

# NODPA News

## Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

January 2021

Volume 21, Issue 1

WWW.NODPA.COM



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*Family Cow Farmstand, owned and operated by Aubrey Schatz and Scott Hoffman*

## FEATURED FARM: FAMILY COW FARMSTAND, HINESBURG, VT

### Just Beginning: An Organic Raw Milk Dairy Journey

By Tamara Scully, NODPA News Contributing Writer

Aubrey Schatz and Scott Hoffman are proud to be small, certified organic dairy producers. Both have backgrounds in small scale vegetable farming, meeting at a diversified farm and eventually embarking on their joint

dairy farming journey. That dairy journey began in southern New York, where they first sold raw milk, from their small herd of three cows. Scott had no prior dairy experience,

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## Origin of Livestock Letter to the USDA Secretary

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

We now have a new administration and it is now the time to educate the new appointees about a ready-made opportunity to improve the future sustainability of organic dairy producers.

The final rule on Origin of Livestock (OOL), which would close loopholes related to the transitioning of conventional dairy cows into organic dairy operations, has been recognized as a critical regulation

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Message from NODPA Co-President

Our farm had a very dry year in which our mostly cool season grasses, and even legumes, struggled to produce. We normally grow 20-40 acres of corn with the intent to harvest it as high-moisture shell corn. It's also nice to have it as back-up forage in years where grass and legumes perform poorly. We've ended up chopping it the last two years.

Now that I have more experience feeding corn silage and seeing the effects on the herd, I'm considering growing some every year for the benefits it provides. The addition of corn silage to the ration has had the unexpected consequence of tightening up the manure consistency, which makes milking and chores much more enjoyable. Instead of splattering all over the barn, the manure forms a tidy pile that is easily cleaned. We add 35 pounds per cow to the total mix ration, which also includes 85 pounds per head of high-quality

haylage. Apparently, the leaves of the corn silage in the rumen slow things down enough to do the trick.

I certainly don't love doing tillage or cultivating corn, so I'm trying to find a different crop that will be less labor-intensive and fit into our cropping program while still being a drought-year insurance plan. I can't seem to find any research that has been done on this kind of thing. One possibility I want to try is a dry stalk BMR sorghum that could be planted after first cutting; have it direct harvested; then follow it with a no-till fall grain like triticale. But I've yet to find anyone who knows if this would indeed give us the desired results.

**Kirk Arnold, NODPA Co-President**  
Truxton, NY | Phone: 607-842-6631

## Board Members &amp; Representatives

## PENNSYLVANIA

**Roman Stoltzfoos, State Rep**  
Spring Wood Organic Farm  
1143 Gap Rd, Kinzers, PA, 17535  
romans@epix.net  
Phone: 610-593-2415

**Dwight Stoltzfoos, Board Secretary**  
Spring Wood Organic Farm  
1143 Gap Road  
Kinzers, PA 17535  
info@springwooddairy.com

## NEW YORK

**Kirk Arnold, NODPA Co-president**  
3175 State Route 13  
Truxton, NY 13158-3107  
kickaha21@gmail.com  
P: 607-842-6631

**Liz Bawden, Co-president, Newsletter Contributor, Associate Editor**  
119 Factory Rd., Hammond, NY 13646  
bawden@cit-tele.com  
Phone: 315-324-6926

**Ryan Murray, Board Member**  
6000 Chenango Solon Pond Rd.  
Truxton NY 13158  
rcmdairy@gmail.com

**Robert Moore, State Rep**  
Moore Farms, 2083 Moore Hill Rd.  
Nichols, NY 13812  
Phone: 607-699-7968  
cowpoke2@verizon.net

**Bill Stine, State Rep**  
45540 Stine Road  
Redwood, NY 13679-3160  
Phone: (315) 482-2017  
tstine2007@yahoo.com

**John Stoltzfus, State Rep**  
1553 Hesselton Gully Rd.  
Whitesville, NY 14897  
jtscribe@yahoo.com  
Phone: 607-356-3272

**George Wright, Treasurer**  
821 Pyrites-Russell Rd., Hermon, NY 14897  
wrightdairy@yahoo.com  
Phone: 315-347-4604

## VERMONT

**Brian Wilson, State Rep**  
Morningside Farm, 101 Hemenway Hill Rd, Shoreham, VT 05770  
Cell phone: 802-377-1786,  
bpwilson@shoreham.net

**Jeep Madison, State Rep**  
2806 Smith Street, Shoreham, VT 05770  
Cell: 802-349-6262  
jojoselixir@yahoo.com

**Bonnie and Tom Boutin, State Rep**  
1184 Cross Road, Newport Ctr, VT 05857  
Phone: 802-334-2081  
bonnieboutin@yahoo.com

## CONNECTICUT

**Rick Segalla, Board Member**  
96 Allyndale Rd., Canaan, CT 06018  
mocow@earthlink.net  
Phone: 860-824-0241

## MASSACHUSETTS

**Morvan Allen, Board Member**  
Maple Shade Farm Inc.  
229 Hewins St, Sheffield, MA 01257  
morvenallen@live.com  
Phone: 413-229-6018

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

**Cindy-Lou Amey, State Rep**  
Indian Stream Farm  
81 Tabor Road, Pittsburg, NH 03592  
Phone: (603) 538-7734  
cindyloamey@gmail.com

## MAINE

**Steven Russell, Board Member**  
RR2 Box 5660, Winslow, ME 04901  
jwinrussel@roadrunner.com  
Phone: 207-872-6533

**Steve Morrison, Board Member**  
**Policy Committee Chair**  
159 Atkinson Rd, Charleston, ME 04422  
smccrest@gmail.com  
Phone: 207-285-7085 Fax: 207-285-0128

**Aaron Bell, State Rep**  
Tide Mill Organic Farm  
91 Tide Mill Road, Edmunds, Maine 04628  
Phone: 207-733-2551  
eatlocal@tidemillorganicfarm.com  
www.tidemillorganicfarm.com

## AT LARGE NODPA BOARD MEMBERS

**Ed Zimba, MODPA Board Member**  
Zimba Dairy, 7995 Mushroom Rd  
DeFord, MI 48729  
zimbadairy@tband.net  
Phone & Fax: 989-872-2680

**Darlene Coehoorn, MODPA President, Newsletter Contributor**  
Viewpoint Acres Farm  
N5878 Hwy C, Rosendale, WI 54874  
ddviewpoint@yahoo.com  
Phone: 920-921-5541

**Bruce Drinkman, MODPA Treasurer**  
N14264 490th Street  
Ridgeland, WI 54763  
bdrinkman@hotmail.com  
Phone: 715-265-4631  
**Sean Mallett, WODPA President**  
seanmallett@msn.com

**Henry Perkins, Past President,**  
Box 156 Bog Rd., Albion, ME 04910  
Phone: 207-437-9279  
henryperkins51@gmail.com

**NODPA Policy Committee**  
**Chair Kathie Arnold**  
3175 NYS Rt. 13, Truxton, NY 13158  
kathiearnold@gmail.com  
Phone: 607-842-6631  
Fax: 607-842-6557

**Cecelia Murray, Policy Committee**  
Bundy Creek Farm LLC  
5229 Cheningo Road  
Truxton, NY 13158-3118  
cecelmurr@aol.com

## NODPA STAFF

**Ed Maltby, Executive Director**  
30 Keets Rd, Deerfield, MA 01342  
ednodpa@comcast.net  
Phone: 413-772-0444 Fax: 866-554-9483

**Nora Owens, Editor & Event Coordinator/Webmaster**  
30 Keets Rd., Deerfield, MA 01342  
noraowens@comcast.net  
Phone: 413-772-0444  
Fax: 866-554-9483

**Newsletter Layout**  
Angie Holcomb  
Hayward, WI 54843

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

**From the NODPA Desk:***By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director*

The last issue of NODPA News fell victim to the ‘quirkiness’ of the US Mail, especially around the holiday season, and took longer to reach all of you. We use the cheaper non-profit rate so I assume the NODPA News fell to the bottom of the pile, literally. Hopefully this issue will move more quickly through the system, especially for those of you that don’t have the ability to view this material electronically. Many thanks to those of you that responded to our request for an annual contribution to support the work of NODPA. In these difficult times it is wonderful that so many of you took the time to respond to the letter we sent out. We run a very efficient and slim organization and you can be sure that all the money is put to good use. For those of you that have not had the time to respond yet, we are always open for contributions of any size at any time of the year. Please also support our sponsors and advertisers whose financial contributions help us to keep communicating and getting the messages out for organic dairy producers.

With the New Year we have a new administration, and USDA headed by some familiar faces. Tom Vilsack who served as the 30th United States Secretary of Agriculture from 2009 until 2017, returns to head up the USDA under President Biden. Vilsack became the safe, comfortable choice for Biden after competition for the USDA job set off a battle between two wings of the Democratic Party. Traditional farm lobby groups had rallied behind former Sen. Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, while reformers, who want the USDA to spend its money fighting hunger and climate change, pushed for Rep. Marcia Fudge from Cleveland. My personal choice would have been Kathleen Merrigan who did such great work as Deputy Secretary, shepherding the Pasture Rule through to completion among a great many other achievements. She, like me, also likes Joe’s Pizza and Spaghetti House in Northampton MA. We will, as my friend Shirley Sherrod, who was forced to resign as Georgia state director of Rural Development for the USDA, said in a recent MSNBC interview, “Give him (Vilsack) a chance.” He does understand Dairy as a commodity; however, we will need to continue educating him and the Under Secretaries about protecting the integrity of organic dairy. We have a newly appointed Deputy Under Secretary of Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Mae Wu. Wu previously served as a senior director at the Natural Resources Defense Council, helping to lead the organization’s health and food work.

The Origin of Livestock letter that was sent to the USDA on January 28 accrued support from 118 organizations and 249 farmers across the country. Thank you to all those organizations and farms that signed on in support. It is only with grassroots

action, backed by the Organic Farmers Association and the National Organic Coalition that we can make our voices heard in Congress and the Administration. There will be no immediate action on the Origin of Livestock, or anything else, because the new administration has set a moratorium on all regulatory action. The regulatory freeze, announced by White House chief of staff Ron Klain, halts work by federal agencies on new rules and suggests a 60-day postponement in implementing rules that have not yet taken effect.

Interestingly, with the wave of Executive Orders there was one that addressed Modernizing Regulatory Review which is an integral part of the regulatory process. The Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has been charged by presidents of both parties with reviewing significant executive branch regulatory actions. Usually, it’s process is slow and sometimes the results are disconnected from the reality of the real world and subject to undue partisan interpretations of regulations. In calling for recommendations to improve and modernize the process, the Executive Order asks for suggestions that “promote public health and safety, economic growth, social welfare, racial justice, environmental stewardship, human dignity, equity, and the interests of future generations.” Hopefully, these instructions will help with the backlog of regulations that need to be published to address issues important to organic farmers and organic integrity.

The President’s Executive Order for tackling the climate made it plain that the “climate crisis” will be at the center of the administration’s national security and foreign policy plans. Similarly, the USDA has been tasked to recommend a climate strategy for agriculture and forestry within 150 days, beginning with 60 days of consultation with landowners, farmers, conservation groups, and other interested parties on how to encourage voluntary adoption of ‘climate-smart practices.’ On January 6, 2021, Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-Michigan)—the incoming chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee—announced that she would make the establishment of a federal agricultural carbon market a “top priority.” Will carbon stored in soil become its own commodity crop, and how will that affect organic dairy producers? Should measuring carbon, data collection and profiting be left to the marketplace, and inevitable consolidation, or is there a significant role for the Federal government to play in incentivizing different practices and expanding its conservation payments to include ‘climate smart practices’? Organic production is one of those practices, perhaps the most significant. As the organic marketplace quickly reduces any opportunity to get paid for the costs of producing organic milk, perhaps the financial recognition of the importance of scale appropriate organic production for the environment, for the climate crises and for the economy of rural communities can provide income to producers as part of true cost accounting. Plenty of opportunity for 2021. ♦

## ORGANIC PRODUCTION

## Improving Winter Livestock Management

By Karl H. Kazaks

*This article first appeared in the January 11, 2021 edition of Country Folks and is reprinted with permission from the author and the editor.*

**A**s winter settles in, reviewing your winter livestock management strategy can help you improve the productivity and profitability of your operation. Recently, NRCS hosted a webinar with three of its agronomy and grazing experts to discuss approaches to handling livestock during what can be a challenging time of the year.

“Making hay and feeding hay is the most expensive part of the cow business as far as I am concerned,” said NRCS’s Indiana State Agronomist/Grazing Specialist Victor Shelton.

Yet feeding stored forages is the most common method to maintain livestock over the winter, particularly in more northern locations, said Adam Jones, NRCS Kentucky State Grazing Specialist.

We also know that, as Steve Woodruff, agronomist at NRCS’s East National Technology Support Center in Greensboro, NC, said, “winter feeding is tough.” So what do you do? “Winter happens,” Shelton said. You can’t avoid it and you want to make sure when it’s here you have enough feed or forage or a combination of both to keep your livestock going until spring.

One of the ways to reduce winter feeding issues is to reduce the amount of feeding and to utilize grazing instead. “It’s almost always cheaper to graze something than to feed something,” Shelton said. “I tell people all the time, ‘If the wheel is turning, you’re spending money.’” By reducing the amount of time you feed in the winter, not only can you save money, but you can also reduce the



amount of resource concerns which arise when you feed animals in one concentrated spot.

One answer, Woodruff pointed out, is to increase your resource base by adding additional land. Even the addition of just a few acres of land can improve your operation. Another option, Shelton said, is to increase forage efficiency – get more productivity out of the land you do have. One way to do that is to stockpile forage. Another way is to graze cropland residue.

Avoid overgrazing. The general rule of thumb is to not graze lower than four inches for warm season grasses, or six to 12 inches for warm season grasses, depending on the species. That measuring stick of four inches, Shelton said, is for the lowest point in the sward, not the highest.

What’s more, Shelton advised giving your pastures time to recover post-grazing prior to going dormant. This allows the roots of the forages to regrow and the plants to be in a better state for winter and spring.

*continued on page 6*

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— Myron Martin



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## Improving Winter Livestock Management

*continued from page 4*

That could mean feeding hay earlier than you typically do. Feeding hay in the summer may actually allow you to feed less hay overall year-round. By allowing pastures to rest in

the peak of summer when it's really hot and dry, you may boost autumn production enough to provide more grazing throughout autumn and winter months, Shelton said.

Evaluating environmental and soil conditions is important

when grazing and feeding in the winter months. Snow shouldn't be a problem when grazing fields when the depth of the snow is less than the level of the grazing animal's eye, Shelton said. "Ideally, you want dry or frozen conditions to graze," he said, "but you don't always get that."

Grazing or feeding during wet conditions can lead to soil disturbances which the following year can lead to weedy pastures. Be aware of compaction when allowing livestock to graze cropland residue, and thus don't feed them supplements on cropland, which would encourage them to linger. Instead, provide that feed either in a pasture area or a dedicated feeding area.

If you have stored standing forage, consider using temporary fences, Shelton advised. Not only will it help maximize efficiency of feeding, but it will also promote better distribution of manure and urine.

When using temporary fencing, Shelton has noticed that when conditions are wet, blocks can be more effective than long, narrow strips. The strips tend to promote animal travel along the fence line, which leads to more disturbance and possibly erosion.

When you evaluate your winter feeding program, Woodruff advised, keep in mind what your goals and your resource concerns are. What may work for someone on the other side of the county may not work for you. At the same time, the same sort of concerns crop up



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whether you are feeding or grazing on pasture or utilizing a dedicated site – animal health, soil compaction and erosion, water quality and more.

In the East, a lot of winter feeding takes place where the ground is level, to make travel with tractors easier and to reduce the chance of tearing up sloped ground. But repeated feeding at the same location means nutrient deposition is concentrated in one area when nutrients should be back on pastures. Plus, if your feeding area is in a level area near a waterway, you may be dealing with potential water quality issues.

One solution Woodruff suggested is to rotate your winter feeding area, using temporary fencing, as Shelton described, with stockpiled grazing. Make sure to avoid environmentally sensitive areas when practicing this option, Woodruff stressed. Another option is to dedicate one area to winter feeding – in the right place, where resource concerns are minimized. (For help planning, see your local NRCS agent.) The result of feeding in one dedicated area may make a modest impact in that area which is more than offset by the gains experienced on the other areas of your farm which are untouched during winter months.

NRCS has programs to assist with winter feeding, Jones said, including grants to build animal walkways, access roads, bedded pack barns and more.

Bale grazing is also a strategy some producers use. In this strategy, the operator will put out bales of hay in autumn when the ground can still readily support tractor travel. Come winter feeding time, the bales are restricted from livestock with temporary fencing. By moving the fencing – just as with stockpiled grazing – the producer can promote maximal feed efficiency and the

efficient distribution of manure and urine through the pastures.

Overall, there are a lot of sophisticated approaches to customizing a winter livestock management system in your operation. Consult with your local NRCS agent while winter is still with us. Before you know it, it will be time to reseed and keep up with the many demands of spring. ♦



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## Combating Invasive Weeds in Organic Dairy Pastures

*By Tamara Scully, NODPA Contributing Writer*



Cows can eat their fair share of weeds to gain micro-nutrients

**G**razing certified organic pastures means forgoing tools - those chemical controls - which are often the first choice when dealing with plants which are growing where you don't want them to be. Otherwise known as weeds, unwanted plants in a pasture can also be controlled through a combination of grazing management, maintaining optimal soil fertility, pasture seeding, and observing best practices for avoiding the introduction of weed seeds into fields. Organic graziers can successfully combat weeds, naturally.

According to John Duynisveld, of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, who spoke during a webinar for the Beef Cattle Research Council (BCRC), a weed may be palatable to livestock or it may be toxic. A weed may be a sign of grazing mismanagement or of depleted or compacted soils. A weed may be invasive, with the potential to rapidly dominate a pasture if

not controlled early, or it may crowd out more palatable forage in the stand, more gradually over time.

But weeds aren't all bad. They do have some redeeming features which smart graziers can use to their advantage. Weeds can provide an indication of what might be lacking in your pasture fertility, and they can often be successfully utilized as forage.

"A weed is a misunderstood forage, a repairer of soil health, an indicator plant of soil fertility," said Troy Bishopp, aka The Grass Whisperer. Bishopp is not only a grazer himself, but also a conservation professional with the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District and Upper Susquehanna Coalition in New York State."

Weeds can and do provide a small amount of micronutrients to cows, and are generally best tolerated when they are in a vegetative state, Bishopp said. And cows can be trained to eat

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weeds, which can then decrease the weed's ability to overtake a pasture. Managing weeds in this manner provides nutritious forages, reduces weed pressure, can avoid the use of costly inputs or chemicals, and can be an economical way of managing weeds in pastures.

Multi-species grazing is another way to manage weeds. If the cows won't eat it, other livestock likely will. Sheep, goats and poultry all forage differently than do cows. Not only do they selectively eat different plants, with sheep in particular able to consume plants which are toxic to cows - such as tansy ragwort, but they actually bite into plants differently, too, and may eat different parts.

Sheep enjoy broadleaf plants, and can eliminate dandelions from a field by grazing in spring and fall. They will graze dandelions to the ground, leaving lush pasture forages behind. Broadcasting legume seeds will fill in the bare soil spots from the dandelions, and should out-compete any weeds the next spring, Duynisveld said.



Pruning or clipping pastures is one way of keeping weeds at bay

Bishopp, too, promotes multi-species grazing as a means of utilizing all of the forages present in the pasture, and capturing their value.

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## Combating Invasive Weeds in Organic Dairy Pastures

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“One might benefit from having a multi-species approach where different animals eat these said plants, formerly known as weeds,” he said.

### Eliminating Weeds

“Good grazing management is the best starting point to manage invasive weeds,” Duynisveld said.

Selectively using your cows’ actions to drastically reduce a weed’s ability to spread can be effective even on notorious weeds such as Canada thistle, but will take three to four years. Using animals to trample the weeds, via high stocking density grazing with upwards of 700,000 pounds of animal weight per acre, and multiple movements per day, can eliminate persistent weeds if the pasture is grazed tall, and plenty of residual is left. The cows do not have to consume the weeds in order to eliminate them. They may simply bite them and spit them out.

“The quicker you can get them on and off... one day or less...the more rapidly you’re going to get the effect you’re looking for,” Duynisveld said of this approach.

In areas under and around fencing, weeds will remain, but they will be eliminated in grazed areas that received intense grazing

and hoof pressure. This technique is best done in seasons where the desired forages are strong, and can grow back and recover rapidly, so few bare spots are left for weed regeneration, and it will not work in wet conditions. Any bare patches of soil left should be monitored, to insure that desired forages are filling in the spaces, and not more weeds.

“Some form of strategic clipping, trampling or animal munching when the weeds are at their most vulnerable,” can combat weed proliferation, Bishopp said. “I have used portable animal attractants - minerals & watering points - to mitigate spot weed problems.”

While allowing cows or other livestock to graze and trample weeds can be beneficial, other non-chemical methods for eliminating problem weeds do exist.

Mechanically clipping weeds - if the problem is not yet too extensive - is another way to combat them. Clipping before seeds are set decreases their spread, and repeated cutting will weaken the plants, Duynisveld said.

“Generally, diminishing a weed issue can be done with an intense mob or trampling grazing event, a strategic pasture clipping regime, or if bare ground is noted, a timely inter-seeded planting of an annual and perennial combination,” Bishopp said. “No-till a cocktail mix in to increase biology and competition and cover up bare ground. Full-tillage would be the choice of last resort! A combination of all approaches should be investigated before any action is taken. Does a field need more nutrition? Does it need better grazing management? Does it need a timely mechanical response?”

Using annual forages to smother out patches of weeds can be effective. Interseeding annuals, allowing them to take hold, and then intensively grazing them infrequently can almost eliminate even tough weeds like Canada thistle, according to Duynisveld. The next season, the annuals will have died

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out after smothering the weeds, allowing pasture legumes a competitive edge.

### Preventing Weeds

But before deciding how to control weeds, it's best to discover why the weed issue exists in the first place.

"Mitigating is investigating the root causes of this proliferation. For me, taking on these weed issues comes down to a field-by-field assessment," Bishopp said, adding that root causes of weed proliferation stems from overgrazing, poor soil fertility and bare ground.

Overgrazed pastures allow sunlight to reach bare soil, providing dormant weed seeds the opportunity to germinate. Wet, muddy soil is easily compacted by animals or equipment, and allows a "chance for seeds that you don't want to come in and start to take hold," Duynisveld emphasized.

Proper grazing management involves grazing periods which leave plant residual heights high, which helps to avoid the problems caused by bare ground or stressed plants. When

grazed low, roots become weakened, and the plants' ability to photosynthesis is diminished. Moving into the winter, strong roots are needed to insure a strong stand next season. If weakened plants aren't able to regenerate quickly in the spring, weeds can take hold.

Planning enough recovery time between grazings, especially during dry or excessively wet periods, is needed to keep forages lush, Bishopp said. Carefully examining your stockpiling and overwintering protocols is warranted, too. He encouraged farmers to have a resiliency plan in place for sacrifice paddocks and heavy use areas.

"The biggest no-no is creating bare ground through some sort of overgrazing or weather event," he said.

Soil fertility issues also encourage weed growth. When soil pH is outside of a 6.0 - 6.5 range, the competitive ability of desired forages declines, allowing weeds to thrive. Soil nutrient availability is affected by pH, and many weeds are adapted to thrive in low fertility soils. Dandelions, for example, thrive in

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

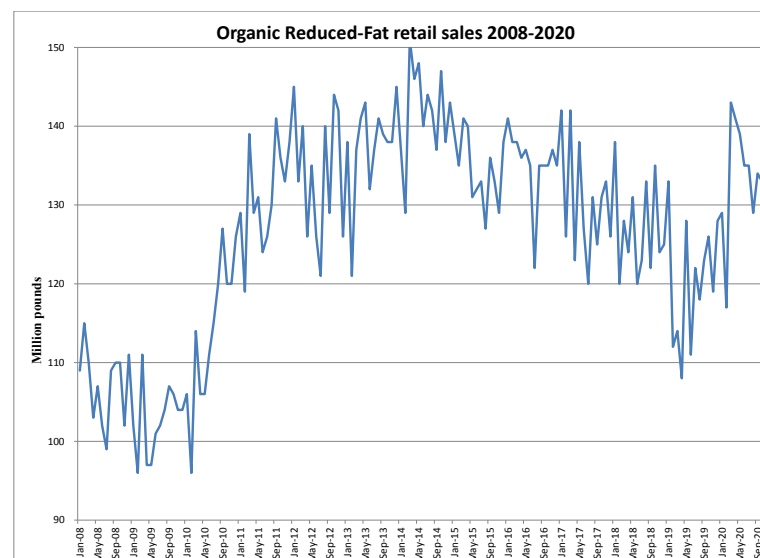
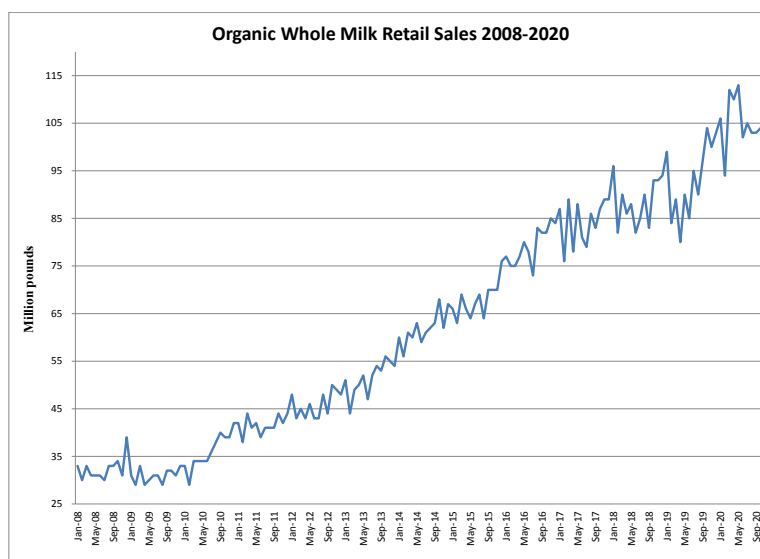
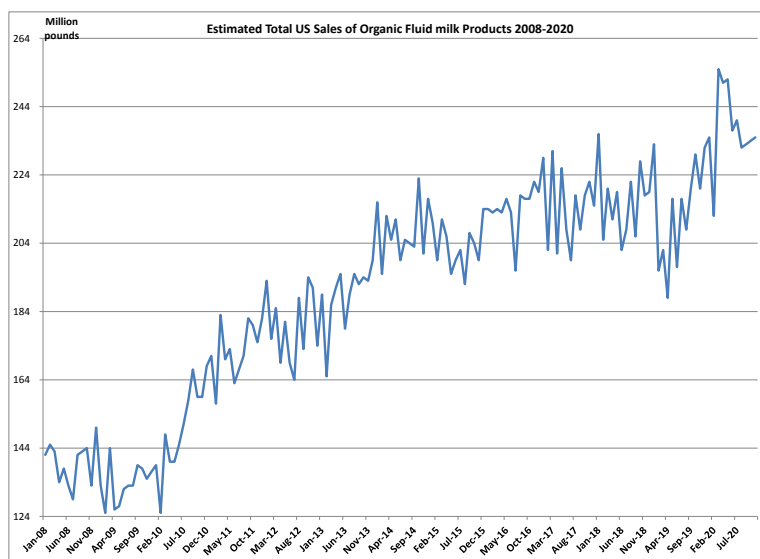
### Pay And Feed Prices January/February 2021

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

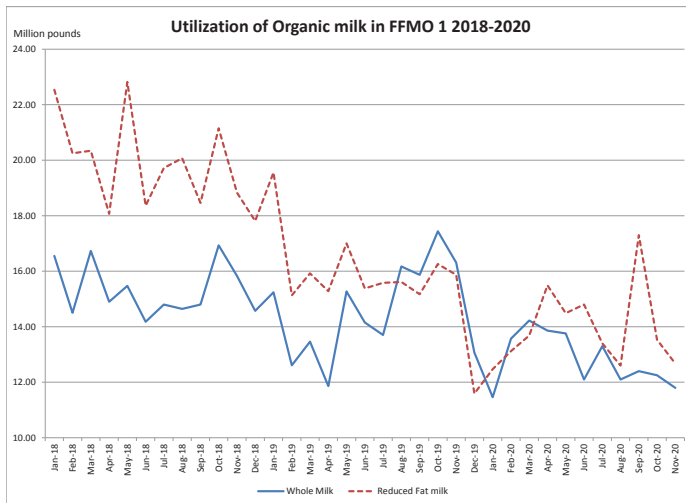
The growth in sales of organic dairy product continues to increase at a steady rate and retail prices remain stable. The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) reports that estimated US sales of total organic milk products for November 2020 were 235 million pounds, up 6.1 percent from November 2019, and up 10.6 percent year-to-date. Organic whole milk sales for November 2020, 104 million pounds, were up 2.3 percent compared to a year earlier, and up 11.5 percent compared with year-to-date 2019. Reduced fat milk (2%) sales were 82 million pounds, up 14.0 percent from the previous year, and up 15.3 percent year-to-date.

The year to date figure is distorted by the peak in COVID-19 sales in March, April and May. USDA reports that “one of the largest U.S. organic cooperatives” announced that organic milk demand is increasing across the country. They reported that recent data that they had collected showed that organic milk demand grew 11.3 percent in the last year and 8.4 percent the past 6 months. This cooperative referred to organic milk demand in general terms with no reference to actual sales either in manufacturing or retail.

Interestingly, utilization of Class 1 organic milk has fallen year-over-year in one of the biggest markets, the Federal Milk Marketing Order 1 (FMMO 1), the Northeast. The reduction in utilization by as much as 14% between 2018 and 2019 was followed by a further drop in utilization of organic milk. There was no increase in utilization during the peak COVID 19 shutdown. Utilization of Class 1 organic milk in December 2020 increased by 12% over December 2019 with the highest increase in Reduced Fat milk, 14.65 million pounds in December 2020 compared to 11.59 million pounds in 2019.



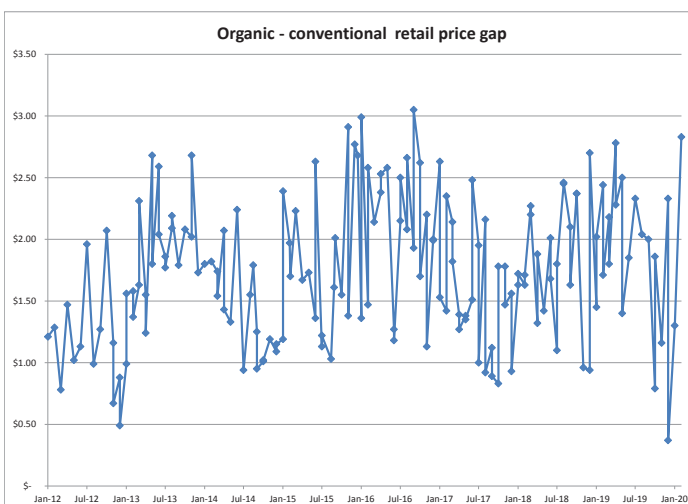
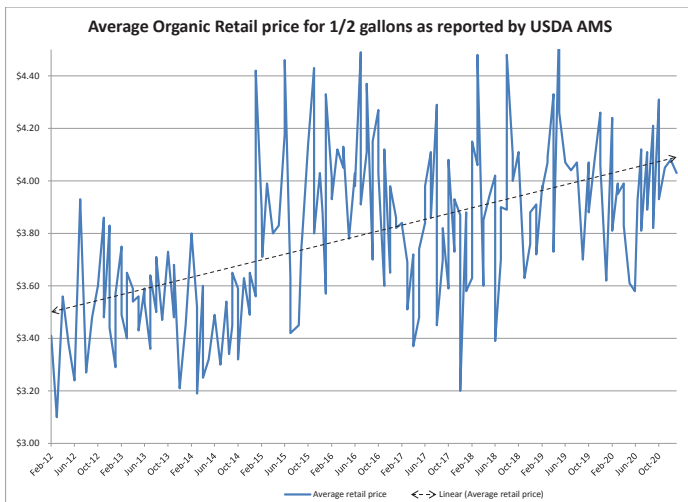
## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS



### Utilization of organic Class 1 milk in FFM0 1

Year	Million pound of organic milk	Year by year change
2018	422.32	
2019	363.50	-14%
2020	322.50	-11%

There has been no movement in pay price that has been reported. At this time of year, CROPP Cooperative Board meets to set the pay price for the year ahead. At the time of going to press, we have heard nothing of any increase or changes from the 2020 pay price. The published farmgate pay price for CROPP Cooperative, as a national year round average for 2020, was \$31.55 per hundred pounds. There was a low of \$27.13 in March, April, May, June and July, and a high of \$32.42 in January, February, March, and December. The farmgate pay price is the price received by farmers minus the selling costs (transport costs, marketing costs). In 2009 the average pay price was \$27.13 and in 2012 it was \$31.70. The average retail price for organic half gallons as recorded by USDA AMS has changed very little since 2008 when they started to collect the retail prices across the country. There will be highs and lows by location, and store brand milk is usually up to \$1 less expensive per half gallon, but the average retail price has always been between \$3.70 and \$4.00 per half gallon. Store brand and private label organic milk is now the biggest seller at retail, ahead of Horizon, the previous highest seller.



Organic corn prices have yet to react to the large upswing in conventional prices and with plenty of organic corn around, the upside might be limited in the short-term. Over the next season, prices might experience an upside, as the drought in Argentina and the rise in conventional prices could make achieving similar import levels year-over-year challenging. The volume of organic corn imported from South America could be down 25-30% year-over-year. There are several different prices the Jacobsen Report has seen recently in the Midwest area. With transportation, the prices seem to converge. Organic corn in Illinois is bid at \$7.25 delivered. Prices are a little lower in the Wisconsin area, but some trades have traded in the middle \$6 range for

*continued on page 14*

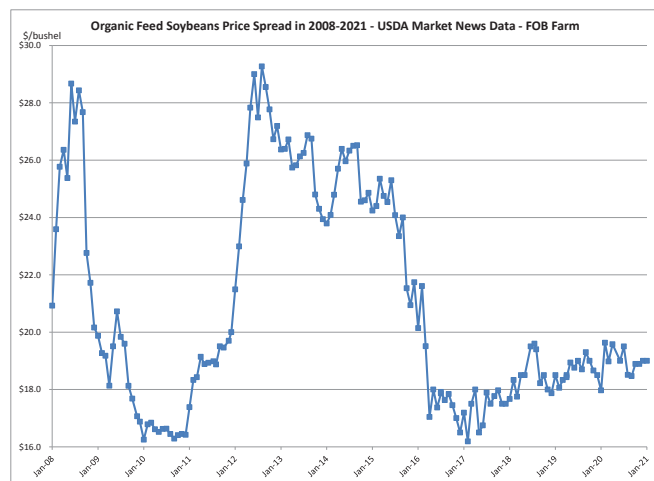
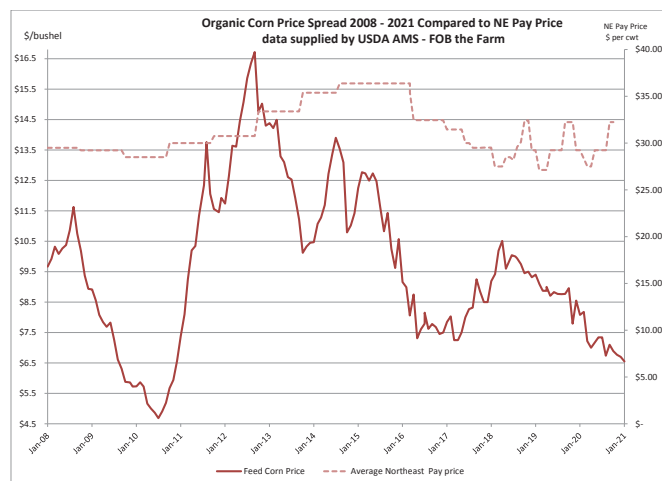
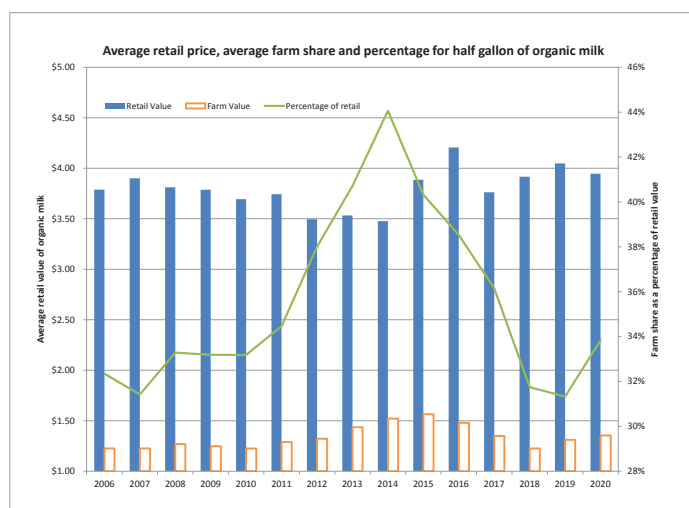
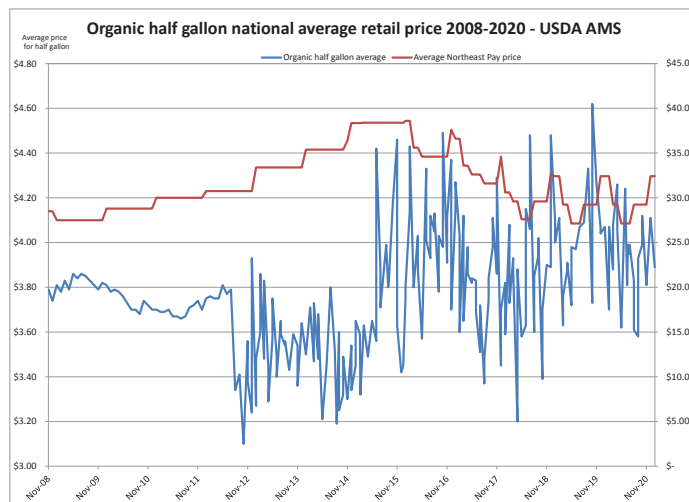
## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

### Pay And Feed Prices

*continued from page 13*

small quantities. The Jacobsen reports that organic soybean meal prices are moving higher. At Baltimore, imported organic soybean meal customs cleared and trans-loaded is currently near \$820/\$825 per short ton for the balance of the first quarter 2021. This puts Pennsylvania prices close to \$850 per short ton for imports and close to the same level for domestically crushed organic soybeans. The price for imports of organic soybean meal in the Midwest would be near \$900 per short ton, which is well above prices offered for domestically crushed soybeans in the Midwest. The lack of imports going from the East coast to the Midwest will eventually put upward pressure on organic soybean meal prices in the mid-west. Organic corn prices remain stable in the Midwest, hovering just above the \$7 level. Prices in Illinois are priced as high as \$7.35 and closer to the \$7.1 level in the Western Iowa region. Organic corn prices in the Pennsylvania region are trading near the \$9.50 level, bid near \$9.25, and offered at \$9.75. With rail costs from the Midwest to the East coast near \$2.25 per bushel, this level appears to be in line with value.

The Jacobsen reports that organic corn imports remain in an upwards trend. According to official customs data, organic corn imports eased in November 2020, declining 41% year over year compared to the same period in 2019. The rise in organic corn imports was in line with The Jacobsen's expectations. For the 12 months ending November of 2020, organic corn imports rose 8% year-over-year, hitting 206K metric tons. ♦

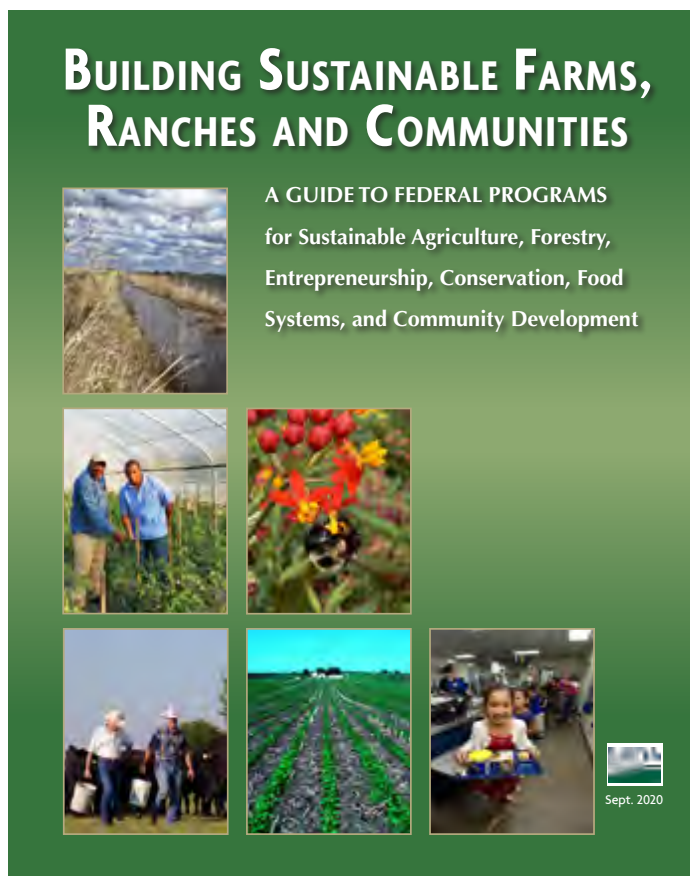


## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Updated Guide to USDA Programs Opens Door to Millions of Dollars of Available Funding

*Building Sustainable Farms, Ranches and Communities:*

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“Farmers are hungry for resources to help them get started or answer specific questions. *Building Sustainable Farms, Ranches and Communities* provides a comprehensive, one-stop-shop to many helpful programs,”

– Kerri Ebert, coordinator of the Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops

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It can be difficult for farmers and ranchers to navigate the wide range of USDA resources and stay up to date with program changes after each Farm Bill. Thanks to the newly updated *Building Sustainable Farms, Ranches and Communities*, producers, researchers, nonprofits and landowners can easily find USDA programs that can help them achieve their goals.

The 101-page guide covers 62 government programs and has been updated to include program updates from the 2018 Farm Bill. Each program listing provides a description of the program’s available resources, information on how to apply, and in some cases, examples of how the funding has been used. The guide also includes basic information on how to design

sound projects, find appropriate programs and write grant applications.

*Building Sustainable Farms, Ranches and Communities* is now available as a free download. Free print copies are also available from the National Center for Appropriate Technology’s ATTRA program. To order, email [pubs@ncat.org](mailto:pubs@ncat.org) with your request. Don’t forget to include your shipping address. Building Sustainable Farms, Ranches, and Communities was produced through the collaboration of SARE, the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (MFAI), the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). Funding was provided by SARE, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the McKnight Foundation. ♦

## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Proven Programs, Not False Hopes — Engaging Farmers in Climate Solutions

By Jeanne Merrill and Chris Schreiner, Opinion Contributors

*This article first appeared in the online publication THE HILL on January 4, 2021 and is reprinted with permission from the authors and THE HILL-- The views expressed by contributors are their own and not the view of THE HILL*

Farmers should be rewarded for their efforts to become climate stewards. From building healthy soil to on-farm renewable energy to organic production and more, there are diverse agricultural solutions to the climate crisis. Our food security depends upon this fundamental transition in how farmers manage the land.

Many in the climate policy space point to carbon markets as the solution to provide the necessary financial resources for farmers to make a significant transition to climate beneficial farming. But despite nearly 15 years of both private and regulatory carbon market attempts in the United

States, they have never delivered the resources needed to support farmers.

The country's first carbon market, the Chicago Climate Exchange, attracted a record number of farmers who signed up over 3 million acres, primarily in the upper Midwest. The market collapsed in 2010 because of market volatility and more offset credits than buyers. This left farmers, who had taken on additional risk and cost implementing new practices, in the cold.

Eight years ago, California created the country's most comprehensive compliance carbon market. However, only the largest dairy operations in the country receive carbon credits by building costly methane digesters. High transaction costs combined with low carbon prices and a limited number of eligible project types make it nearly impossible for most farmers to participate in the California market.

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Now, a private, voluntary carbon market created by Indigo Ag claims that it will offer farmers \$15 per metric ton of carbon sequestered. But a review done by CalCAN found that paying \$15 per metric ton fell far below the cost of new farm practices, whether cover crops, compost or other soil management practices to increase carbon sequestration.

Despite a losing track record of carbon markets, some legislators have joined with agricultural trade groups and Big Green organizations to promote carbon markets as the way to deliver agricultural solutions to our climate crisis.

In 2020, House and Senate leaders introduced a number of bills aimed at advancing climate legislation focused on farm solutions. One such bill, the Growing Climate Solutions Act, received a lot of attention for its efforts to develop a federal carbon market for agriculture. Unfortunately, as currently written, the bill does not incorporate the lessons learned from the past and present carbon markets.

Among the bill's shortcomings is its approach to certification of carbon projects on farms. It allows private consultants,

working with farmers to develop projects for the newly proposed federal carbon market, to also certify those practices as eligible for credits on the market. This is a clear conflict of interest.

Moreover, the act allows self-registration for anyone who wants to get into the business of developing and certifying agricultural carbon credits. There is no uniform oversight or accreditation of certification service providers to ensure the competency and accuracy of their carbon credits. These provisions violate international norms for quality certification systems and undermine market integrity.

The act would create the "Wild West" of carbon markets without sufficient integrity, oversight and standards. There are better approaches for incentivizing farmers to adopt practices that boost resilience and sequester carbon, such as public investments in proven working lands conservation and high-integrity organic certification programs.

*continued on page 18*

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Proven Programs, Not False Hopes — Engaging Farmers in Climate Solutions

*continued from page 9*

When the 1930s Dust Bowl Crisis laid bare the vulnerabilities of agriculture to unsustainable practices, the country rallied to create Soil Conservation Districts and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. Together, these agricultural professionals teamed up with farmers to improve soil conservation and keep farmers on the land and it worked. Thirty years ago, Congress passed legislation to establish the USDA National Organic Program, creating a marketplace where consumers can support farmers whose practices sequester carbon.


We can meet the challenge of the climate crisis by scaling up and expanding well-established USDA conservation and organic programs. By providing the research, technical assistance and financial incentives, we will better meet the needs of farmers and the environment. And we can do this work in a way that supports farmers most vulnerable to the

climate crisis: small, mid-scale farmers, farmers of color — farmers who are often underserved and left behind. We advance agricultural solutions to the climate crisis in ways that deliver equity and real benefits.



The climate crisis requires urgent action and farmers can be part of the solution. We cannot waste time or resources on approaches that have not worked. It is time for bold, decisive action, building on existing, successful efforts, to ensure U.S. agriculture not only survives in the face of climate change but thrives. ♦

*Jeanne Merrill is the policy director with the California Climate & Agriculture Network, a coalition of the state's sustainable and organic agriculture organizations.*

*Chris Schreiner is the executive director of Oregon Tilth, a leading nonprofit organic certifier, educator and advocate.*



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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Is Your Farm Receiving the Support You Need Since COVID-19 Began?

The UVM Extension Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Department of Community Development and Applied Economics want to know what helps farmers succeed under difficult conditions.

We are sending this in hopes of reaching commercial farmers in Vermont to learn about how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted farming. Please help us all learn by [completing the survey](#) about your last two farming years. It should only take about 20-30 minutes to complete. All responses are kept confidential and will not be associated with your name. If you have questions about this survey please contact Cheryl Herrick, who is coordinating the project's outreach, at UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture at [cheryl.herrick@uvm.edu](mailto:cheryl.herrick@uvm.edu). The Principal Investigators (PIs) of this project are Linda Berlin in UVM Extension's Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Daniel Tobin in the Department of Community Development and Applied Economics.

For taking part in this research study, you will be reimbursed for your time and input. **The first 225 respondents to complete the survey will receive a \$40 gift certificate.** At the end of the survey, you will be asked for some information about yourself (name, mailing address, and email) that will be used for the sole purpose of sending you the gift certificate. Information gathered for this purpose will be stored separately from your survey responses.

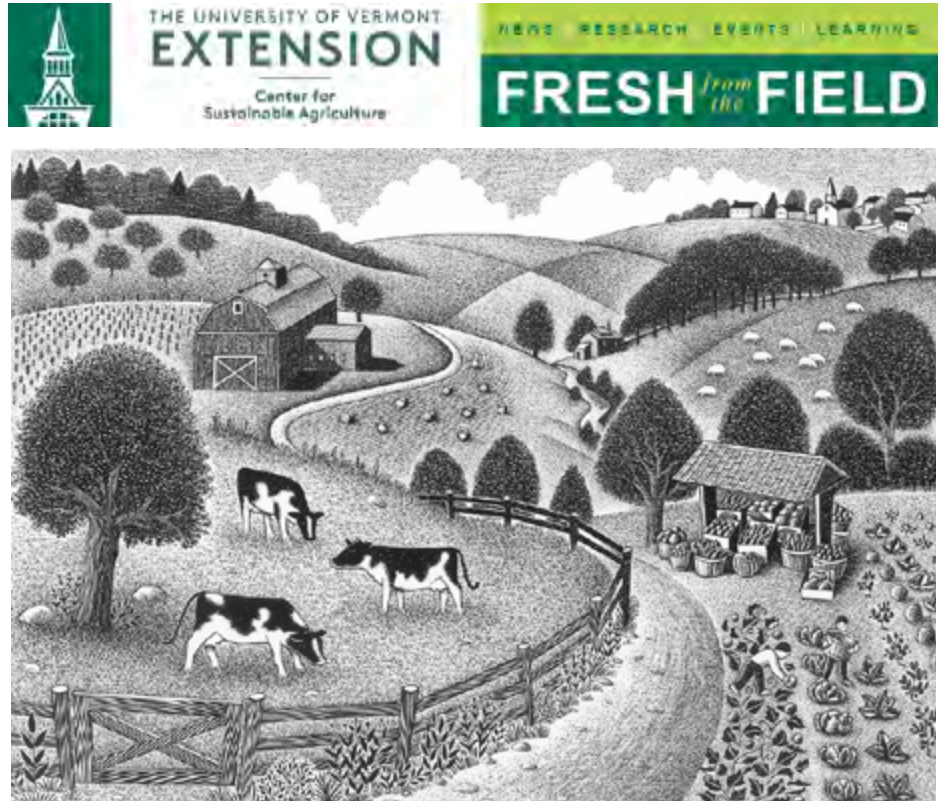
The survey is located at: [https://qualtrics.uvm.edu/jfe/form/SV\\_6tGjM94wNWWhWL8q](https://qualtrics.uvm.edu/jfe/form/SV_6tGjM94wNWWhWL8q)

Many thanks for your time, and wishing you and yours well. Please don't hesitate to let me know if you've got any questions or if I can assist in any way.

Best,

*Cheryl Herrick for the Covid-19 Resilience Project Team*

*(Suzy Hodgson, Travis Reynolds, Juan Alvez, Linda Berlin, Lisa Chase, Cheryl Herrick, Carina Isbell, and Dan Tobin, with funding gratefully received from a USDA Hatch (NIFA) grant, USDA ARS grant, and a grant from the UVM Office of Engagement.*



## NET UPDATE

## Recent ODairy Discussions

By Liz Bawden,  
Organic Dairy Farmer, NODPA President

A farmer wanted to draw some good maps of his farm and asked the group for their suggestions on computer applications that would help with this. Producers offered lots of suggestions, including: A9Cad at <http://a9tech.com> and QCad at <https://qcad.org/en>, a mapping program by Penn State found at <https://extension.psu.edu/programs/nutrient-management/planning-resources/paonestop>, a mapping tool for grazing and pasture management called Pasture Map at <https://pasturemap.com>, a mapping and organizational tool called AgSquared geared more toward vegetable farmers at <https://www.agsquared.com/>. Cornell Small Farms Project has produced two videos on how to use Google Earth for farmers: these can be found at <https://youtu.be/iAlTg08loG4> and <https://youtu.be/pJZKYi-OEYg>. And a 3-D design program that works well for building design called Sketch Up at <https://www.sketchup.com> was also recommended. Another

producer suggested working with NRCS who will make detailed maps of your farm to help plan additions, manure storage, wastewater irrigation, and barnyard improvements.

A veterinarian asked the group, "In addition to the basics: avoidance of overcrowding, strict cleanliness and good nutrition, what therapies have you used with success to control and treat coccidiosis in calves?" Producers responded with some suggestions that worked for them. For calves on milk, one producer recommended using Dr Paul's Calf Start (a product containing humates and garlic) added to the milk as a preventative or treatment. He suggested "feeding a lower preventative rate for the first 3 weeks of life, and then as needed. For the last 3 days prior to weaning, a double dose is fed to flush out the GI tract of any pathogens/toxins. This helps tremendously in mitigating the "post-weaning slump", often caused by coccidia, that can hit organic calves....especially grain-free animals. After weaning, similar results are achieved by offering dry Mennefee Humates free-choice." Another producer treats it with a homemade garlic tincture.

An experienced producer had a third lactation cow that did not let her milk down for three days; after trying all the usual techniques, she asked the group for ideas. A helpful vet suggested putting on a rectal sleeve and reaching in to massage her cervix to bring about an oxytocin release. Other suggestions included putting the calf on her, washing with warm cloths like a compress, homeopathic ignatia, beer, and one brave soul that sucks on the teat herself to get a letdown response. Xylazine, a tranquilizer and on the NOP approved list, was also recommended as a "classic facilitator of fresh heifers". ♦

### 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](http://www.nodpa.com/list_serv.shtml)



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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Origin of Livestock Letter to the USDA Secretary

*continued from page 1*

for the organic sector for the last decade. Through the Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations process, Congress mandated that the USDA complete an OOL final rule by June 17, 2020, but the USDA missed this deadline. In the fall of 2020, the USDA NOP announced that they are working on a new version of the rule to address concerns about whether it will be enforceable. We need the USDA to finalize a rule on Origin of Livestock as quickly as possible. In 2015, Secretary Vilsack's USDA published a Proposed Rule. It's now time to turn that into an ENFORCEABLE final regulation that will not be hindered in its implementation by the possibility of lawsuits (or the threat of lawsuits). A Final Rule will provide the clarity that will ensure consistent enforcement of the transition of conventional

animals to organic production. Organic dairy producers and those with conventional herds considering transitioning to organic, can then build a solid future for their farms.

This letter, which follows, was originated by the two independent producer groups: NODPA and WODPA, that worked with the NOC and OFA to take it to the whole organic community. The approval of the content of the letter was vetted by both producer organizations for over a month, allowing time for their consultative process to work. The final sign-on and projected delivery time is after we went to press so the names of all the individuals and organizations that signed on to the letter are not known or included.

*continued on page 22*

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## ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

## Origin of Livestock Letter to the USDA Secretary

*continued from page 21*

January 25, 2021

Acting Secretary Kevin Shea  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, DC 20250

**RE: USDA National Organic Program – Origin of Livestock Rulemaking**

Dear Acting Secretary Shea:

As members of the organic community, we look forward to working closely with you to advance a food and agriculture system that benefits the health of people and the planet.

In that regard, we are writing today about an issue that is important for the future of organic dairy farmers, their families, and the integrity of the organic label. This issue is the need to clarify the regulation regarding Origin of Livestock (7 CFR 205.236), pertaining to the process of transitioning conventional dairy livestock to organic production.

The organic label is one of the most highly trusted labels for consumers. This is due to the strong Federal standards and enforcement behind the label. There are, however, some areas where the USDA's National Organic Program standards need to be strengthened to retain that consumer trust. Solidifying standards to ensure all organic farmers operate under the same rules is essential for the entire organic community. The economic viability of organic dairy farmers is dependent upon clarification of regulations to stop varied interpretations or loopholes regarding dairy livestock transitioning practices.

The problem has been that those organic dairy producers who have utilized the loophole to continuously transition conventional animals into organic production have gained an economic advantage and contributed to the oversupply of organic milk. This has contributed to a significant drop in the milk prices paid to organic dairy farmers, the majority of whom were held to a higher standard and stricter enforcement.

In 2015, during the Obama-Biden Administration, USDA published a proposed rule to close the loopholes related to 'Origin of Livestock' (80 FR 23455). Specifically, the proposed Rule would clarify that: "After completion of a one-time, 12-month transition period of an existing conventional dairy herd (or livestock to form new organic dairy operations), all new dairy animals milked on the organic dairy farm would need to be managed organically from the last third of gestation."

The 2015 proposed rule garnered strong, united support from the organic community and consumers, especially the provision that stopped conventional livestock from continuously entering the organic herd. Implementing the 2015 Proposed Rule would clarify the regulation so that all certifiers will consistently enforce the same standards, with confidence that their decision would be upheld in any legal challenge. Unfortunately, the 2015 rule has never been finalized.

**ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS**

Organic dairy farmers understand the economic importance of maintaining the integrity of the organic label by finalizing the 'Origin of Livestock' (80 FR 23455). For 15 years, organic dairy farmers have advocated for an enforceable regulation applied equally to all certified producers. The organic community has provided comments two times on Proposed Rules from the National Organic Program (NOP) to stop the continuous transition and two-track system interpretation created by loopholes in the current regulation. USDA's unconscionable delay in issuing a Final Rule has resulted in economic damage, financial hardships, and closure of businesses for organic dairy farmers following the true intent of the organic standards.

Congress included a provision in the Fiscal Year 2020 Agriculture Appropriations bill requiring USDA to finalize the long-delayed rule by June 17, 2020. USDA missed that deadline. On October 21, 2020, the NOP announced plans to publish another Proposed Rule to address enforcement issues raised by USDA's Office of General, instead of moving directly to a final rule as required by Congress. NOP has failed to provide a timeframe for issuing the new regulations. Organic dairy farmers and the organic community more broadly are frustrated by the NOP's continued delay in finalizing this regulation.

The undersigned organizations urge you to take the immediate actions necessary to finalize this important rulemaking, to establish a consistent and fully enforceable standard regarding the origin of dairy livestock used for organic production.

Sincerely,

Jill Smith, Consultant, Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

Ed Maltby, Executive Director, Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

Kate Mendenhall, Executive Director, Organic Farmers Association

Abby Youngblood, Executive Director, National Organic Coalition

<< organizations and individual farms will be added in alphabetical order >>

CC: Deputy Secretary, Dr. Jewell Hairston Bronaugh

Congressional Leaders TBD

National Organic Standard Board

## FEATURED FARM

**FAMILY COW FARMSTAND  
HINESBURG, VT***continued from page 1*

although Aubrey had previously milked at a few small New York dairy farms.

Today, they own Family Cow Farmstand in Hinesburg, Vermont, having purchased the business name, cows, milking equipment and customer list in spring 2016. The raw milk dairy had been established by prior owners in 2008. Family Cow Farmstand is currently milking a herd of 12 -15 cows once per day, producing raw milk for direct retail sale.

All of the milk produced by the herd is sold as raw milk, either directly at the farm stand, or via their CSA. If there is surplus, they'll feed it to the pastured pigs. Sold by the pint, half-gallon or gallon, raw milk demand has held steady over the past five years, but hasn't yet met with their growth expectations.

"When we bought the business we were so confident we could boost sales and despite all of our best efforts the only thing in the last five years that has brought us more milk customers has been increased demand for local food around Covid-19," Aubrey and Scott said, answering many of the interview questions jointly. "Covid-19 has increased demand for milk by 30 - 40 percent. Demand was pretty steady over the prior four years."

**Business Building Blocks**

Aubrey and Scott are renting all of their land and facilities. The land includes 35 acres of pasture accessible to the grazing herd, and 45 acres used to produce bedding hay, which is also used to graze the heifers. Pastured pork is raised in the woodlands and field margins, while pastured chicken co-occupy five acres of the dairy herd's pastures. Overall, the land is extremely wet, poorly drained silt clay, which makes it difficult for them to grow their own feed, or to bale graze as much as they'd like to do in the winter months. A lack of acreage to devote to making their own hay, other feeds, or increasing grazing capacity is an obstacle to growing their operation.

Despite the challenges, the herd receives 100 percent of their dry matter intake from pasture during the May through November 1st grazing season. They don't feed hay in the grazing season, except for the last two weeks when they transition the herd to stored feed for the winter.

During the non-grazing season, the cows receive baleage, with some dry hay when available. The herd is sheltered in an open pole shed during the winter. The shed is managed as a bedded pack, with a fresh 4' by 5' round bale added each day.

Livestock feed, for pigs and chickens, is purchased locally, and most of the baleage and hay is, too. The goal is to eventually grow their own feed for all the livestock.



**Land and facilities used for Family Cow Farmstand in Hinesburg, VT**

## FEATURED FARM

Grazing rotations occur either every 12 hours, or once per day. They utilize a batt-latch to help keep consistent with the rotations, and generally provide about one-half acre of pasture forages per day, adjusted depending on the grass. They look at the residual left in the last paddock, rumen fill, and future grazing options and adjust the next paddock accordingly. Temporary fence posts are placed 35 feet apart consistently, which helps them adjust paddock size without complicated math each time, and they've developed their own innovative shorthand for communicating the size of the paddocks, measuring in "squares" based upon the temporary post placement. Pastures have not been seeded with the exception of some frost seeding of clover.

Because most of the paddocks don't have shade, they've built a mobile shade wagon on a forage box running gear. The 20 foot by 25 foot area of shade it provides has helped to fully utilize the pastures, particularly during hot spells, which have been frequent the past several years.

"Our grazing isn't too scientific or rigid, and sometimes we get it right and sometimes we miss the mark either on the cow end or on the grass management end," they said.

Cows are bred via artificial insemination, using a service for both straw storage and breeding, which is done year-round. Genetics from Paul and Phyllis Van Amburgh's 100 percent grassfed dairy



herd at Dharma Lea in Sharon Springs, New York, have been utilized during the past four years. Ayrshire genetics from New Zealand are now being sourced as well.

"We calve year-round. We don't do much aside from make sure they get a calcium bolus after calving," they said, adding that they use Dr. Paul's Lab Fresh Cow bolus and Comfort bolus. "Calves get a dipped navel, and the vet dehornes within a couple of weeks if we keep her."

Heifers are raised on the dam, for a period of time which varies from three to ten months. Moving forward, they aim to be more

*continued on page 28*



**Open pole shed where the herd is sheltered during the non-grazing season**

## FEATURED FARM

**FAMILY COW FARMSTAND  
HINESBURG, VT***continued from page 29*

consistent, weaning around seven months. They continue to milk the dam until the calf begins using all of the milk. At that point, they stop milking that cow until the calf is weaned.

Cow-calf pairs are grazed with the milking herd, at least until the cow is no longer being milked. They just began grazing heifers separately from the milking herd last year, and will continue to do so moving forward, and may begin to move cows with older calves into the heifer group.

They have had no calf health issues using this method so far. They'll continue learning and adjusting their protocol as needed as they gain more hands-on experience. The goal is to raise all of their own replacement heifers, keeping about three per year. Bull calves and excess heifer calves are sold - or given away - at one to three days old.

They have had to purchase cows several times over the past years, mostly when more milk was needed to meet sales demand, but the end goal is to have a closed herd.

"I keep saying this is the last year that we are going to buy in more cows, and then we buy more the next year. But so far we're four days into 2021 and we haven't bought any yet so that is a start," they said half-jokingly.

The initial herd they purchased with the business is long gone. They expected that those first ten cows they purchased along with the business would still be producing today. But within three years, they were all culled. They've since learned that no one is selling their best cows, although they do have relationships with several other organic, grassfed dairies and feel comfortable purchasing cows from those particular sellers.

The current herd is "a hodgepodge," primarily Jersey with a mix of various crosses. The goal is herd longevity. Maintaining herd health - rather than a focus on treating sick cows - is the goal, so preventative medicine is emphasized.

"We want 15 year-old cows, and we've been only doing this for five years, so we have no idea if anything we're doing is on the right track," they said. "But cow health is a priority. Starting with robust genetics, and getting the calves off to a really healthy start, and then trying to keep enough condition on the cows so that they could respond to stress themselves without human intervention," is the goal.



**Cow-calf pairs are grazed  
with the milking herd**

## FEATURED FARM

When health issues do occur, the focus is on finding out why they happened, and preventing it from happening again and becoming a herd health issue. They've implemented a strict protocol for culling *Staphylococcus aureus* cows as quickly as possible. Other than that, culling is very cow-dependent. Most of their culls have been older cows with health issues, or cows with breeding concerns.

The only vaccination given to the herd is for rabies, which is required under Vermont law. They haven't felt that their herd health has warranted any additional vaccine usage.

"The idea is to raise healthy animals from the very start that have strong immune systems so that we do not feel we need to rely on regular treatments," Scott said. "None of the health problems that we have had over the years have led us to a solution that involved vaccines - I'm not saying we will never vaccinate for other things - we just haven't been presented with that specific situation."

They do have experts to help them prevent issues, and to assist them when issues arise. The Van Amburgh's have been their primary mentors, along with a grassfed organic dairy farming neighbor, and a dairy-faring veterinarian who has both conventional and organic experience. A lot of reading on organic dairy farming has served as their self-study lesson plan.

"We really didn't know anything about cows when we started out - despite thinking we maybe did - so reading as much as we could from Paul Dettloff, Hue Karreman, Gerald Fry, Newman Turner and others has helped us to know what we are even looking at," they said.

### Milk Metrics

The raw milk is tested twice monthly. Somatic cell counts average 130,000, well below Vermont's limit of 250,000 cells/ml for raw milk sales. Coliform and bacterial counts, which measure the cleanliness of the milking and bottling process, are extremely low, too. With consistent readings well below legal limits, and coliform counts consistently at zero, Aubrey and Scott feel good about selling their raw milk.

"We don't do DHI testing, but we don't make a lot of milk!" Scott said. "The average cow for us in 2020 that didn't have a calf on her was at 8600 pounds."

Milking is done in a tie-stall barn each morning. Bucket milkers are used, and the milk from each cow is carted directly after milking into the milk house bulk tank and cooled and maintained at 38 degrees.

*continued on page 30*



## FEATURED FARM

**FAMILY COW FARMSTAND  
HINESBURG, VT***continued from page 29*

The bottling operation is very simple, and works well despite a few occasional issues. Milk is stored in their small 56 gallon bulk tank, which sits on hydraulic lift that can be operated with a foot pedal, and each day is dispensed from the elevated tank containers for raw milk sales. On average this past year, they've bottled 230 gallons of raw milk per week.

**Raw Marketing**

"I think our philosophy around selling raw milk is that we have to feel 1000% confident giving a jar to literally anyone and they're not going to have an adverse reaction, which for us means being extremely fastidious with milking and jarring procedures, and having the healthiest herd possible and not being afraid to cull for health reason," Scott explained. "We just don't take producing and selling raw milk lightly. We are aware of its significant risks if not handled properly."

Customers who are inclined to purchase raw milk do so for a variety of reasons. Many raw milk advocates believe that the vitamins and minerals in the milk, and its overall nutritional and flavor profile, are altered during pasteurization, and that the milk becomes less digestible as well. But Aubrey and Scott aren't touting the health benefits of raw milk as a selling point.

"I am not out here to change everyone's mind to drink raw milk from any farm or any cow- I want them to drink milk from my farm because I can stand behind my product. What I can stand behind 100% is the products that we are producing, and one of those is raw milk," Aubrey explained. "If I were growing spinach it would not be that different- I would be an advocate for my spinach, not trying to convince everyone to simply eat spinach. I milk the cows every single day and have been for the last 5 years- I stand behind the product and advocate for our milk."

In the future, they'd be very interested in making butter and other value-added dairy products. The cost, however, is prohibitive, and they are operating with rented infrastructure.

"We would like to possibly do value-added products in the future. We do feel it has the potential to open more doors, allow us to grow as a dairy and create a more diversified operation but whether or not that means more success, sustainability and happiness- well that is to be determined," they agreed.

They built their farmstand in 2017, converting a manure spreader shed, with the goal of increasing raw milk sales by drawing customers in with other local products. The store - as of last season - sells their own pork, chicken and eggs, plus local beef, butter, cheese, bread and ice cream in addition to the raw milk. Ultimately, they'd like to feature their own products, diversifying their farm's product line.

"It has been awesome to see folks turn to us as a source for high-quality local foods," Scott said. "That being said, we built the store with the hope that it would really boost milk sales, and it didn't do that at all! We have no idea how to sell more raw milk. We wish we were milking 30 head and selling all of it instead of 15 head."

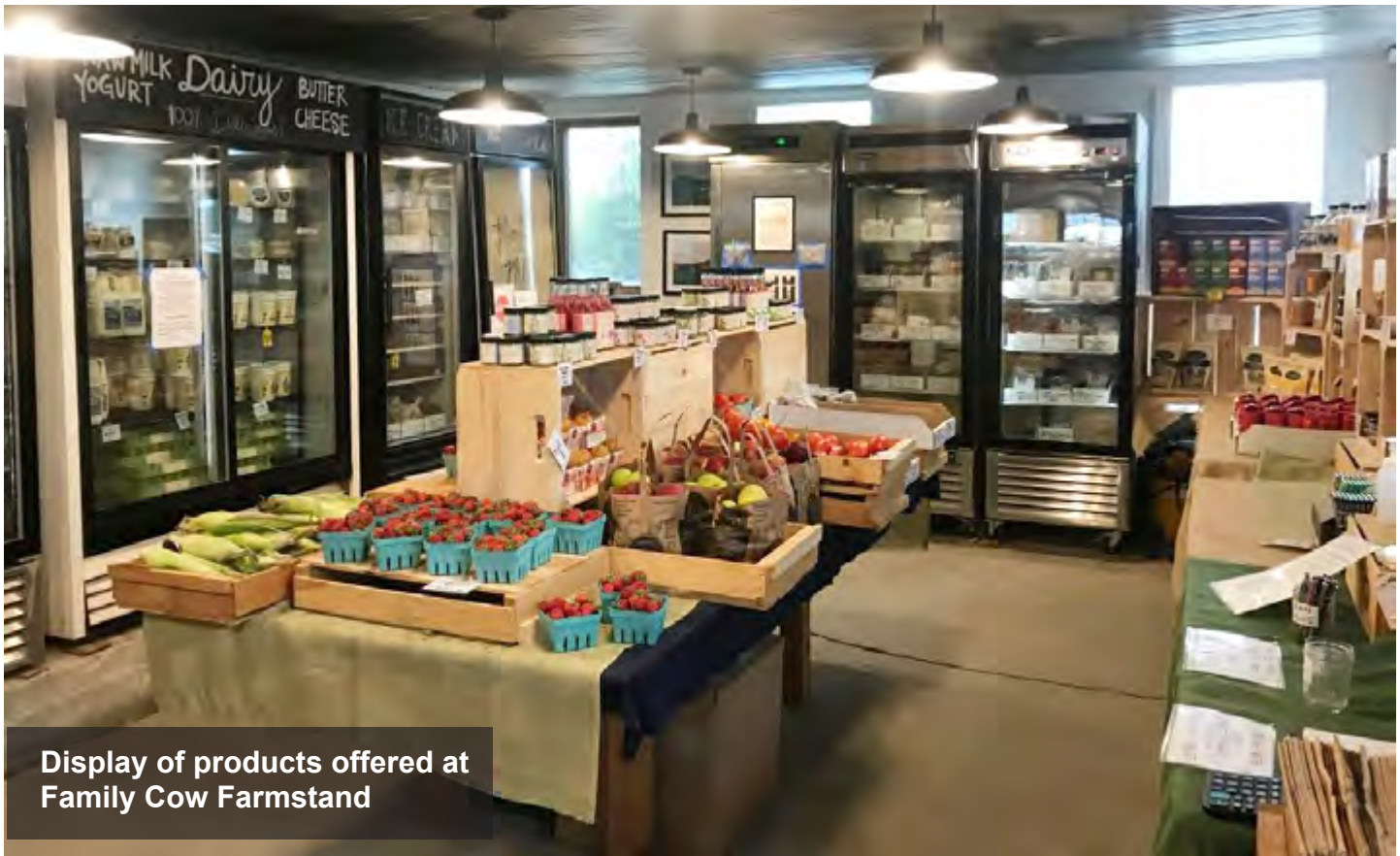
Instead, they've found themselves reselling products from other local farms, and spending much more time with retail sales than they anticipated devoting to that enterprise. The store operates on a self-serve system, and Aubrey spends about 20- 30 hours per week of her time restocking, ordering and talking to customers. Scott and Aubrey agree that the farmstand has been their best decision thus far. With the demands of a growing farm, and a growing retail business, Family Cow is now hiring its second full-time employee.

"At the end of the day I want to be able to keep farming and if that means less farming for a while and more time in the farmstand- well I'm perfectly fine with that," Aubrey said. "The fact that so many of our customers come to us is incredible. We haven't had to rely on farmers markets or wholesale - which is certainly not something to be taken for granted. If anything it has surprised both of us how well received our farmstand has been over the years."

While the farm stand didn't increase raw milk sales, their CSA has been successful in its ability to capture raw milk customers who might not make it out to the farm stand. Family Cow Farmstand's CSA is a month-to-month model, where shareholders don't have to make a long-term investment in the farm. But it's been steady enough that they can now predict how much milk will be needed three months out, despite customers being added or dropping out regularly. About 75 percent of their raw milk sales are from the CSA.

They deliver the milk to various drop points where they've placed refrigerators, which they own. Drop points are someone's garage, or front porch, and nearby CSA members pickup their order from that location. Milk pricing is \$6.00 per half-gallon, sold in

## FEATURED FARM



**Display of products offered at Family Cow Farmstand**

returnable glass bottles or plastic containers. Pints are plastic, and available to CSA members in a six-pack, but make up a very small portion of their sales. A small delivery fee is charged, or free pickup is available at the farm stand if preferred.

“We deliver five days per week to a neighborhood drop off site. It’s a nice medium between having people not come to your farm because it’s too far from the daily routine and the other extreme of weekly door-to-door deliveries,” Scott explained.

### Growing Organic

Although the farm isn’t yet producing as much food as they’d like, and processing raw milk remains a future goal, Aubrey and Scott are proud to be organic dairy farmers, and to be able to show others that beginning a dairy farming operation takes a lot of work, a willingness to learn, some creative business strategies, and practical advice from those experienced dairy farmers who have made it work themselves.

“We’re farming this way mostly because it was how we were introduced to dairy farming and we saw as young people with no land and no capital that it was a way to get into farming on our own, and that has more or less been true,” Aubrey said. “What I do like

about our milk is that it is an unadulterated agricultural product that is so completely specific to not just our region, but to this exact farm, land, soil and animals, and I get to see and taste the result of that product every day.”

The decision to officially certify the farm as organic was made simply because they were already following certified organic regulations. While most of their raw milk customers aren’t that concerned about the certification, they probably did gain a few new customers once they became certified organic. Their chicken and pigs are also certified organic.

“If we were going to farm that way anyway, then we might as well fill out the paperwork to be able to tell customers we are doing so,” Scott said. “I am extremely proud as a farmer to produce a safe and healthy product that my customers have come to expect and greatly enjoy, and I do believe that comes across very clearly to them which is, perhaps, most important when selling anything: just be yourself.”



*Aubrey Schatz & Scott Hoffman can be reached at Family Cow Farmstand, 2386 Shelburne Falls Road, Hinesburg VT 05461, (408) 666-9120, <https://www.familycowfarmstand.com/>*

# Calendar

**Sunday, February 7, 2021 - 3:00pm to Thursday, March 4, 2021 - 1:00pm**

## 39TH ANNUAL NOFA-VT WINTER CONFERENCE

From February 7 through March 4, in lieu of our in-person conference, we are planning a series of online events with many different opportunities for community building, learning, and connection through workshops, speakers, film & more.

Given the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, our Winter Conference will be virtual this year. But we will not let physical distance keep us from continuing to build community, strengthen the movement for an ecological, just and organic food system, and learn and celebrate together.

This February, we invite you to join us for an incredible month-long series of events with many different opportunities for online learning, gathering, and movement building. This series will also be the kick-off of a year-long celebration for our 50th anniversary (NOFA-VT was founded in 1971)! We hope you'll join us as we work together to grow and nourish a just, verdant and sustainable food system here in Vermont!

Your registration for the conference gives you access to all live streamed events throughout the month including Sherri Mitchell's keynote speech, two featured panel discussions, 20 workshops and roundtables, and special engagement opportunities. You will also receive access to video recordings of the keynotes and workshops post-conference.

**LOCATION: Online**

**COST:** Suggested Member Rate: \$80, Suggested Non-Member Rate: \$100, Sliding Scale Options \$30-\$150, Free of charge for BIPOC. **WEBSITE:** <https://nofavt.org/conference>.

**CONTACT NAME:** Livy Bulger

**EMAIL:** [livy@nofavt.org](mailto:livy@nofavt.org)

**February 10-15, 2021, Wednesday-Monday**

## THE 42ND ANNUAL OEFFA SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE: OUR TIME:

### ESSENTIAL LINKS- ONLINE

OEFFA's can't-miss conference offers up to six days of learning, sharing, and networking for farmers, gardeners, homesteaders, and others committed to local food, sustainable agriculture, and green living.

This online event will feature educational workshop video sessions, inspiring keynote speakers, in-depth Food and Farm School classes, an interactive virtual trade show, and fun and engaging networking opportunities.

Beyond of all the top-notch education this conference will provide, the Socio app and online event platform easily allow you to join by computer or phone, organize your schedule, interact with vendors, message other attendees, play games, share contact information, and re-watch recorded sessions.

Please join this inspiring community of food and farm advocates to learn, engage, and build a strong food chain! Register Now! <https://conference.oeffa.org/registration/> Go to the link to see registration pricing and scholarship information.

**February 15, 2021 12:00-1:00pm Online**

### PENNSSTATE EXTENSION

## THE DAIRY WORKFORCE FOCUS: ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION-WORKFORCE SUCCESSES AND STRUGGLES

Webinar will conclude the Workforce Focus series with dairy managers sharing successes and struggles with their day to day communication, training, and leading of their people. Join us to hear their stories and share some of your own.

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## About the Series

The Dairy Workforce Focus Series is designed for dairy managers who supervise employees. Each session will include a question and answer session with the guest speaker. The webinars will focus on your dairy workforce and will cover topics such as communication, opportunities to lead, train, and keep workers safe, and a roundtable discussion of dairy workforce successes and struggles on the farm. The event is free but registration is required. <https://extension.psu.edu/dairy-workforce-focus-round-table-discussion-workforce-successes-and-struggles>

**February 22-27, 2021**

### 5 CONFERENCES IN 1 VIRTUAL EVENT

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OGRAIN, Organic Pork Conference, Organic Vegetable  
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Access expertise across the FULL range of organic and grass-based production—no need to leave home, pay for lodging, or hire someone to do chores!

Admission is \$125.00. Your ticket gives you access to virtually all content—workshops, roundtables, exhibit booths, socials—

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# NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

## Website & E-Newsletter Advertising

### Website Advertising

NODPA.com receives over 2500 visits each month navigating to an average of 3 pages/visit.

### 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.

### 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](mailto:noraowens@comcast.net)

Phone: 413-772-0444

## Advertise With Us!

**NODPA News is Published Bi-Monthly**  
**January, March, May, July, September & November**

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](http://www.nodpa.com/directory.shtml) or contact Nora Owens.

**2021 Ad rates and sizes listed below.**

**Deadline for advertising in the  
March 2021 issue is February 15, 2021.**

**Full Page Ad (7.5" W x 10.25" H) = \$660**

**1/2 Page Ad (7.5" W x 4.5" H) = \$340**

**1/4 Page Ad (3.5" W x 4.75" H) = \$190**

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

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**Commit to a full year of print advertising and get 10 percent discount: Full: \$600, Half: \$306, Quarter: \$171, Eighth: \$90.**

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

For advertising information call Nora Owens:  
413-772-0444 or email [noraowens@comcast.net](mailto:noraowens@comcast.net).

Please send a check with your ad (made payable to NODPA).  
30 Keets Rd., Deerfield, MA 01342

# Calendar

*continued from page 31*

during this 6-day event and access to recorded sessions for 90 days after the live event. Register here: [https://web.cvent.com/event/b1fcc89f-d903-4e65-9a18-c63297078800/regProcessStep1:5f4918aa-64a0-4903-bded-97d808b14981?rt=we289WA5X06taySy\\_88zfg](https://web.cvent.com/event/b1fcc89f-d903-4e65-9a18-c63297078800/regProcessStep1:5f4918aa-64a0-4903-bded-97d808b14981?rt=we289WA5X06taySy_88zfg)

For more information, visit the conference website:

<https://mosesorganic.org/conference/>

The Organic Farming Association is holding a series of webinars that will prepare participants to participate in Virtual Advocacy Days

## ADVOCACY 101 WEBINAR

**February 8, 2021 at 2:00-3:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada) and**

**February 9, 2021 at 7:00-8:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)**

Host: Patty Lovera

How can we get Congress to support organic farmers? Learn how to make your voice heard in the legislative process during this webinar about how to lobby your elected officials. Get ready for meetings with your members of Congress. We'll cover how to schedule a meeting, what to say, and how to create ongoing communication with elected officials. Register here! <https://organicfarmersassociation.org/news/advocacy-101-webinar/>

## ADVOCACY DAY TALKING POINTS AND PREPARATION WEBINAR

**March 16, 2021 at 2:00-3:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)**

**March 17, 2021 at 7:00-8:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)**

Host: Patty Lovera

Members of the Organic Farmers Association who have registered for the Virtual Advocacy Days will be required to attend one of these sessions to prepare for successful attendance and participation in the OFA advocacy days. Patty Lovera, Policy Director, will lead us through OFA talking points, how to best structure the meeting, how to effectively follow up afterward, and what notes to take, and how to share them with OFA for follow-up afterward. When you register

for the Advocacy Days, you will also select one of the two Advocacy Day Talking Points & Preparation Webinar times.

## VIRTUAL ADVOCACY LOBBY DAYS

**March 22 – 25, 2021**

Host: Patty Lovera

Join members of Organic Farmers Association as farmers across the country join together in a week of targeted advocacy in Washington, D.C. We will support you with talking points, link you with other OFA members in your same district, and provide pre- and post-training to make the most of your hill visits. YOUR VOICE IS IMPORTANT! Join us for our virtual farmer advocacy day! Register here: <https://organicfarmersassociation.org/news/2145/>

## ADVOCACY RECAP WEBINAR

**Mar 26, 2021 at 2:00-3:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)**

Host: Patty Lovera

Members of the Organic Farmers Association who participated in the Virtual Advocacy Days will be strongly encouraged to attend this session to share takeaways from the Congressional and agency meetings. We will review overall impressions, potential organic champions, areas for follow-up, and additional insights gleaned from the advocacy meetings throughout the week. This webinar will only be open to participants in the 2021 OFA advocacy days.

<https://organicfarmersassociation.org/webinars/>

**Thursdays, February 25, 2021 to April 1, 2021, from 6:30-8pm Eastern, online**

## WEBINAR: BF 231: GRAZING MANAGEMENT

### IMPROVE YOUR TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE THROUGH BETTER GRAZING

Grazing is more than simply turning livestock out onto a green pasture and hoping for the best. With sound grazing management, you can reduce your workload, keep your animals happier and healthier, and improve the overall productivity and profitability of your farm. Well-managed grazing systems also provide greater environmental benefits and enhance habitat for many wildlife species.

In this course, you'll learn the key concepts of successful grazing operations that can be adapted and successfully implemented on your own farm. The course focus will be on

*continued on page 36*

## ORGANIC PRODUCTION

## Combating Invasive Weeds in Organic Dairy Pastures

*continued from page 11*

low calcium soils, and in low pH conditions. They can rapidly crowd out other species, creating a weed problem.

“After looking at hundreds of pasture soil samples, lime/calcium is still one of the most limiting factors in maintaining proper fertility levels that keep weeds at bay,” Bishopp emphasized.

### Weed Knowledge

It’s important to properly identify the weed and understand its lifecycle, Mike Cowbrough, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture said during the BCRC webinar. Knowing when a particular plant is vulnerable, as well as when and how it spreads, should be your guide to targeting weeds. Attempting to control weeds at the wrong time can cause more problems.

Annual plants proliferate via seed, while perennials set seeds and use their roots systems to grow new plants. Each plant is most vulnerable at different times.

Some weeds have shallow root systems which can be easily dug up. But if you try to dig up wild hogweed, hundreds of plants will sprout from any remaining root pieces in the soil. Cutting this plant can work, but results vary drastically depending on when in its lifecycle the cutting is done.

In experiments on a giant hogweed patch, the uncut stand produced 4,000 seeds. When cut prior to flowering, seed production was reduced to 90 seeds. When cut at peak flowering, only 40 seeds were produced. If cutting was done at the beginning of seed-head development, no seeds were produced!

For other plants, the timing of cutting can produce much different results. It can be a matter of trial and error. The goal is to trick the plant into thinking that it has already set seed, so it is no longer trying to do so. Experimenting on your own fields, on a small scale, to determine when to best target an invasive weed is recommended.

“On a small scale, you can easily see what works well, and what doesn’t work well,” Cowbrough said.

Renny Gritz, Conservation Resource Management Officer, also spoke during the BCRC webinar. Gritz said that preventing weed problems starts by not introducing weed seed into your pasture environment. Weeds can spread from road ditches, can



**The best defense against weeds is a dense, diverse, fertile pasture sward**

be introduced on equipment, or can take hold in disturbed, bare areas of soil.

“If you can keep the weeds out...that is the best way to deal with invasive species,” Gritz said.

Weeds can be spread via equipment, clothing and livestock. If a field is weedy, exercise caution when moving livestock or equipment out of it and into other pastures. Equipment should be cleaned, and livestock may need to be kept out of uncontaminated fields for a few days, depending on whether or not the weed was producing seeds, which they could then introduce to other pastures. Bishopp also cautions farmers purchasing hay that viable weed seeds can be introduced into pastures via the feed.

“You may be buying in a weed crop you didn’t have before,” he said.

Maintaining a lush sward of pasture forages is the best defense against weed problems. A healthy stand of desired forages can keep weeds from taking root. Proper grazing management, along with optimal soil fertility, is the prevention, and often can be the cure, for weed concerns.

For those seeking more information, Bishopp offers these words for wisdom: “In the end, as a lifetime grazer, I always refer back to the awesome Jerry Brunetti and Fred Provenza for weed advice and their benefits and deeper considerations,” recommending this article for those seeking more in-depth information: <https://www.nsfarming.com/Media/Jerry%20Brunetti%20-%20Biodiverse%20Forage.pdf> ♦

# Classified Ads

## ANIMALS

**FOR SALE: Organic Dairy Herd.** Time to retire and find a new home for my 26 calm jersey/ crossbred cows and 8 fat and friendly bred heifers. 20 ARE due March to May and the rest spread out over the summer. BTSCC under 100 in December; good production and components. Bred to Jersey and Swedish Red, for components and productive life. Vaccinated and healthy. \$1500 each; \$49,000 for the herd.

Call Brian for more info 802-623-6584,  
email: [drbrianhowlett@gmail.com](mailto:drbrianhowlett@gmail.com).

**Location: Whiting Vermont**

**WANTED: A2A2 Jersey, Family Milk Cow.**

Contact Mathew Mullet, 724-854-2404,  
email: [mathewmullet1993@gmail.com](mailto:mathewmullet1993@gmail.com)

**Location: Jamestown, PA**

**FOR SALE: Certified Organic dairy herd.** Quality milk awards 11 straight years, 7 years under 100k somatic cell. Some polled breeding. 55 Holstein, 7 Holstein/jersey or brown swiss crosses. Contact Bill, (570) 423-5146, Plouse Family Farms LLC, [dmplouse94@gmail.com](mailto:dmplouse94@gmail.com).

**Location: Gillett, PA**

**WANTED: Certified organic Guernsey heifer.**

Calf preferred but will consider older. Contact Cynthia Larson at 802-645-1957, or by email: [cynthialarson32@gmail.com](mailto:cynthialarson32@gmail.com).

**Location: Wells, VT**

**FOR SALE: 7 certified organic Holstein heifers** of varying ages (2 bred) for sale and 2 bred milking cows.

Need to downsize herd a bit for the winter. Will sell at discounted rate if taken as a group. Milking Holstein components 5.3 and 4.4, production high 80 at peak, low cell counts. Email: [jdavenson@stonewallfarm.org](mailto:jdavenson@stonewallfarm.org) or call Julie Davenson at 603-357-7278 for info.

**Location: Keene, NH**

**FOR SALE: 12 organic Holstein heifers.**

Good breeding, very well fed, last of my herd.  
\$2,000 per heifer. Due in May and June.  
Please call Gary Dewitt at 607-287-0198.

**Location: Delhi, NY**

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

**Dairy Farm Worker Position available. Cowbella Creamery/Danforth Jersey Farm, Jefferson, NY**

We're a small grazing Jersey dairy with an on farm value-added creamery where we produce our own butter. We use all the milk our 40 cows produce to make our own products. We milk once a day, and have 2 other part-time farm and creamery employees in addition to family labor. Our farm has been in our family since 1817, and we are currently raising our seventh generation. Our Jersey herd also has been long established on our farm, with our nationally highly regarded genetics tracing back over 100 years.

### Job Description

- Full time farm employee, starting immediately
- Hours: 7am-4pm (end time could be earlier or later depending on season)
- 6 days/week with one day off
- 2-3 milking shifts/week
- Must be able to work weekends (and holidays if need be)
- Must have experience operating tractors and skid steers, and have mechanical knowledge
- Must have experience milking, and knowledge in medical diagnosis and treatment of dairy cows
- Duties include:
  - daily feeding (manual baleage/dry hay) in barn
  - skid steer operation to feed and move bales
  - daily barn cleaning including running out gutters, and spreading manure
  - calf/heifer care
  - seasonal fence building/pasture maintenance
  - seasonal operation and maintenance of hay

equipment, including disc bine, tedder, rake, baler, and wrapper

- working closely with our herdsman on herd health and management

- Requirements: physical strength, great work ethic, team player attitude, ability to take direction and be flexible, mechanical knowledge, dairy farm experience, and a great love of cows

Full-time, Year round. Salary/Pay: \$720/week.

Contact Shannon Finn, [whollycowbella@hotmail.com](mailto:whollycowbella@hotmail.com), 607-435-2857

**Location:** Jefferson NY

## FEED, GRAIN, HAY FOR SALE/WANT TO BUY

**FOR SALE: Certified organic baleage 4\*4 round bales.** 2nd and 3rd cutting. Sorghum sedan grass round bales available also. Forage analysis available. Contact Jason Tillotson, [Tillotson228@gmail.com](mailto:Tillotson228@gmail.com), 585-721-6025.

**Location:** Pavilion, NY

## OTHER

### ORGANIC PRODUCTS WANTED: SEEKING USDA CERTIFIED ORGANIC DAIRY FARMS

Healthy PlanEat is a new online platform for farmers that use sustainable growing practices to sell their food directly to local customers. Using the platform, USDA Certified Organic or Northeast Organic Farming Association Farmer's Pledge producers can create a farm profile, post inventory, set distribution options, and manage incoming orders. Local customers can find sustainable farms near them and shop via the online marketplace.

Healthy PlanEat currently works with farms in Connecticut and is interested in working with USDA Certified Organic producers in the Northeast and beyond. If you are interested in selling products via Healthy PlanEat or learning more, please email the founder, Rosemary Ostfeld, at [info@healthyplaneat.com](mailto:info@healthyplaneat.com)



## 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](mailto:noraowens@comcast.net)

**Phone:** 413-772-0444

Go to the following web page for more information:

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

**Northeast Organic Dairy Producers  
Alliance (NODPA)**

c/o Ed Maltby  
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Deerfield, MA 01342

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**NODPA News**

**Advertise with Us in 2021**

# Calendar

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grazing ruminant livestock, but most of the information will be relevant to non-ruminant animals as well. All webinars will be recorded and posted for later viewing. For more information and to register, please visit: <https://smallfarmcourses.com/p/bf-231-grazing-management/>

**Mondays, February 22, 2021 to March 29, 2021, 6:30 -8:00pm**

**WEBINAR: BF 110: SOIL HEALTH**

**INVESTING IN THE VITALITY OF YOUR FARM**

The health and productivity of the soil forms the basis for any farm's success, profitability, and ecological sustainability. Successful farmers need to develop a holistic approach to preserving and building soil health and fertility. Stewardship of the soil is arguably the most important job of any farmer or gardener. All webinars will be recorded and posted for later viewing. For more information and to register, please visit: <https://smallfarmcourses.com/p/bf-110-soil-health/>