College Dictionary, Third Edition, soil fertility work based on what Dr. Albrecht taught could perhaps be considered in such a way. That definition is “A procedure for solving a problem that involves collection of data, processing, and presentation of results.” All these steps are required to correctly utilize the work of Dr. Albrecht. But never be fooled into thinking there is just one specific program that makes up the Albrecht Method of building soil fertility.

In the beginning, I worked with soils in Southeast Missouri and Southern Illinois where even heavy clay soils and high pH's are characteristically low in calcium. Consequently, that is the “program” I learned to use from Dr. Albrecht. This program which Dr. Albrecht taught should be used for helping farmers in that area worked very well for those clients who would follow what was shown to be needed in terms of nutrient requirements. In an area of the state where continuous soybeans was the major crop, for those who correctly followed the advice, a soybean yield increase of 10 to 15 bushels per acre was not unusual in the first year. How could such a program with such good results have been overlooked by so many in agriculture? It was so simple to follow! Why weren't people everywhere making use of this information to produce better yields?

The greatest changes that were shown to be needed in our soils was the classic advice made so famous by his work on medium to heavy soils in Missouri and most states east of the Mississippi River. Correct the soil's calcium content to 65 – 70% saturation in the soil and the magnesium content to no more than 12 and no less than 10% saturation in the soil and with the proper amounts of other needed nutrients present there that land would suddenly grow the best of whatever was planted there, not just soybeans. The advice was always to correct the calcium regardless of what the soil pH measured, and it work over and over again based on the exact testing Dr. Albrecht used and recom-

mended. But “modernizing the soil testing procedures” which seems to be generally for speed of handling - not increased accuracy, and disregard for calcium and magnesium for the sake of pH, has caused the specific testing used to achieve the end results Dr. Albrecht was able to accomplish to appear as “flawed science” and a wrong approach.

I had only a very few clients and about one year of experience before Dr. Albrecht died in the early 1970's. What he taught about correcting fertility for the pre-dominant soils in the area where I worked was used far and wide by those trained by him at the time, so it must surely work everywhere and on every soil. That is what I thought, and it is still the belief of many of those using the work of Dr. Albrecht. Though I heard it over and over from others after he was gone, I never heard Dr. Albrecht say this, and over time, working with clay soils as close as Iowa and on into the west, and even soils in New York and with sands in Southeast Missouri and Florida, that was not what proved to be the case!

In studying some of Dr. Albrecht's published information, I was puzzled by his comment about 80% calcium being a desirable level for crop production. Since that was not what I learned this surely must have been early in his career before he perfected the soil tests he was using for advising farmers on soil fertility.

But then I received some soils from a farm near Des Moines, Iowa that reportedly produced the best yields of soybeans I had ever heard of to that time. When the soil tests came back, it appeared the farmer must be stretching the truth by a great deal. He was not. Top yields at the time were actually being produced on that farm. Ten bushels per acre better than the best I had seen, but far different in terms of soil fertility than what we recommended for the medium to heavy clay soils in other areas of the country. How could this be so? Not enough space to provide the answer this time. See Part 2 in the next issue of NODPA News.

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Quality of Life and Milk Quality

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QMPS completes the tasks listed above in order to determine why the current quality or efficiency is what it is and helps determine potential improvements. It is easy to get lost in all the numbers provided today by processors and from each milking; however, numbers are one dimensional and only part of the picture. Numbers alone cannot provide enough information as to why your current quality is what it is. Therefore it is imperative that one is in the milking center during milking to see how the numbers are being achieved. Completion of the above tasks allows QMPS to provide management with a detailed methodology on how to improve quality and efficiency. In addition, these areas can also be used to monitor and track changes to fully determine if changes were positive.

Cows love consistency, and having the milking experience be exactly the same at every milking, every day, can reduce stress by creating a calm experience at each shift. However, with many modern dairy farms, the same person is not milking at every shift and there may be some person to person variation. Because there are so many potential things that can shift and change in

the milking experience, it is important that we keep an eye on what the cows are telling us.

Having consistent milking procedures between shifts and milkers can be difficult, but if well trained, can be well executed. It doesn't matter if cows are milked in a tie stall or stanchion barn or a brand new freestall. Making sure that pre-dip is on for enough time and that the cows are clean and dry before milking will help to prevent new infections. In addition, fore-stripping will aid in oxytocin release and milk letdown, it also helps in identifying cows with subtle signs of clinical mastitis. Ideally, preparation procedures should be timed so that pre-milking teat dip can sit in contact with the teat skin for 20-30 seconds before being removed with individual towels. Unit attachment should be 60-90 seconds after fore-stripping to take the best advantage of the cow's natural oxytocin.

Once the units are on, a lot can be determined by the cows' behavior. Do they shift and dance when the milking units are being attached or throughout the entire milking? Are a lot of units getting kicked off early? Are teats discolored when the units come off? All these things can be indicators that something is wrong and cows are not happy with how they are being milked. If you are seeing any of these signs, it is important to get someone

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

in to evaluate milking procedures, cows and equipment function to determine the cause.

Regular parlor evaluation and equipment maintenance can help to identify and solve many of these issues before they become bigger problems and impact cattle welfare and milk quality. Milking equipment is in use for 1,500 – 8,400 hours each year, making routine maintenance a must. Pulsators should be evaluated for proper function at least three times annually when milking for only a few hours daily, and monthly when milking 12 or more hours/day. The entire milking system should be evaluated under the NMC Vacuum and Airflow Guidelines at least annually.

What impact does teat end vacuum have on milking center performance? Teat end vacuum should be between 9.5 – 12.5”Hg during peak milk flow. Increasing claw vacuum typically decreases milking unit on-time, but not by as much as you probably think. One study showed that raising the vacuum level by 1”Hg reduced milking unit on-time by 16 seconds; however, increasing the vacuum level too high can lead to increased risk for hyperkeratosis, reduced milk out and increased teat edema. It becomes easy to point the finger at milking equipment when one notices poor teat ends, which can be from high claw vacuum, poorly functioning pulsators and automatic detachers not automatically detaching, not to mention flaws in milking procedure timing.

However, one must ask, is the faulty milking equipment because of lack of equipment maintenance, and if so, this is a human/people issue, not equipment.

Detacher settings can have a positive or negative impact on milking center performance. Typical detacher settings are 1.5 – 1.8 and 2.0 – 2.2 lbs/min for herds milking 2x and 3x daily. The goal of the automated detacher is to detach the milking unit when milk flow goes below a pre-determined milk flow threshold for a predefined period of time. This low flow period (<2 lbs/minute) is when the risk for teat damage is usually the highest and therefore should be kept under 10% of milking unit on-time. The only way to determine if the detachers are functioning properly is to perform strip yields after the milking unit has detached. Perform strip yields by hand stripping milk from each teat for 15 seconds into a measuring cup and record the volume. The goal for completeness of milking is to have 80% of your cows with > 150 ml or > 5oz. of milk from hand stripping.

One of the most neglected areas in the milking center is proper replacement of hoses and other wear items. All rubber hoses, gaskets, etc. should be replaced at least one time annually. Liners should be replaced at the manufacturer's recommended number of individual cow milkings. The use of detergents and acids to

continued on page 14



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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Quality of Life and Milk Quality

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clean the milking system breaks down (ocular degeneration) the inside of hoses leading to microscopic cracks inside the hoses that allows for bacteria to colonize and multiply inside the hoses.

The hygiene of milking equipment does not begin and end when milking units are placed in the clean-in-place (CIP) manifolds at the end of milking. Cleaning the exterior of the milking units is just as important as the water temperature, chemical concentration and slugging of the wash system. Milking units including the shells, liners, and claws, need to be properly rinsed, scrubbed, and allowed to drip off prior to be placed in jetter cups or wash racks. This prevents dirt and manure from being drawn into the milk line during the wash cycle at the interface of the mouthpiece of the liner and the jetter cup or seal. Removal of manure contamination from the exterior of milking equipment could involve a pressure washer, foaming and/or hand scrubbing. Do not use water to spray off milking units or the deck while cows are still loaded in the parlor. If a milking unit needs to be sprayed with water then the milking unit should be un-hooked and lowered

into the pit where the deflection of water of the milking unit will not contact the cows. Spray down the parlor deck and milking units when there are no cows located on said side of the parlor.

All of the issues outlined above can predispose cows to mastitis, and if we can do the best job possible with these things, we will improve animal welfare, and produce more, higher quality milk for consumers. Increasing the quality of a cow's life can be done by completing a calm and consistent milking routine, maintain milking equipment and facilities. It's all about people and if people take care of the cow, equipment and facilities, then the cow will take care of you (people) by providing increased milk yield and improved milk quality.

Jessica C. Scillieri Smith, DVM is Senior Extension Associate, Quality Milk Production Services (QMPS), Northern Lab, Canton, NY. She can be reached at Jcs385@cornell.edu or by calling (315)379-3930 and Dr. Rick Watters, PhD., Director of Quality Milk Production Services Western Laboratory, Warsaw, NY, and can be reached at rdw32@cornell.edu, or by phone, (585) 786-2555. Dr. Scillieri Smith and Dr. Watters will lead a workshop, entitled Milking System Tune-Up: Increasing Efficiency and Milk Quality, at the 2016 NODPA Field Days.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Updated Comments on the Proposed Rule: Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

In the May 2016 NODPA News, we published a lengthy article on the comments for this proposed rule. The work continued since then and the following are the updated and final comments that have been submitted to NOP.

For the past three months, NODPA worked with Midwest Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (MODPA) and Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA) to submit comments on this Proposed Rule to bring some common sense, production-based criteria to regulations that are as specific as possible. Our comments reminded the NOP and organic consumers that organic certification is already the gold standard for animal welfare. It is not just a scorecard of the health and well-being of the livestock but is a third-party certified federal program with a holistic system approach that also considers the impact of the production system on the environment, the quality and content of animal feed, and ensures that livestock are not treated with any antibiotic, artificial hormones or growth stimulants.

Outlined below are some of the comments and changes we rec-

ommended. Our full comments are posted on our website, www.nodpa.com or available from us by mail.

Definitions: For the term “Outdoors”, remove “with at least 50 percent soil” to read: “Outdoors. Any area in the open air outside a building or shelter where there are no solid walls or solid roof attached to the indoor living space structure.” Requiring that mammalian outdoor access areas provide at least 50 percent soil would create permanent conditions rather than “temporary conditions” that threaten soil and water quality.

§ 205.238(a)(2) NOP added “resulting in appropriate condition” to this section and we recommended that it is not added: “2) Provision of a feed ration sufficient to meet nutritional requirements, including vitamins, minerals, protein and/or amino acids, fatty acids, energy sources, and fiber (ruminants);” The addition of “resulting in appropriate body condition” is unnecessary. Regulation requires documentation of the animal’s total feed ration, the amount of each type of feed actually fed, and all changes made to all rations throughout the year. Finally, “appropriate body condition” is a subjective determination influenced by species, breed, stage of life, age, gender, and time of year.

§ 205.238(a)(5) NOP added conditions to this section on who can make “physical alterations” but also introduced a loophole that would allow alterations for hygiene. We recommended amending the proposed to read: (5) *Physical alterations may be performed to benefit the welfare or safety of the animals, or for*

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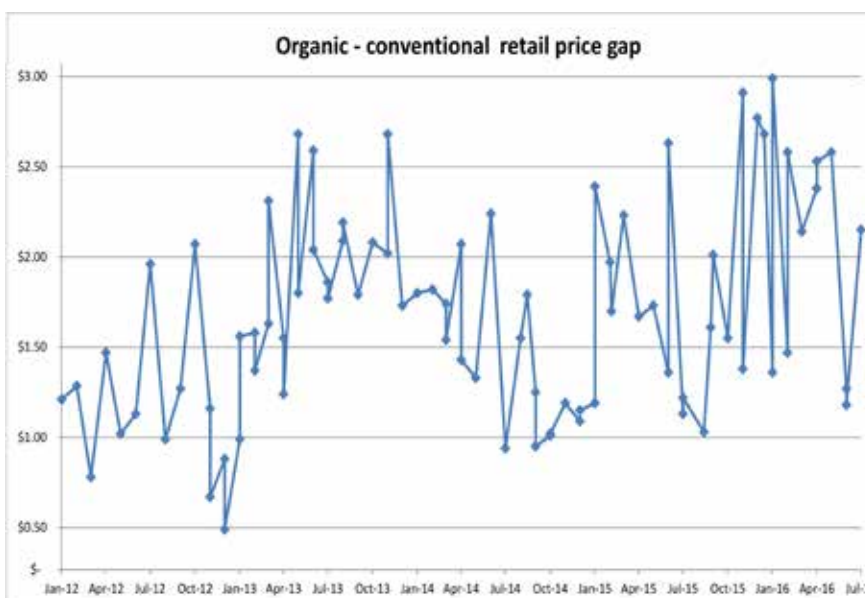
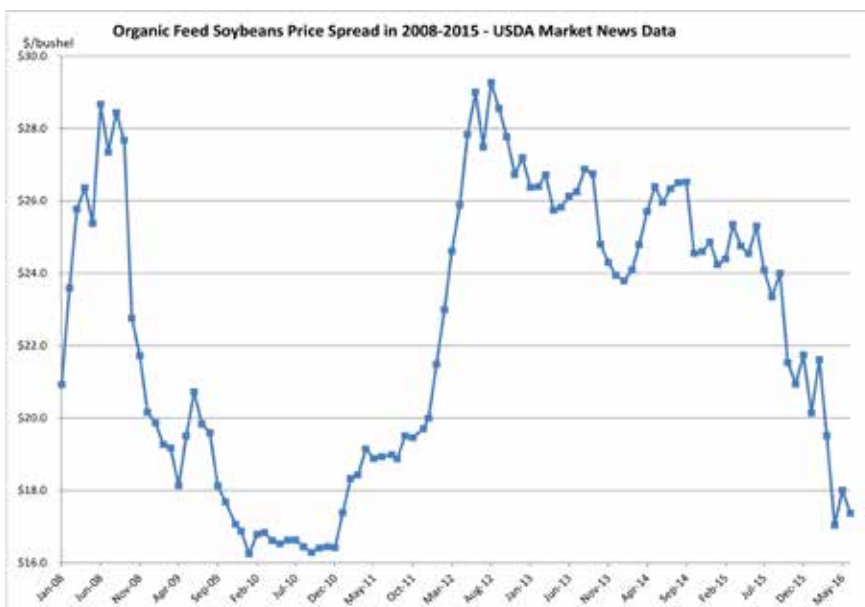
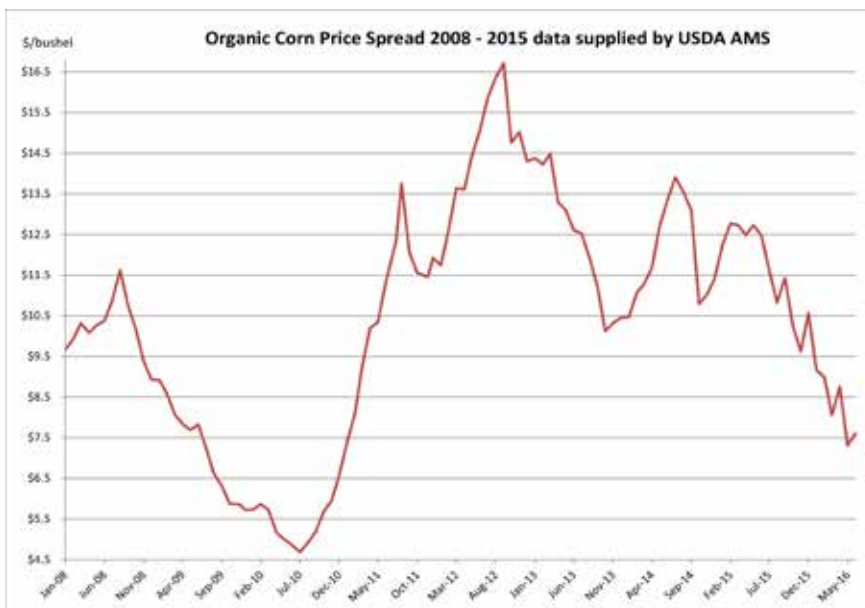
ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Milk Pay, Retail and Feed Prices for July 2016

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

USDA AMS data shows a continuing slight increase in retail sales of organic fluid milk for 2016 over 2015 with sales up by 4% January through April compared with the same period in 2015. Sales of organic whole milk are up 15.6% in April 2016 from sales in April 2015. New England continues to see strong growth in utilization of organic whole milk as reported by the Federal Milk Marketing Order 1 with organic milk utilization up by 32% in May 2016 over May 2015. As we recognize that the organic dairy and beef market is now worldwide with imports of organic milk, organic milk powder and organic beef manufacturing trim increasing, attention needs to be paid to changes in Europe, especially with the exit of Britain from the European Union. The sales to China that Organic Valley has been channeling through Britain may get more difficult if the terms of export are less favorable for an independent United Kingdom. Organic farm gate pricing for organic milk is trending higher than a year ago as increases in sales of organic milk rise in some countries but weakening retail prices may well impact the farmgate price relatively quickly. The EU farmgate price is approximately \$26.50 per 100 lbs. of milk. Comparatively retail prices in the EU are lower by about 35%.

WhiteWave announced that they will be reducing the MAP by one dollar as producers are seeing lower feed cost and a claim of a surplus of milk of up to 5%. There is no word yet from the other companies about their plans. For years, some processors have imported ever increasing volumes of low priced organic powdered milk, butter, and cheese, making it difficult to judge the actual supply situation. With imported powdered milk selling for about \$2 per pound, and U.S. powdered milk sells for closer to \$5 per pound one can see why some cooperatives and manufacturers are importing product rather than

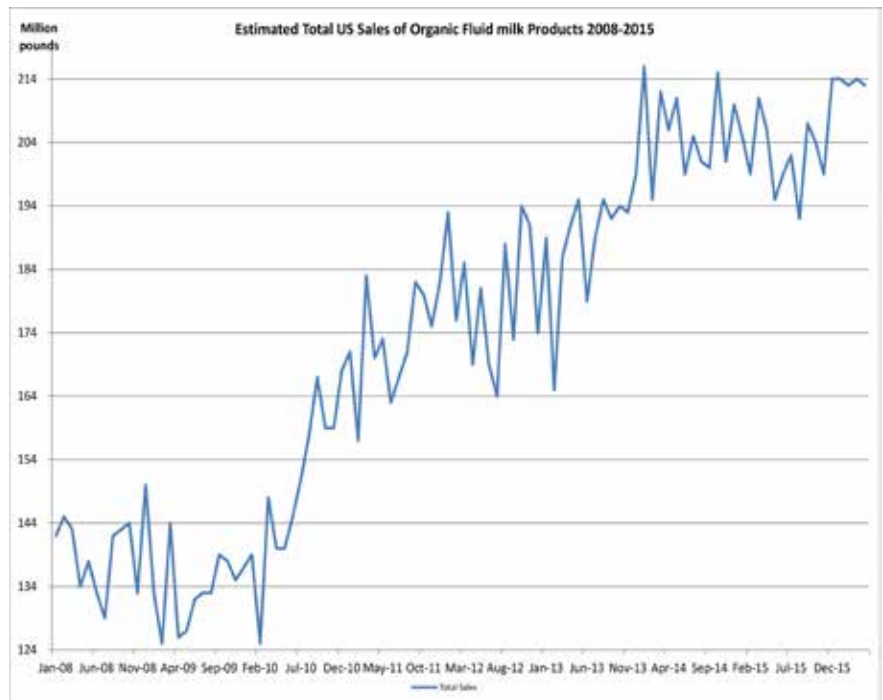
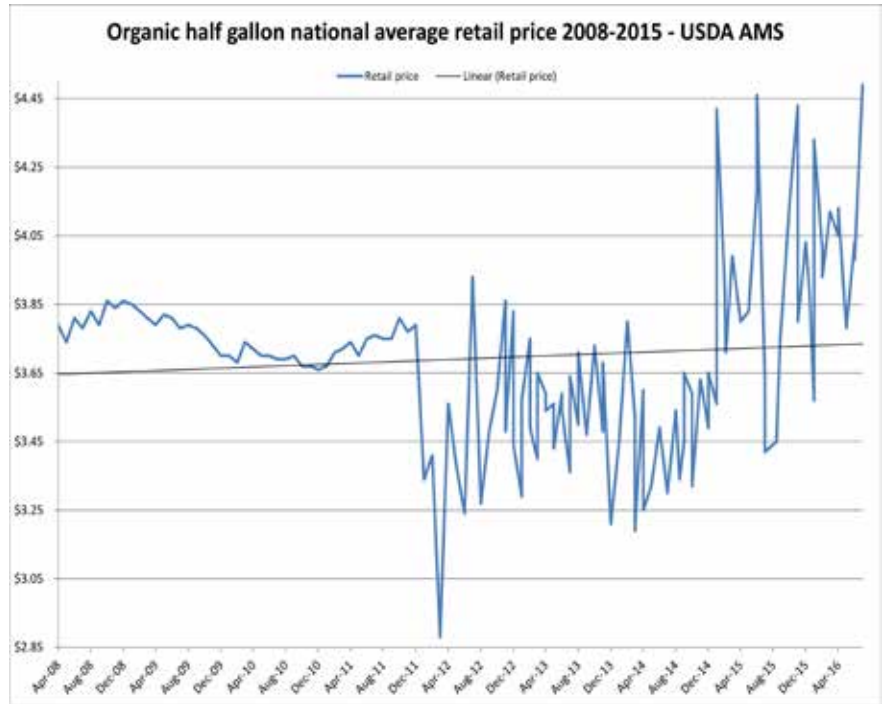


ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

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building the sustainability of the domestic supply. Whether supply is long or not, and we have no independent proof of that, there is a steady increase in consumer demand for retail fluid product and a continued high demand from processors, making a reduction in pay price unjustified. Receiving a reasonable pay price has allowed producers to pay down debt or make needed repairs and upgrades, plus a higher pay price will encourage more small to mid-size operations to transition to organic production. There are reports from the west of the transition of large herds to organic production using the various loopholes still available under some certifiers for continuous transition while we await the publication of the origin of livestock regulation. The next thing out of the mouths of processors will be a request for lower volumes of milk and penalties for over production. After the debacle we had the last time that was tried, with numerous producers being treated unfairly, it will not be an attractive option for producers given the low price of conventional milk.

The French dairy giant, Danone, that is behind brands like Activa, Oikos, Dannon and Stonyfield yogurt, announced on July 7, 2016 that it will buy WhiteWave Foods in a deal worth \$12.5 billion in cash, immediately raising questions about the future of the organic supply market. Danone will now control the Horizon, Stonyfield and Wallaby organic yogurt labels and this will impact Organic Valley, which will be Groupe Danone's primary rival in the marketplace. There are many questions that will need to be answered once the deal is completed--how will it impact competition in the marketplace and whether producers can obtain a fair pay price. Currently, Organic Valley supplies Stonyfield with raw milk and has a licensing agreement to market packaged, fluid milk under the Stonyfield label. Stonyfield has also built its own supply in the Northeast. It's not a surprising coincidence that as WhiteWave lowers its pay price to producers by \$1 per hundred pounds, shareholders of WhiteWave saw an increase of up to 24% on their share price. ♦



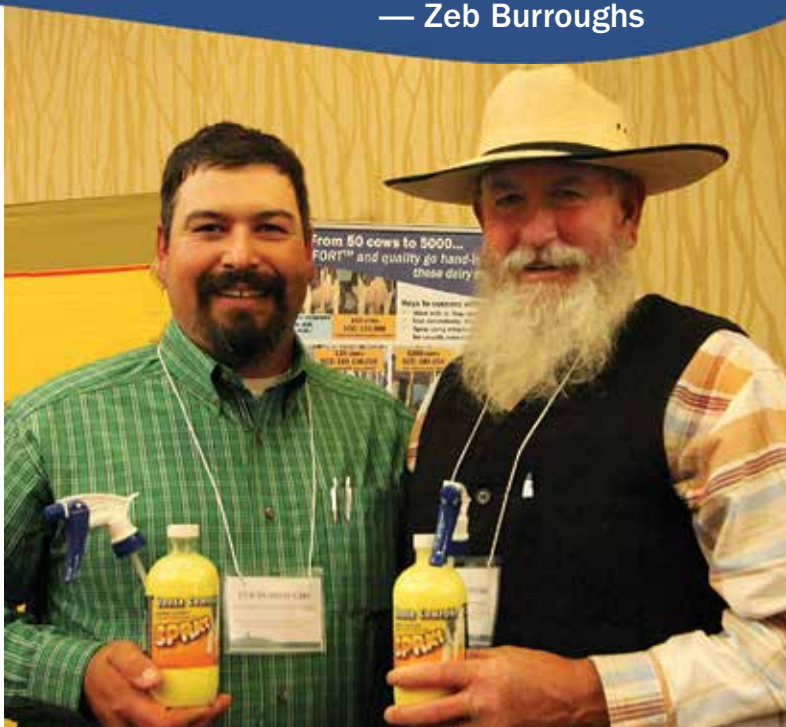
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The entrepreneurial Burroughs families have been farming and dairying in California's Central Valley for over 100 years. Ward (right) and Rosie Burroughs are partners with each of their children in their own farms, and they all work together. In addition to Zeb (left) and Meredith Burroughs' California Cloverleaf Farms, other children have livestock, poultry, almond and olive operations, as well as additional dairy production.

“After 7 years of using Udder Comfort,[™] we find the best use and results when our cattle freshen. It's great for fresh cows and any problem cow. It helps us keep our SCC under 200,000,” says Zeb Burroughs, 4th generation farming near Denair, California. He and his wife Meredith started the 550-cow organic dairy in 2005. They enjoy the challenge of managing the herd proactively for healthy, productive, and “happy cows.”

“The Mas-D-Tec[®] is also instrumental,” he says. “We use it daily. It is so simple and useful that it's well worth replacing, even yearly if we need to. We test fresh cows and any problem cows to identify milk to keep out for feeding the calves.

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SAVE THE DATE:**2016 NODPA Field Days: September 29 & 30, 2016**

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The daily demands of organic dairy farming are great and sometimes we forget to think about the future of our land, infrastructure and ourselves. The 2016 NODPA Field Days, *The Future of Organic Dairy Farming: Regenerate, Renew, Refresh*, will focus on regenerating our soil, renewing our farms' infrastructures, and refreshing ourselves in order for our farms and families to thrive into the future.

There will be workshops focused on the soil: Managing for Milk Production per Acre; renewing the farm's infrastructure: Milking System Tune-Ups; the growing support and infrastructure for the grass-fed milk market, along with an update on the Certified Grass Fed Label, and news about the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program in New York and Pennsylvania. We will hear about an OREI research project being conducted by the Rodale Institute and the University of Iowa that is Integrating Crops and Livestock to Enhance Organic Farm Stability, Safety and Resilience. And, we will have some critically important updates on the Animal Welfare Rule, Origin of Livestock, Organic Check-off and Other Issues Relevant to the Organic Community.

There will be a number of opportunities to refresh ourselves, too. We start with an optional tour of Trickling Springs Creamery on Thursday morning; John Kempf, founder of Advancing Eco Agriculture, will refresh and renew us with his Thursday evening keynote presentation: *Decision Making Principles of Exceptional Farm Managers*; and we will have a farm tour and lunch at Cliff and Maggie Hawbaker's Hamilton Heights Farm, with an additional tour of their Emerald Valley Farm in the afternoon. In addition to hosting lunch at the Hawbakers, Trickling Springs Creamery will feature an Ice Cream Sundae Bar with all of their delicious ice creams.

The meeting format is a bit different this year, so please take a look at the program on page 20 for all of the details. Registration and the trade show open on Thursday morning at 8:30 am and the first workshop, focused on the regeneration of the soil, led by John Kempf, will kick off the education program at 11:00 am. Lunch follows, then an afternoon of workshops. After Thursday's workshops, we will have time to connect with each other during the Trade Show and Social Hour, followed by the NODPA banquet, annual meeting, and the Keynote Presentation.

In between the educational program, producer-only meeting, farm tours, and optional Trickling Springs Creamery tour,

**Pictures from the 2015 field days in Pavilion, NY**

attendees will have ample opportunities to reconnect with old friends, meet new ones, visit the trade show, enjoy delicious food, and feel refreshed and ready to take back all of this good information to their farms and communities.

continued on page 21

FIELD DAYS 2016

Thursday, September 29, 2016

8:30 – 11:00 am NODPA Field Days Registration and Trade Show

9:00-10:30 Trickling Springs Creamery Plant Tour OPTIONAL (Small group, 30 minute tours start at 9:00 am, with the last one leaving at 10:00 am) Please: no loose clothing or jewelry, open-toed shoes, no food or drink (full tour policy and directions will be given out at Field Days registration)

11:00 – 12:30 pm First Session: Managing for Milk Production per Acre, John Kempf, Founder, Advancing Eco Agriculture. Learn how to grow high fat content, high energy forages. High yielding forages with a fat content of four percent or greater, and high digestibility are the foundation of grazing dairies financial performance. John will describe how to manage forages and crop nutrition to produce high fat content forages very quickly, even in a single growing season.

12:30 – 1:30 Lunch and Trade Show

1:30 – 2:30 *Certified Grass Fed Label: A Progress Report* Tim Joseph, Maple Hill Creamery, PCO and/or NOFA-NY Certifiers, invited, and

Support for the Grass Fed Milk Market, a SARE Grant Fay Benson, NYCCE will describe the current project and how it impacts organic, grass-based dairy farmers.

2:30 – 3:15 *Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program: NY and PA:* Fay Benson, NY-CCE, Franklin Egan, PASA, NY and PA DGA Education Coordinators, and Rob Moore, Master Grazer will provide updates on this program.

3:15 – 4:45 *Milking System Tune-Ups: Increasing Efficiency and Milk Quality* Jessica Scillieri Smith, DVM, Director, Northern NY Lab, Quality Milk Production Services (QMPS), and Rick Watter, Ph.D., Director, Western NY Lab, QMPS.

4:45 – 5:30 Social Hour and Trade Show

5:30 – 7:00 Banquet Dinner and NODPA Annual Meeting

7:00 – 8:30 Keynote Speaker John Kempf's Presentation: *Decision Making Principles of Exceptional Farm Managers*, followed by Q&A session

8:30 Meeting Ends

Friday, September 29, 2016

6:30 – 9:00 am Continental Breakfast and Trade Show

7:00 – 9:00 *Producer-Only Meeting* Facilitated by Henry Perkins, Maine Organic Milk Producers president and past NODPA president, with discussion on pay price, milk supply and much more.

9:00 – 9:45 *Updates on Animal Welfare Rule, Origin of Livestock, Organic Checkoff and Other Issues relevant to the Organic Community* Updates and discussion on these and other regulations and areas concern to the organic community such as increase in imports of corn and dairy product, pay price, NOP's role in enforcing regulations. Panel: TBD

9:45 – 10:15 *Integrating Crops and Livestock to Enhance Organic Farm Stability, Safety and Resilience* Dr. Kris Nichols, Chief Scientist, Rodale Institute, will describe this OREI research project being jointly conducted by The Rodale Institute and University of Iowa

10:15 – 11:00 *Farm Tour Overview: Hamilton Heights Farm and Emerald Valley Farm* Cliff Hawbaker will give an overview of his farms and farming philosophy with Q&A session

11:00 – 2:00 pm Depart for *Hamilton Heights Farm Tour* (just a few minutes away from the church/meeting site): Cliff and Maggie Hawbaker's farm and Lunch and Ice Cream Sundae Bar. (Door Prize Drawing will take place during lunch.)

2:00 (approx.) Meeting Ends after Farm tour and lunch

2:00 - *Emerald Valley Farm: Optional tour* of the second Hawbaker farm (a few minutes north of the main farm) where they are building their cheese plant



FIELD DAYS 2016

This year's Field Days features a tour of Cliff and Maggie Hawbaker's farms in South Central PA.



continued from page 19

If you haven't begun to plan your trip to the 16th Annual NODPA Field Days, taking place in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania on September 29th and 30th, you might want to start soon because with the incredible line up of presenters, workshop topics, and farm tours, it is going to fill up fast. You can complete and submit the registration on page 21, or online at:

www.nodpa.com/fielddays_registration_2016.shtml

If you have questions or are interested in supporting this event or registering for the trade show, please contact Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator, at 413-772-0444 or by email: noraowens@comcast.net.



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RESEARCH & EDUCATION

The Art and Science of Grazing

How Grass Farmers Can Create Sustainable Systems for Healthy Animals and Farm Ecosystems: A Book Review



*Reviewed by Nancy Glazier,
Small Farms Specialist, Live-
stock & Field Crops Team,
Cornell Cooperative Extension,
Penn Yan, NY*

An experienced grazier knows the art and science of grazing go hand in hand. Sarah Flack hits the mark with her new book, *The Art and Science of Grazing, How Grass Farmers Can Create Sustainable Systems for Healthy Animals and Farm Ecosystems*. It is written for all graziers with all skill and experience levels; it is a great resource to get the beginner off on the right start and has valuable information for the experienced grazier.

Though Flack has lived in and traveled to distant parts of the world, she now lives in Vermont. The book is written from the perspective of mesic, or humid climates: think the eastern US. It is scientific, but clearly written for the layperson; written to benefit conventional and organic farms. References are listed in the Notes

section if the reader has interest in delving deeper. Call out boxes highlight additional or critical points. The art portion is covered at the conclusion of chapters with spotlighting successful grazing farms. All is highlighted with great pictures and illustrations, all numbered to be referred to in the text.

This book is a good read all the way through and afterward a resource go-to on the bookshelf. It is broken down into four parts: Laying the Groundwork, Grazing from the Plant's Perspective, Grazing from the Animal's Perspective, and Designing and Managing a Grazing System. Each successive chapter builds off the preceding chapters. The Contents are listed by Part, Chapter and Headings. This helps to quickly find what you are looking for. An Index is included in the back of the book to search for words or short phrases.

What I really like is how Sarah drives home the importance of management, particularly in averting overgrazing. That is the biggest challenge I see as an educator. She stresses paying attention to occupancy and recovery periods, and modifying them as the season advances, and adding acreage as needed during summer slump.

Fertility management is reviewed. Many pastures are brought back into production from idled land. Soil testing is the important first step to know what amendments are needed.

Chapter six is a review of common pasture plants, including some that are sometimes considered weeds. With proper management weeds are fine additions to pastures. Sarah describes annual and


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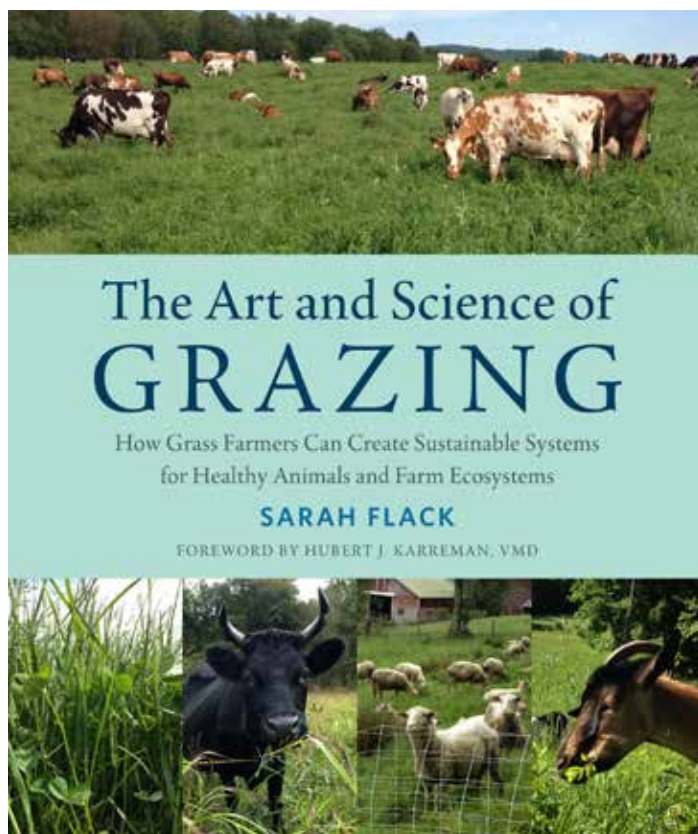
perennial species of cool- and warm-season grasses (including small grains), legumes and forbs. She points out the importance of matching species to one's soils, drainage and climate.

Eat Now, Chew Later. Part three of the book looks at the ruminant digestive system and nutrition from pasture. Pasture quality is a moving target, but Sarah does a great job walking the reader through it. She covers basic nutrition, collecting and understanding a forage analysis. She reviews manure scoring and why it's important with pictures to help with descriptions. She continues with a chapter on grazing behavior that includes a review of toxic or mechanically injuring (thorny) plants, and other potential health concerns associated with grazing.

Part four brings it all together with **Designing and Managing a Grazing System**. Chapter 14 covers design and infrastructure including fence, water, and electric, even some cool labor-saving technology. The next chapter brings goals, plans and management together for a successful system. Worksheets are provided to develop your own plan. Recordkeeping is recommended to keep track of what transpired – rain, temperature, residency, recovery, number of livestock – and plan for future grazing.

Things don't always go smoothly on the farm. Flack has developed troubleshooting tables for livestock, plants, and soil. A glossary is included that helps define and clarify related jargon. Resources are listed for further reading.

Sarah provides the science and reminds us of the art of grazing with her chapter endings. There are no cookie-cutter grazing systems and this book will help you develop and manage yours. So much great stuff in one book! I read it cover to cover. ♦



Nancy Glazier is Small Farms Specialist for the 10-county North West New York Dairy, Livestock & Field Crops Team, Cornell Cooperative Extension. Her office is in Penn Yan, Yates County. She can be reached by email at nig3@cornell.edu.



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EMPLOYMENT

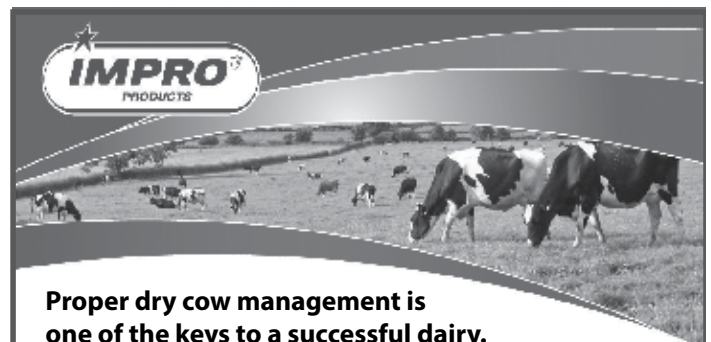
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The assistant herd manager would be expected to milk 6-9 shifts per week, feed out bales and bed down barns through the winter, monitor herd and calf health, set up and move temporary fencing during the grazing season, and assist with construction projects. Those with tractor experience (preferred) may expect to help with mucking out, turning compost, cropping, and haying. Once settled in, the candidate will be expected to anticipate and execute tasks on their own or with the livestock team.

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RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Integrating Crops and Livestock to Enhance Organic Farm Stability, Safety and Resilience: A USDA-OREI Research Project

Rodale Institute, Iowa State University and University of Minnesota have been working together on a USDA-OREI research project that has positive ramifications for organic dairy farmers. Dr. Kris Nichols, chief scientist, Rodale Institute, will be discussing this research at the upcoming 2016 NODPA Field Days in Chambersburg, PA (the full program is on page 20). Join Dr. Nichols' workshop to learn more about this exciting project, and read a brief summary of this project, here:

Project Summary

Farmers are interested in producing organic crops that meet the "triple bottom line" of environmental health, economic viability, and social equity. Currently, organic production in the U.S. is dominated by cash grain crops, with a significant number of organic farmers in the Midwest and Pennsylvania using off-farm purchases to feed their organic animal herds. Production, environmental and economic benefits can be increased by enhancing the multi-functionality of the farm through integration of cash crops with forage crops for grazing and hay crops for livestock feed. Incorporating a legume into grass-based pastures will increase overall forage quality and provide nitrogen to improve pasture health and stability. Building or maintaining soil carbon and nitrogen pools for crop use is an important consideration in the evaluation of sustainable farming systems. Beneficial effects from integrating livestock into crop rotations have been associated with improvements in soil quality, including enhancement of soil organic matter, soil physical condition, and disease suppression. Incorporation of manure and crop residue inputs sequesters carbon in soils, improves soil function and mitigates erosion. A higher forage rather than grain-based diet is also beneficial for animal health and producing milk and meat with higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids, and for economic security by reducing nutrient input and feed costs.

Project Collaborators: Kris Nichols, Rodale Institute, Kathleen Delate, Craig Chase, and Angela Shaw, Iowa State University; Brad Heins and Paulo Pagliari, University of Minnesota

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Updated Comments on the Proposed Rule: Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices

continued from page 15

identification purposes, **except when prohibited by § 205.238(a)(5)(ii). Physical alterations must be performed on livestock at a reasonably young age, with minimal stress and effective pain relief.** We believe the addition of hygiene serves no purpose, creates conflict among regulatory provisions and would create a loophole for justification for physical alterations.

§ 205.238(a)(8) and § 205.238(d) NOP proposed adding new sections to monitor and record lameness and level of parasitic infestation of a herd and we recommend deleting them. Producers are already required to keep these records.

§ 205.238(c)(1) NOP proposed amending § 205.238(c)(1) to enable cows being treated with drugs that have a withholding period under organic regulations may suckle their own calves and their calves would still remain organic. This is not workable on dairy farms where cows generally do not suckle their own offspring. In some production systems, calves are allowed to stay with the milking herd and inevitably suckle from many cows. There is no way to guarantee that the calf will only be fed or suckle just its mother's milk. We recommended the following *(1) Sell, label, or represent as organic any animal or edible product derived from any animal treated with antibiotics, any substance that contains a synthetic substance not allowed under § 205.603, or any substance that contains a nonsynthetic substance prohibited in § 205.604. Milk from animals undergoing treatment with synthetic substances allowed under § 205.603 having withholding time, cannot be sold as organic, fed to their own offspring, or fed to other organic animals. Milk from animals undergoing treatment with prohibited substances cannot be sold as organic or fed to organic livestock.*

§ 205.238(c)(7) and (8) NOP introduced new wording in a new sections to deal with withholding treatment to maintain organic status and some guidance on euthanasia. We recommended combining the two sections to read: *(7) Withhold medical treatment designed to minimize pain and suffering and restore health to injured, diseased, or ill animals in an effort to preserve its organic status. All appropriate medications, approved or unapproved, must*

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be used to restore an animal to health when methods acceptable to organic production fail. **Such treatment may include euthanasia as detailed in the producer's written plan for prompt, humane euthanasia. This plan may include forms of euthanasia as recommended by the American Veterinary Medical Association. Livestock and their products treated with a prohibited substance must be clearly identified and shall not be sold, labeled, or represented as organically produced.** We believe this recommendation reflects current practice and existing regulation.

§ 205.238(e) NOP proposed adding a new section and three subsections addressing euthanasia. Our only recommendation here was to change "for prompt, humane euthanasia for sick or injured livestock" to "for prompt, humane euthanasia for **animals suffering from irreversible disease or injury.**" Current practice of organic dairy farmers is to euthanize animals that demonstrate to be irreversibly ill or irreversibly injured. We propose using the above language as more descriptive and this language is already being used in the National Dairy FARM Program Animal Care Manual.

§ 205.239(a)(3) NOP proposed making this section more complicated and not practical. We recommended that it be kept simple and highlight that bedding that can be eaten is organic. **(3) Appropriate, clean, dry bedding. When roughages are used as bedding, they must be organically produced and handled in accordance with this part by**

certified operations, except as provided in § 205.236(a)(2)(i).

§ 205.239(a)(4)(i) NOP proposed taking the existing simple language ((i) Natural maintenance, comfort behaviors, and opportunity to exercise;) that could cover all species and changing it to language that would never fit dairy cows. We recommended keeping the existing language and coming up with more species specific language for housing. For dairy cows we recommend the following: a new § 205.239(a)(12) to read: *Dairy cattle housing: Bedded packs, compost packs, tie-stalls, free-stalls and stanchion barns are all acceptable as housing systems. These different types of facilities must be managed properly and outcome based standards will be used to monitor the general health, cleanliness, and well-being of livestock. Cattle require a clean dry place to lie down. There must be adequate space for all animals to lie down whether it is a bedded pack area or a stall.*

§ 205.239(a)(7). This section deals with housing of calves and we recommended amendments that reflect current practices around group housing of calves without restricting the producers' ability to maintain the animal's health in many different production systems.

§ 205.239(a)(12) This section again deals with needing soil as part

continued on page 35

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continued from page 1

region in 1809 and put down his roots.

“We moved here when I was three and I’ve been here almost every day since,” Andrew explained of his roots. Gradually, Andrew’s father handed him the reins and along with the independence came some inevitable mistakes. “My dad didn’t really push the cows but milk prices were high in the late nineties and I thought we should try to maximize production,” he said. “We put the grain to them and experimented with BST. It worked for a few years but then milk prices came down, cull rates skyrocketed, and herd health suffered. After all that, I came back to the idea that we were better off not pushing production.”

After seeing the negative results of a high grain ration coupled with the economic yo-yo of conventional milk prices, the farm was philosophically ready to transition to organic production in 2003 as Organic Valley expanded into the region. The farm began shipping organic milk in 2004. Having dropped grain from their ration in 2011 when they shifted to OAD milking, they made an easy transition in May of 2016 and joined OV’s new regional Grassmilk route.

A niche product within the greater organic pool, Organic Valley launched Grassmilk in 2012. CROPP has developed an internal set of standards that Grassmilk producers follow. The standards require that all lactating and dry cows must be in compliance with all requirements at least sixty days prior to and during participation. Feeding standards do not apply to calves and heifers.

Allowable feeds are alfalfa, clover, and other legumes, grass in any stage, forbs in any stage, brassicas (without bulbs) in any stage, small grains before the dough stage, and barley grass sprouts (under specific conditions). Supplements that are allowed are molasses, kelp, salt, vitamins, minerals, and apple cider vinegar. Grassmilk producers are also required to address mineral imbalances in their soil, show continuous improvement in both pasture and forage programs, and to closely monitor the body condition of the milking herd.

Punctuating the changes from conventional to organic, and then organic to grain-free, have been two major infrastructure improvements – in 2005 a heifer hoop barn was added and a swing-8 parlor, in 2007. Principally though, the farm has been an experiment in

Milk cows heading back to barn for milking





Clydesdale team (Dale and Clyde) and Belgian team (June and Joe).

developing a low-input grazing based system that strives to maintain a balance between farm and family. At the heart of this system is the relationship between the cows and calves, the forage and pasture programs, and OAD milking.

A Holstein herd originally, the genetics of the fifty milk cows now include both the Swedish Red (also known as Swedish Red and White) and Montbeliarde breeds. Some Fleckvieh genetics are also present. The Montbeliarde originated in the Haute Saône-Doubs region of France, descendants of the Bernoise cattle that were brought by the Mennonites to France in the 18th Century. Swedish Reds are a breed from Sweden that originated from Milking Shorthorn and Scottish Ayrshire (thecattlesite.com).

Both the Swedish Red and Montbeliarde breeds are “good at converting forage to both meat and milk,” Andrew said. “With OAD I’ve found that their lactation curves are more flat and consistent. They might not peak as high but at late lactation they are still milking.” One of his concerns, however, with the Montbeliarde breed is that the calves tend to be too large.

Both of these breeds possess a strong mothering instinct which is fundamental because the farm’s calf program depends on the use of nurse cows, a practice also known as bonded rearing. “We’ve gone in circles with our nurse cow program,” Andrew acknowledged, but “I’ve finally found something that I like. The first guy I talked to about nurse cows told me that he keeps the calves on for nine or ten

months and I didn’t think that was necessary.”

He attempted to wean at three or four months but said that he had some train wrecks post-weaning. Discouraged, he would go back to bottle feeding for a year and then try the nurse cows again the next. “Finally, I came back to the idea that nine or ten months was the solution,” he said. “The first guy had it right. Nine or ten months sure makes nice calves.”

Andrew’s ideal ratio is two calves to one nurse cow and he usually has about ten nurse cows at a time. Andrew explained one of the biggest issues is finding the right cow that will not lose body condition over the ten-month span of mothering. “Fresh cows put out a lot of milk,” he said, “but after nine or ten months you have a nice heifer but a thin cow.”

Rather than using fresh cows, Andrew typically chooses cows that are open and fresh sixty to ninety days, and also selects cows that don’t produce well on an OAD system. Cows that are mid-way through a lactation are unfavorable because he doesn’t like to switch nurse cows partially through a calf’s suckling period. The greatest disadvantage to the nurse cow program is that the heifers haven’t been handled much. “They’re a bit more skittish and harder to get going through their first few months of lactation,” Andrew noted.

During the grazing season, the nurse cows and calves are rotation-

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FEATURED FARM

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ally grazed off-farm on a thirty-acre parcel, and since he freshens 70% of the herd in the spring, Andrew is able to raise the majority of his cow/calf trios on pasture. Weanlings and young heifers are pastured on an additional thirty-five acres of rented ground with the landowner responsible for rotating and managing the animals. An additional forty acres of hay ground is leased, but Andrew is losing this field next year and will have to increase his dependence on stored winter feed.

Having moved young stock off the farm during grazing season, Andrew is able to devote his time to producing milk within the challenging confines of no-grain, and now since joining a Grassmilk route, no corn silage. With the exception of ten steep acres, all of his ninety-acre home farm is tillable. Fifteen to twenty acres gets rotated with an annual every three to five years. Andrew said, "I used to lean heavily on corn silage, and I am not sure what to expect as we move forward."

Access to rented ground is limited in this part of Ohio which pushes Andrew to maximize production on the home farm. The tillage on

the farm is done using a four horse hitch and a powered forecart. This spring his annual forage program involved twenty acres of grazing corn mixed with soybeans and some forage sorghum which he expects to be able to graze through September with some left over to bale or chop for winter feed. Another eight acres are in sorghum-sudan for grazing in the heat of July and August. The growing season is long enough that he can follow these crops with an early September crop of either oats and turnips or triticale.

"Last fall, I had twenty acres of turnips and oats," he recalled, "that I was able to graze through the first of December. Our pastures got some rest and we had some stockpiled winter grass and were grazing into January. It was a beautiful winter, an exceptional winter."

Paddocks that were planted with annuals are reseeded with a perennial pasture mix of rye grass, festolium, and red clover. According to Andrew, these plantings last roughly three years before the native bluegrass begins to dominate. "It's very persistent," he said of the bluegrass, "and if we don't renovate, we see too much of it. I feel that by renovating our pastures, we get more out of them."

Pasture quality at the farm has been improved by renovation but Andrew also attributes the success of his forage quality to the benefits of his foliar feeding program. "I give the foliars a lot of credit. I can't see



The Farmstead



Prime July Grazing

the difference in the grass; it looks the same and the feed tests about the same but the cows seem more satisfied with higher production and lower somatic cell counts,” he said. His SCC yearly average runs around 200,000, but this spring has been hovering around 100,000.

Some of the products he uses are organic GEM fish fertilizer at a rate of 2 gallons per acre, and Rejuvenate and Spectrum, made by Advancing Eco Agriculture, which are applied at a rate of one gallon per acre. He has also done some experimentation of foliar feeding with an Epsom salts and molasses mixture.

According to Advancing Eco Agriculture’s website, Rejuvenate is an energy-packed food source for soil microbial communities, which contains complex carbohydrates, liquid humates and other powerful compounds that both benefit soil biology and sustain growth over time. Spectrum contains a multiple species blend of plant growth promoting rhizobacteria and other beneficial plant growth promoting microorganisms. This soil inoculant enhances and restores beneficial soil microbe populations to augment the natural organic processes that occur in healthy soils.

Foliars are applied with a boomless sprayer at a rate of twenty-five gallons of water carrying the foliars per acre. Rainwater is preferable because according to Andrew, some water has bio-carbonates in it that tie up and prevent nutrient uptake by plants. Rain is collected into 250 gallon totes and is gravity fed into a four hundred gallon mixing tank where the foliars are added. From there it is gravity fed

into his sprayer. “Mixing foliars can be frustrating,” he said, “but with this system I do it in place and it only takes fifteen minutes.” His goal is three sprayings per year.

OAD milking has given Andrew more time and energy to focus on producing nutrient dense forage which ultimately benefits herd health and milk production. His annual production per cow averages 9,000 pounds with protein at 3.3 and butterfat at 4.0; both components increased slightly with the switch to OAD. It is difficult to say how much milk production has dropped with the switch from twice a day to OAD because the change coincided with an exceptionally dry year and then an exceptionally wet one. Most research on OAD milking indicates that a 25% loss of milk production is to be expected in year one with modest increases in subsequent years as cows that don’t perform well on OAD are culled.

“We went cold turkey the day before Christmas in 2011,” Andrew explained about the transition to OAD. “My wife groans sometimes when I come up with a brainstorm, but this is one that we’d been cultivating together. Our goal is to have a farm that is enjoyable enough that our children will want to farm too. We wanted to simplify so that we had time to do things we never got to do.” Rarely practiced in the United States, OAD milking is fairly common in New Zealand, Ireland, and England.

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FEATURED FARM

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Andrew cautions that in his experience, the switch to OAD caused an increase in SCC for a few weeks. Overall, he reports that he has seen an increase in herd health since the change with less cases of clinical mastitis and improved fertility rates. He noted, however, that if you do have a case of clinical mastitis “you need to jump right on it because it will be 24 hours before you have a chance to milk her out again.” The family appreciates the flexibility of OAD milking. Generally, they milk in the morning but a few times a year they switch to afternoons and accomplish this by gradually adjusting their milking time.

He finished, “Someday this life will be over and it won’t be how much money we made. It will be about our relationship with God and the things we’ve done, the memories we’ve made, and the things that we’ve taught our children. We give all honor and glory to God. We firmly believe that He has given us these resources and we are stewards of the land during our time here. Along with that comes responsibility and we want to use it wisely.” ♦



Son Adam's ducks sitting on eggs in the doghouse

- chemical free -

NZI Biting Fly Trap



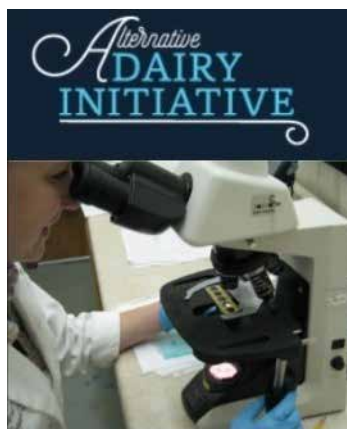
The Nzi Trap attracts biting flies by mimicking the shape of a large animal. Flies visit under the front blue panel expecting to take a blood meal from its “underbelly,” then end up in the mosquito netting. As the fly tries to fly away toward the sunlight it is channeled into a clear plastic bottle where it dies.

- Simple, safe, cloth trap for capturing biting flies
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- 6 ft wide, 4.5 ft tall and 2 ft deep
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NET UPDATE

Recent ODairy Discussions

By Liz Bawden, Organic Dairy Farmer, NODPA President

A producer had just received soil test results, and asked for guidance to use the test results in creating a plan to improve pasture. Several farmers suggested using recommendations from your local extension service or state university for two reasons. The first is that soil and climate conditions vary from state to state, and the calibrated fertilizer recommendations will differ as well. And secondly, well, they are not trying to sell you anything. Another producer recommended Crop Services International (CSI); she was impressed by their services, and felt they understood her needs as a grazer.

Another farmer, relatively new to grazing, began a discussion about the best practices for maintaining forage quality through the season. One key point that came up in that discussion was the timing of manure application. On pasture fields, producers felt it was wise to avoid applying manure in the spring. The manure will cause the forage to have unnaturally high potassium levels and indigestible proteins (the “funny proteins” that Jerry Brunetti talked about). One producer told of a neighbor that lost a number of cows due to nitrate poisoning after heavily spreading a pasture with manure in early spring.

Farmers also discussed rotating the cows faster in the spring, clipping pastures, and the practice of taking a 1st cutting of hay off some pasture fields early in the season. We all want that perfect regrowth, but need to be cautious that there is available soil moisture. If it is dry, and the outlook for rain is not good, then you could hold it for grazing, even if it is over-mature for what you want. It was also suggested to clip pastures with the machine high, to just take off the tops.

A heifer had scratched an eye, and the farmer asked how many drops of calendula tincture to use to make an eye wash for her. A vet replied that 3 to 10 drops per ounce of water is a good rate.

After treatment with Phytomast, Udder Comfort, and Dr. Paul's CEG Tincture, the Strep uberis in this cow's quarter still remained. The farmer decided to dry off the affected quarter, and two weeks later, another quarter came in with the same mastitis. One farmer said she had treatment success with Excell 2000 and SCC cream, both from Synergy Animal Products. Another reported clearing up Strep uberis during the dry period using “a high plane of nutrition” that included free choice minerals, Immunoboost, and MuSe. And this herbal recipe was recommended by a vet: Mix equal parts Dandelion

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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 banner ads 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 banner ads 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.

Discounted rates for commitments of 6 months or more.

Interested in one or both of these opportunities? For more information, contact Nora Owens at:

Email: noraowens@comcast.net

Phone: 413-772-0444

Go to the following web page for more information:

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:

www.nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml

Organic Milk Sought

CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley

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

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

- In New England, contact John Cleary at (612) 803-9087 or john.cleary@organicvalley.coop or Steve Getz at 207-465-6927 or steve.getz@organicvalley.coop.
- In New York, Contact Anne Phillips at (607)-222-3265 or Anne.phillips@organicvalley.coop
- In the Southeast, contact Gerry Cohn at (919) 605-5619 or gerry.cohn@organicvalley.coop.
- Central to Western PA, contact Peter Miller, Division Pool Manager, peter.miller@organicvalley.coop; cell 612-801-3506.
- In Southeast Pennsylvania and Maryland, contact Terry Ingram at (717) 413-3765 or terry.ingram@organicvalley.coop.

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

Upstate Niagara

Upstate Niagara is a member owned dairy cooperative dedicated to high quality dairy products. We are currently seeking new organic member milk. Upstate Niagara offers a highly competitive organic pay program with additional premiums for milk quality and volume. For producers interested in transitioning to organic production, we also have programs to assist you in the transition process.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please contact Mike Davis at 1-800-724-MILK, ext 6441. www.upstateniagara.com

Natural by Nature

Looking for an organic milk market? Natural Dairy Products Corporation (NDP) was founded in 1995 as a family owned and operated organization producing organic dairy products under the Natural By Nature brand name. Natural By Nature

organic dairy products are produced with great care and distributed nationwide.

We are actively seeking organic, grass-based dairy producers in the southeastern PA, northern MD and DE areas. NDP pays all hauling and lab costs, and we are currently offering a signing bonus, so this is the time to call! We'd be happy to answer your questions ... please call 302-455-1261 x221 for more information.

Maple Hill Creamery

Seeking 100% Grass Dairy Farmers! Maple Hill Creamery, located in Stuyvesant, NY is a small manufacturer of 100% grass-fed organic yogurt. We are growing rapidly and are looking for more 100% grass-fed farms in the NY state area to join us.

We offer:

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- No grain, no corn silage
- Just pasture, dry hay and baleage
- Certified Organic

Please CALL US with questions! Phone: 518-758-7777

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

Stonyfield Farm, Inc.

Stonyfield Farm, Inc is looking for producers to support their comprehensive line of organic yogurt and diversified portfolio of organic dairy products. We offer a stable price platform with competitive premiums for components, quality and volume. In addition, we offer a comprehensive technical assistance program designed with producers to help them achieve their unique business goals. We are actively seeking producers looking to grow their business today and for the future.

Please contact our Farmer Relationship Manager, Kyle Thygesen for further details at kthygesen@stonyfield.com or (802) 369-0267.

To be listed, free, in future Organic Milk Sought columns, contact Nora Owens at 413-772--0444, noraowens@comcast.net.

ODAIRY UPDATES

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root, Burdock root, Cleavers, Figwort and Red Clover. Then add 10% Pokeroot. If a dry, ground mixture, give a heaping tablespoon twice a day. If made in a tincture form, give 60 drops twice a day, and see if the SCC goes down in a week.

A farmer was troubled by a first-calf heifer continuously kicking off the milker. Several producers suggested the “Kow Kant Kick” device, or a rope around the middle, just in front of the udder. Both of these approaches put pressure on a nerve that keeps them from kicking. Other techniques were suggested: have a person hold the tail straight up in the air, have a person rub their leg (as a distraction from the milking routine), using a halter to tie their head down to the side, and always give her advance notice that you are there. Generally these techniques are needed only for a few days until the heifer gets used to the new routine. Some producers noticed that their problems are in heifers who resent the milking preparation, not the actual milking itself. And some producers suggested that there is a genetic basis for milking disposition; some breeds and cow families are known for poor behavior at milking time.

Some calves were dotted with a few spots of ringworm, and the farmer asked for suggestions. Several producers recommended feeding kelp; they felt adequate supplementation will reduce ringworm and pinkeye in calves dramatically. Some feed it free choice alone, some mix it 2:1 with Redmond salt. One producer suggested that cows will take more kelp when it is hot; he suggested that it acts as an electrolyte. For treating the calves with ringworm, apple cider vinegar, iodine, tea tree oil, Vitamin A injections, quality dietary protein, and sunlight were recommended. Once infected with ringworm, they are immune for life. A vet suggested that if you have a really severe case of ringworm, you may consider having the animal tested for BVD-PI, as it causes immune suppression.

A farmer shared his success in treating 2 cows with Klebsiella with Yellow Jacket and Excell 7000, both from Synergy Animal Products.

Another farmer noticed his cows munching on knotweed along the laneway to the barn. A vet explained that knotweed is a great medicinal herb for the immune system; a few mouthfuls a day for everyone is a good thing. Another farmer added that knotweed is effective for the treatment of Lyme disease. ♦

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Updated Comments on the Proposed Rule: Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices

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of outdoor access. If NOP wants to continue with this direction we recommend amending the proposal to read: At least 50 percent of outdoor access space must be soil, except for: (i) When conditions threaten the soil or water quality, outdoor access without soil must be provided temporarily. **(ii) Cattle which may obtain outdoor access on improved yards, feeding pads, and feedlots without access to soil in accordance with section 205.239(a)(1).**

§ 205.239(b)(7) NOP amended this section with revised wording to cover a loophole that some have used to deny access to the outside for long periods because of breeding. We recommend more definition that will leave no doubt and no loopholes: (7) **Breeding:** (i) *Animals shall not be confined for more than 24 hours to perform natural or artificial insemination, (ii) Animals may not be confined to observe estrus, (iii) Once bred, ruminants shall not be denied access to pasture during the grazing season; and*

§ 205.242 This section on Transport and Slaughter lacked clarity and definition in many areas. Our recommendations are to use more industry specific terminology, for example using the word “ambulatory” to describe animal that are fit to travel. We also recommended some changes in language to ensure that it is not cost prohibitive to transport organic cattle to auction or slaughter. On slaughter we recommended language that would ensure animal welfare and inspection from qualified personnel from drop-off at the plant to slaughter. ♦



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Organic

Dairy Marketing Services provides access to secure organic milk markets through relationships with major organic milk handlers. We offer a competitive premium package and can assist farms with making their transitions.

Calendar

Tuesday, July 26 at Grindstone Farm in Pulaski, NY
Thursday, July 28 at the Homer C. Thompson Vegetable Research Farm in Freeville, NY

The Cornell Small Farms Program will be hosting two upcoming workshops on the basics of tractor operation, safety, and daily maintenance protocols. These one-day, intensive workshops will be led by Shane J. LeBrake, who provides an unusual and holistic approach to tractor operation, safety and routine maintenance. The class is designed to de-mystify tractors and equipment, empower and inspire, and inform smart "scale-appropriate" equipment choices and purchase decisions. Participation in each workshop is limited to 12 and applications will be accepted until July 18 or until the class fills up. There is no cost for the training and lunch will be provided. Please note: we plan to hold similar training events in Eastern New York in October and Western New York in March of 2017. For more information and to register, go to

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1PsuNtcZsZdXpcgf8NANcZ5h2Oh5AyTA3mpf-P2CeGKg/viewform>

July 28 & 29, 2016, Live Roots 24/7/365: PASA's 2nd Annual Summer Soil Health Conference
Grange Fairgrounds, Centre Hall, PA

Join us for an in-depth exploration of strategies to build perennial agroecosystems through cover crops, forages, and crop diversity. Visit www.pasafarming.org/sumcon or email Kristin Hoy, Kristin@pasafarming.org or call her at 814-349-9856 x11.

August 3rd, 2016, 8:30 am to 4:00 pm
Pasture Walk, Green Heron Growers, 2361 Wait Corners Rd., Sherman, NY 14781

We are pleased to announce a pasture walk on the properties of John Brickers' Organic Grass Dairy and Steve Rockcastle's Green Heron Growers, to see Steve and John's process to building soils and quality forage, which are the basics of grass production for meat and milk. Steve's operation raises 100% grass fed Devon beef and has been using rotational grazing since he began his operation in 2008. With the use of genetics from the Red Devon breed, has been able to build high quality freezer beef operation. John Bricker has been certified organic since 2012 and uses New Zealand Holstein Friesian dairy genetics. This will include lunch, which will feature 100% grass fed beef burgers, Shiitake mushroom tastings and other organic produce from Green Heron Growers. Agri-Dynamics Products, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Lakota Ranch, will sponsor this Pasture walk. Facilitating the Pasture Walk will be Dr. Hue Karreman, DVM author of "The Barn Guide to Treating Dairy Cows Naturally", Jonathan Zieset from Zeiset Ag Consulting and Jeremy Eng from Lakota Ranch, Lacota Red Dev-

WEBINAR

Cover Crop Options for Hot and Humid Areas:
ATTRA Archived Webinar

Hot humid areas need especially large and frequent inputs of organic matter to maintain soil fertility, yet standard cover crop recommendations don't always work in these locations. Drawing on his own organic farming experience in Texas, NCAT Sustainable Agriculture Specialist Justin Duncan recently held a webinar to explain how to choose and use cover crops in hot and humid areas, describing many crop options (including some unfamiliar in the United States) that do well in USDA Hardiness Zones 8,9,10 and beyond. You can find this webinar on YouTube,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ERXyJX0rHI&feature=youtu.be

or on the ATTRA website:

https://attra.ncat.org/video/?utm_source=July+1st+2016+Update&utm_campaign=Enews+Marketing&utm_medium=email

ons. Advanced registration is requested by calling 716-720-3695 or emailing srockcastle@gmail.com or mailing:

Green Heron Growers, 2361 Wait Corners Rd., Sherman, NY, 716-720-3695.

Thursday, August 4th to Saturday, August 6th
Grasstravaganza 2016: Healthy Soils, Healthy Animals, Healthy Farms
Alfred State College, Alfred (Allegany County), NY

This 2.5 day conference will feature presentations by national and local grazing and soil health experts who will cover a range of topics, interactive soil health related activities, and a trade show. The featured speaker this year is Dr. Fred Provenza. For more than 38 years, Dr. Provenza has produced groundbreaking research on livestock grazing behavior. This work has influenced research in areas from nutrition and foraging behavior of wild and domestic animals and humans, to rural sociology and development. Additional speakers include Justin Morris, NRCS Soil Health Specialist, Matt Ehrhart, Director of Watershed Restoration at the Stroud Water Research Center, an independent research institution focused on stream and river ecology, and Dr. Hue Karreman, is a "first generation" organic veterinarian, having begun using alternative treatments in 1988 as a herdsman on a Bio-Dynamic farm. The complete agenda and registration information is now available on-line at: <http://alfredstate.edu/grasstravaganza>. Sponsored by USDA-NRCS, the New York Grazing Coalition, and Alfred State College.

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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.)

_____ \$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 handler/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 form AND YOUR EXEMPT FORM 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. **If you need assistance in applying for the exemption, check here _____.** 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); visit our web page (www.nodpa.com) or benefit from farmer representation with the NOP and processors that NODPA provides, please show your support by making a generous contribution to our efforts.

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

_____ \$40 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. Please make your check payable to: NODPA

Credit card: Master Card Visa Card #: _____

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

Calendar

continued from page 36

August 10, 2016, 9:30am- 12:30pm

Cornell Small Farms Seminar Series at Empire Farm Days, Empire Building

The Cornell Small Farms Program is pleased to announce a free series of short seminars at the 2016 Empire Farm Days. Seminar topics include; Small Farms Program resources, starting a farm, building soil health, agroforestry, mushroom production, and the NY Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program. To attend, stop by the theater area of the Cornell Center in the on Wednesday, . Find more information about Empire Farm Days here:

http://empirefarmdays.com/?utm_source=July%201st%202016%20Update&utm_campaign=Enews%20Marketing&utm_medium=email

August 12-14, 2016

Cultivating the Organic Grassroots Movement: NOFA Summer Conference UMass Amherst, Amherst, MA

Join 1200 people for a three-day celebration of the organic movement. Here, learning is a community action - with amazing farmers, presenters, seminars, workshops, food and fun. Immerse yourself in a community of like-minded practitioners and curious learners eager to share their inspiration and ideas for organic food, farming, health, activism, and beyond. Keynote speakers: Leah Penniman, food justice activist and farmer at Soul Fire Farm and Andre Leu, international organic agronomist and President of IFOAM - Organics International. For more information, go to: www.nofasummerconference.org

August 12-14, 2016, MA NOFA Summer Conference UMass, Amherst

The NOFA Summer Conference is a dynamic and diverse gathering of people working at the intersections of organic agriculture and gardening, food justice, land management, education, carbon sequestration, environment and health. Our three-day conference offers a wide-range of seminars, workshops and other educational opportunities. Immerse yourself in a community of like-minded practitioners and curious learners eager to share inspiration and ideas for organic food, farming, health, activism, and beyond.

Leah Penniman, Friday evening Keynote Speaker, will discuss Ending Racism in Farming and Food: 10 Not-So-Easy Steps. She co-owns Soul Fire Farm in Grafton, NY, is a full time high school science teacher, was a 2015 Fulbright Fellow and co-founded YouthGROW in Worcester, MA. As a farmer, food justice activist and educator, Leah Penniman is working to dismantle the oppressive structures that misguide our food system. She backs that mission with an incredible work ethic, sharp intellect and a deep

passion for racial equality in land ownership and food production.

Andre Leu will give the Saturday evening Keynote Address: Regenerative Organic Agriculture - How We Can Reverse Climate Change. He travels the world advocating organic farming practices, education and crop development, and demonstrating how organic agriculture adapts to and mitigates climate change. In his native Australia, he and his family have regenerated 150 acres of degraded land into a biodiverse ecosystem where rainforest plants and a variety of animals now thrive. Andre is the President of the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM) and spoke at the November 2015 Paris climate talks.

Sunday, 18 September 2016 -1:00pm to 4:00pm

**Pasture Management and Rotational Grazing
Clover Springs Farm, 234 Ragged Hill Rd, West Brookfield, MA**

In this workshop, organic grass-based cattle farmer Matt Koziol will teach us how he manages his pastures through rotational grazing. He'll explain how to know the stocking capacity of your pastures and how to rotate your animals through those pastures. Matt will take us out onto his pastures to discuss the growth cycles of pasture plants and discuss their relationships with cattle nutrition. This workshop will also include a tour of Matt's certified-organic grass-fed beef farm and livestock facilities.

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Join as a **Business Member** and receive an additional 5% off all advertising. To learn more about Business memberships and the Web Business Directory, go to www.nodpa.com/directory.shtml or contact Nora Owens.

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Commit to a full year of print advertising and get 10 percent discount: Full: \$575, Half: \$290, Quarter: \$160, Eighth: \$85.

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For advertising information call Nora Owens:
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Please send a check with your ad (made payable to NODPA).
30 Keets Rd., Deerfield, MA 01342

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

From the MODPA Treasurer

Questions!!!! As I write this, there seems to be an endless list of questions. I wish I had the answer to them. Labeling has been back in the spotlight as I write this. How hard can it be and why should our consumers not know what they are eating? This seems to be a tough deal for the corporate entities in this country. I know it will be hard for me to scan the label with my flip phone. I also know I am not the only one. Some companies have started to label. We can only hope that this continues.

There have been many questions on animal welfare policy lately. The ODPAS have been working to make sure that they at least have some common sense to them. I don't think there are many farmers in the organic dairy sector who do not truly care for their animals. Most realize that these animals pay the bills and will do that better if they are well cared for. More regulation is not the answer. Ensuring that a farmer has the financial means to take care of his animals will do a better job of this than a one size fits all regulation that has very little common sense attached.

There continues to be a push for an organic checkoff. If we cannot state the benefits of organic up front and center why would a farmer want this? Most of us, as producers, already know the benefits. If we can't openly share them with our consumers, through advertising and the press, why would we want to pay for this? As most of you are aware, checkoffs are not new. Many have been around for too many years. They have done nothing to help the average farmer. They are another tax that the farmer has no say in. Don't we have enough of that already? Let your congress people know we don't need this added tax. If you don't know who to get in touch with, contact me. I will get you the info you need.

One question I have been wrestling with is how we are going to keep farmers like myself on the land. I generally don't like to put any personal issues out in this column but I am going to this time. My wife Mari and I had a foreclosure judgement issued against us last month. We were hurt bad by the glut of milk in 2008-2009. The processor we were with was paying conventional price at best at that time. We have never fully recovered. Not for lack of trying but the system that is in place in the financial sector is one that will only look back. It will not look at today or at the future. I even got desperate enough to apply at FSA. My understanding of them was that they are supposed to help people like myself who have had a few issues over the years. What farmer hasn't had some issues? Imagine the thoughts that ran through my mind when the young loan officer told me she didn't feel I was qualified to manage a dairy after 35 years of doing it. I know I have farmed longer than she has been on this planet. Long story short I now have about 11 months to find a way to refinance. In my search to get refinanced I have come to the conclusion that it is time for some true reform in this country and in the financial sector. We must do a better job of educating people as to our needs. When I recently challenged the loan officer on my application she asked me why I should be given a loan. My response was quite simple and direct: I help feed the people on this earth. She still said no but could not argue my point.

Thanks for reading my column. I hope and pray that everybody has a bountiful safe summer.

Remember to take some time and stop and smell the clover.

Bruce Drinkman, MODPA Treasurer
Glenwood City, WI, 715-781-4856

Become a Member of MODPA!

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

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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**

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." To ensure a fair and sustainable farm gate price.

1. Keep family farms viable for future generations.
2. Promote ethical, ecological and humane farming practices.
3. Networking among producers of all organic commodities.
4. Promote public policy, research and education in support of organic ag.

MODPA Board

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Alliance (NODPA)**

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

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Calendar

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**September 23-25, 2016, Common Ground Country Fair
MOFGA's Common Ground Education Center, Unity, ME
Gates open at 9 a.m.**

The Fair is MOFGA's premier event celebrating rural living. Three full days of educational talks and demonstrations, entertainment, delicious Maine-grown organic food and products from local artisans.

**September 29 & 30, 2016, 16th Annual NODPA Field Days
Chambersburg Mennonite Church, 1800 Philadelphia Avenue,
Chambersburg, PA**

SAVE THE DATE for the 16th Annual NODPA Field Days. John Kempf, an internationally recognized lecturer on the topic of biological agriculture and plant immunity who founded Advancing Eco Agriculture (AEA) in 2008, will be the keynote speaker. Although

John has spoken at many national and regional conferences and seminars, including at the United Nations, he remains a part of the Amish community in Northeast Ohio in which he was raised. The farm tour will be at Cliff and Maggie Hawbaker's farms, Hamilton Heights Dairy Farm and Emerald Valley Farm in South Central Pennsylvania's Franklin County. More information on the program will follow in the July NODPA News and online at www.nodpa.com. Trade show and sponsorship information will be in the mail this month. If you have questions, call Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator at 413-772-0444 or email her: noraowens@comcast.net

November 4-6, 2016

**MOFGA Farmer to Farmer Conference
Point Lookout Resort and Conference Center
7 Atlantic Highway (Route One), Northport, Maine**

MOFGA's annual conference for farmers provides a great opportunity to talk about what works and what doesn't while learning new ideas from university faculty, fellow farmers, and others. For more information, visit their website: <http://www.mofga.org/Events/FarmertoFarmerConference/tabid/293/Default.aspx> ♦