NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Member Info

Cows on pasture, resting at Rocky Top Acres.

FEATURED FARM: ROCKY TOP ACRES, LLC

HUBBARDSVILLE, NY

Owned and Operated by Chuck, Mary and Autum Blood

In Their Blood: Certified Grass-fed Organic Dairy Farming

By Tamara Scully, NODPA News Contributing Writer

Madison County, NY: If organic certification or certified grass-fed milk ceased to exist in the consumer marketplace, things would stay the same at Rocky Top Acres, LLC, located in Hubbardsville, New York. The 100 head of dairy cows, heifers and calves would still be fed exclusively with forages grown on the farm, and the animals would still be out on pasture, managed in an intensive management grazing system. And they'd never use any pesticides, insecticides, herbicides or any other 'cide' on the land. "We just believe in doing what we're doing,"

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Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Face Extreme Suffering from the 2025 Drought

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The harsh reality of the effects of the drought are hitting home for organic dairy producers, especially those in New England and western and northeastern New York. Milk buyers need to step up with an increase in Pay Price for those most affected. While a regional Market Adjustment Premium (MAP) for 6 months is not feasible because of the variation in climate and growing conditions, even within the northeast, milk buyers are the only source of support for producers, some of

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Message from NODPA Co-President

I hope everyone enjoyed the NODPA Field Days as much as I did this year! It was great getting to see so many farmer friends all in one place and getting to meet many new people. Here are a few of my takeaways from the event. It was very apparent, talking with everyone this year, that the weather has been all over the place and very regionally different. On our farm, it started out with the most difficult wet spring I've had to plant and harvest crops through and then the water shut off and we had a mild drought in our area during the summer. For many others, both west and east of us, instead of a mild drought it has been a severe drought having major impacts on their farms. Having to feed far more stored forages during the grazing season to make up for the lack of pasture, coupled with a challenging spring for making high quality forage, is leaving many in a very tough position.

We had two great farm tours and many great presentations. One presentation which I really enjoyed was on dairy nutrition, which has more recently been an area of focus for me on our farm: more specifically--vitamin supplementation in the dry cow minerals. We recently had to switch suppliers and got a new free choice mix made up. The first thing I noticed was that there was 10 times the Vit E in the new mix than in the old. This sent me down a rabbit hole of reading up on vitamin supplementation during the dry period to help prevent transition cow issues and mastitis. After reading and taking the time to figure out how many pounds of free choice minerals my dry cows were actually eating, the new mix has 20 times more Vit E than we were feeding for the last several years. Now, time will tell if we see results. I learned it's always good to review mineral/feeding programs as it took me having to get a new supplier that forced me to look at something I never considered could possibly have been causing us issues for years.

Lastly, having the chance to talk with experts in different fields was very helpful for me, whether it was nutrition, genetics, activity systems, or virtual fencing technology. It's always nice to have the opportunity to talk face to face with experts for advice and ideas for the farm.

Kirk Arnold, NODPA Co-President
Truxton, NY
Phone: 607-842-6631 Email: kickaha21@gmail.com

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Organic Dairy News: November 2025

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Organic dairy farming is not for the faint hearted. Just when the shortage of supply has increased competition and brought Pay Price up to a level which can be profitable, we have a regional drought that has decimated the region, with browned out fields and producers chasing supplies of hay. Hopefully this does not set producers back two years as they strive to make up for the losses of the past 5 years.

The US Drought Monitoring Center reported on October 30, 2025, that 93% of the Northeast is experiencing "some level of dryness," with severe to extreme drought increasing from just under 34% to just over 36%. The most affected areas remain Maine, eastern New York and northern New England, with smaller severe drought zones in other parts of the northeast.

For many producers, purchasing hay from an unfamiliar dealer or farmer—rather than a trusted neighbor—may be a process with which they have limited experience. For those that are purchasing hay, which, with trucking, some are paying over $600/ton, an analysis is essential. You also need to get the correct analysis and be able to interpret it as it applies to your operation. Expert advice is worth every cent that you pay for it. I asked Mike Thresher from Morrisons Feed what he looks for in his hay analysis (he uses Rock River Laboratory Inc. for his hay reports). "For Acid Detergent Fiber (ADF), I want to see it below 32, if mostly alfalfa, below 30. Neutral Detergent Fiber (NDF), I like to see under 45. For the 30-hour undigested neutral detergent fiber (NDFd 30 hour), I like to see 55 or higher for alfalfa, and 60 or higher for grass. Protein I don't worry about, this can be corrected through the diet easily, but if the fiber levels are too high, this can cause milk loss, or no gain, if one is thinking the feed is super." Sarah Flack, (Flack Consulting Services) concurs with Mike and notes, "Often, the forage quality information provided by farmers selling hay is incomplete. Typically, hay for sale is accompanied only by data on protein content and Relative Forage Quality (RFQ), which does not always supply all the necessary details." She encourages all producers to ask for fiber digestibility when they get a forage test (NDFD30). "If the feed is fermented, it is advisable to request Volatile Fatty Acid (VFA) analysis. While I prefer Rock River Lab as well, I also utilize Cumberland Labs. When working with any laboratory, be sure to specify that, in addition to the standard NIR test, you require the fiber digestibility with the NDFD30 test; this information is typically not provided unless explicitly requested."

Leatherstocking Cattle Exchange auction

Nathan Weaver reports that the second annual Leatherstocking Cattle Exchange auction was held on 10/30/2025 at the Alex Weaver farm in Canastota, NY, organized by Alex, Sam and Nathan Weaver. There were over 350 people that attended the auction, with 160 organic Grass-Fed animals presented for sale. The highest prices were for A2A2 bred heifers which fetched prices up to $5,700 with other healthy animals fetching $3,500 to $5,700. Milking cows freshening in Spring 2026 averaged $1,500 each. Non A2A2 bred heifers were selling at $2-3,000 each with pure A2A2 bulls fetching up to $6,000. Nathan reports that there was a was a significant premium, averaging 20%, for pure bred animals over cross-bred.

Updates from USDA

Hopefully the government will be open by the time this reaches you BUT in case its not…….USDA recently announced it is planning to partially reopen around 2,100 county Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices despite the ongoing federal funding lapse. These offices are expected to resume certain services — such as some critical farm loan processing functions, ARC/

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"... better results with Udder Comfort."

— Johnny Painter

Painterland

PAINTERLAND FARMS, WESTFIELD, PA
Three generations of the Painter Family involved
450 mixed breed cows, 40 pounds, 300,000 SCC
Certified organic grazing dairy since 2003

"Simplicity is more than a philosophy, it's a strategy. Cleanliness and comfort are prevention priorities at Painterland Farms, Tioga County, Pennsylvania, where Clinton Painter manages the pastures and mixed breed herd on this 450-cow multi-generational grazing dairy, certified organic since 2003. His daughters Hayley and Stephanie launched their nationwide Painterland Sisters Skyr Yogurt in 2022. Their uncle Johnny leads the business side of the farm and helps where needed, like in the parlor more lately.

"We tried Udder Comfort™ in 2023. After using some brands in the past, I see better results with Udder Comfort. We use it on fresh cows to reduce edema, and on swollen or hard quarters. It makes me smile to see milkers reach for it and apply it to an udder," he says.

"I'm confident if the milkers are willing to get it and use it, then they know how well it works too, and the bonus is, it makes the hands feel good," Johnny relates.

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Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Face Extreme Suffering from the 2025 Drought

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whom are paying $600 a ton for hay and transport after feeding their winter supply during the summer.

What is at stake is not just a drop in supply from lower production but animal welfare and the future of many organic dairies. Culling has already started as producers anticipate trouble cash flowing the extra expense of purchasing and transporting scarce supplies of organic hay and other feed. As always, with the unpredictable cash expenses, whether they be from Covid, the price for soybeans tripling, increase in the price of fuel or, as in this case, excessive extremes of weather, it will be the small to mid-size operations that will be the hardest hit and the least able to survive the cash flow deficits.

Why should producers be asking milk buyers for specific payment for increased costs of forage for climate related problems? Pay Price has been increased by nearly all buyers to a level that now covers most operational and fixed costs. These increases may now be mitigating the effect of rising costs experienced by all small businesses in 2025, BUT, this climate disaster is extreme enough in its impact that they are not enough to address its effect.

The federal government is usually a source for supply side payments with established programs like Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm–Raised Fish Program (ELAP). ELAP has previously paid trucking costs for feed when the price of diesel was high. ELAP is an important part of the ODairy Act 2025 which was submitted to the Senate with suggested changes to the program within the Act that would make it easier for organic dairy operations to apply. It is unlikely that Congress will allocate funds in response to a regional drought in the Northeast, despite previous commitments of significant financial support to commodity programs.

Some states in New England have responded in the past to these cash flow requests to maintain organic dairies as they recognize them as an essential component of a thriving rural infrastructure and community. But in 2025/2026 they have many different priorities, and organic dairies will come low on the list.

Lenders might respond to requests for extended lines of credit, but they must see a way in which the loans can be serviced without decimating the farm's equity base. Producers should not have

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to start down the slippery slope of committing all their equity to operating costs, even if their lenders permit it.

Organic milk buyers, whether cooperatives, multi-nationals or investment companies, need only view the history of the last 5 years to see the effect of losing their supply base. With a marketplace that is tight on fluid milk and in deficit supply on cultured products, there is a strong case to maintain or increase supply by recognizing the impact of the drought and supporting their commercial interests and the Northeast farm families who are an integral part of the organic supply.

Each farm operation is unique, and a direct per cwt payment allows the farm family to implement solutions most applicable to their size, certification, asset base and cash flow. A traditional MAP can only be applied across the board which would not reflect the distinct 2025 weather differences within the northeast region. A per cwt individual market adjustment payment direct to the producer would contribute to the solution, preventing a disaster but does not provide a complete answer. We will not know what the real costs are until 2026, when promised surveys will provide real-time information.

Historical information we have from surveys completed in 2024 can contribute to producer's justification for the short term increased payment per cwt. For the Grass Fed certified, the article "Cost of Production on Grass-fed Dairy Farms in the Northeast in 2023" (published in the January 2025 NODPA News) by Heather Darby, Sara Ziegler & Sarah Flack gives some insight into the economics of the small to mid-size operations in the Northeast. The need to purchase extra forage for 72.3% of producers to meet an average of 36.4% of their forage needs has been a common theme since a 2019 survey as they work to maintain a quality ration. The average cost of the purchased forage over all survey participants was $4.00 per cwt, with lower-cost-of-production farms at $5.32 per cwt. The 2025 drought has caused Grass-Fed producers, and most all organic dairy producers in the NE, to graze less and feed more preserved forage during the summer months and then many have needed to purchase higher priced forage from dealers with higher trucking costs.

Non Grass-Fed certified operations have more flexibility in the type of feed they can use in their ration but they have also been affected by the wet spring and long drought, reducing quality of preserved forage and less productive pasture, in some cases pasture turning brown or stands hurt by long term flooding/waterlogging. The 2023 Production and Financial Benchmarks for New York Organic Dairies (published in the November 2024 NODPA News) by Mary Kate MacKenzie, Farm Business Management Specialist,

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PRO-DAIRY, Department of Animal Science, Cornell University, provides information on cost of production for reference purposes. The wide range and comprehensive report showed that in 2023, the average purchase of dairy grain, concentrate and forage was $10.14 per cwt of milk. In 2025, there was no income from Dairy Margin Coverage or from Organic Dairy Marketing Assistance Program which averaged $4.46 per cwt. in 2023.

Recommendation to Producers:

Producers need to talk with their buyers about their need for an individual market adjustment payment if they have experienced the effects of the drought. The sooner that you can communicate with them, in writing, the impact of the drought on your operation the better. Incidentally, you should have already applied to your certifier for a variance, so the certifier can deal with it as soon as the NOP is back in business. Individual or group conversations with your field manager or rep could be a good starting point so long as the message get passed up to management. Your problems are their problems.

Producers cannot predict what the future cost of forage might be as we don't have that data in a tight supply market. We definitely do not know what the weather will be doing this winter and whether there will be seasonably appropriate early spring weather. We do know decisions are being made on culling, breeding and rations that will affect the future supply and productivity of organic dairies in the Northeast.

Some suggestions of what to give or send to your milk buyer to ask for a market adjustment payment because of the drought:

- On page 9 of this issue is contact information for all the buyers. If you have problems reaching them, please be in touch with NODPA at 413-772-0444 or noraowens@comcast.net.
- The US Drought Monitor gives detailed information for every location on which areas suffered or are suffering from the drought (see below).
- If you have a variance from your certifier for meeting the grazing requirements, send a copy to your buyer.
- If you have proof of purchased feed, include copies of the paid invoice and how much more you will need to purchase by the spring to ensure healthy and productive cows and young stock.
- Share whatever data you have that shows previous years' feed purchase.
- Share whatever steps you have taken already to mitigate the situation, for example- cows culled, young stock sold.

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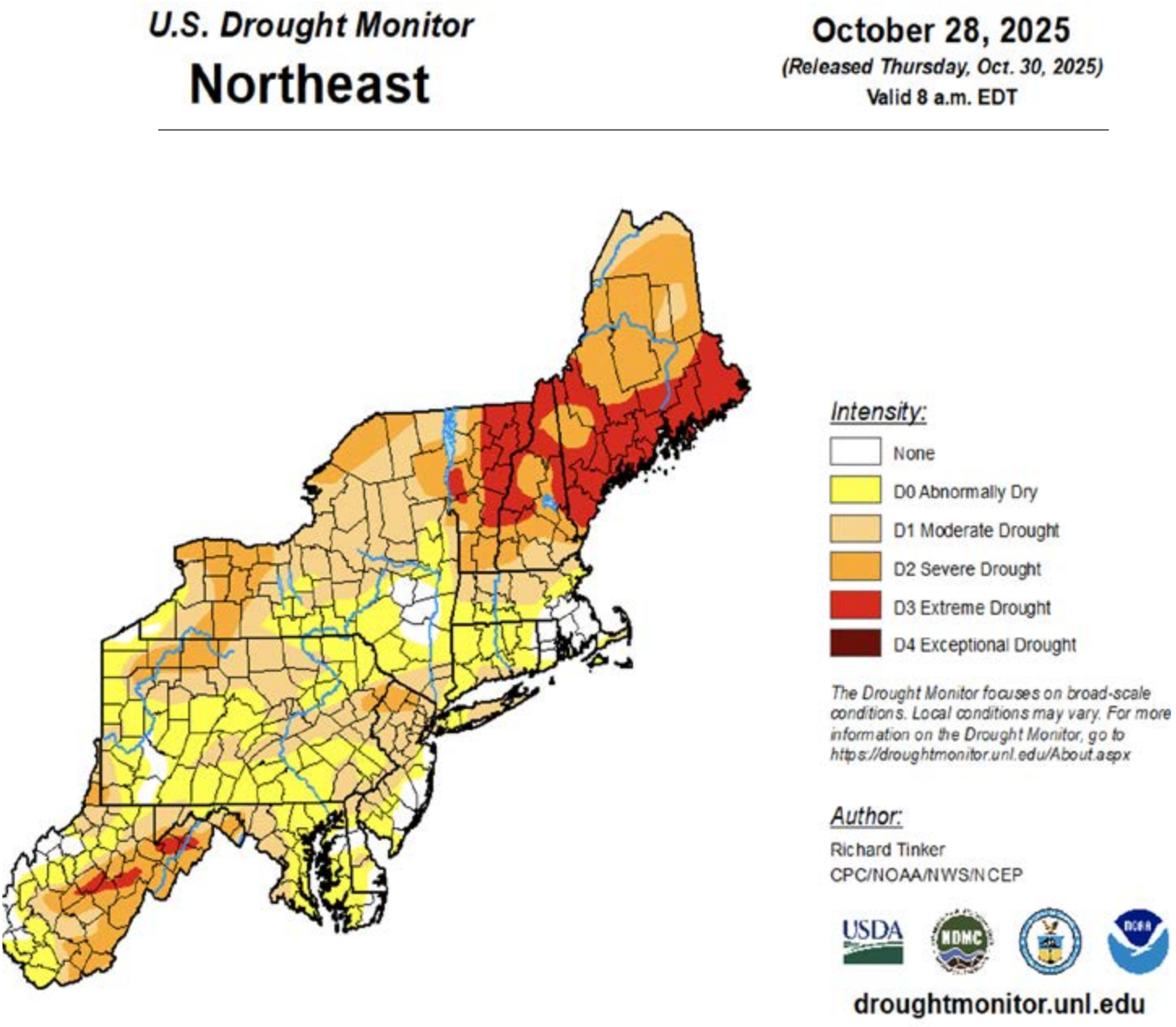
Drought Continued to Intensify with Prolonged Dryness, from the US Drought Monitoring Center

Key Points

- Drought continued to expand and intensify throughout September, with roughly one-third of the Northeast experiencing Severe or Extreme Drought (D2-D3). Almost the entire Northeast (99.97%) is experiencing Abnormally Dry conditions or drought (D0-D3). In terms of severity and coverage, Vermont is experiencing its worst drought conditions since the U.S. Drought Monitor began in 2000.
- Impacts are widespread, including water supply and quality issues, increased wildfires, crop losses/low yields, and livestock forage concerns.
- Warm and dry conditions returned to the region, and outlooks indicate this trend will likely continue into October.
- The U.S. Drought Monitor is a joint effort of the National Drought Mitigation Center, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. ◆



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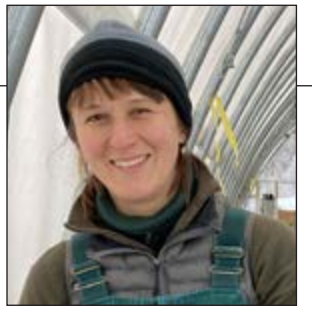
CORRECTION - ASK THE VET - SEPTEMBER ARTICLE:
A correction for the September Ask the Vet column, ***What pasture parasites do I need to worry about?***, the withhold time for Moxidectin is two days not 90, as had been reported.

Ask the Vet

Dayna Locitzer, DVM



How can I improve hoof health on my farm?

Hoof health is one of the most important aspects of dairy cow health, especially organic dairy cows. The longevity of a cow on an organic dairy farm is dependent on her long term hoof health. Cows rely on their feet to get them to and from pasture, walk to their food, get to water, stand during milking. A lame cow has lasting consequences. She will not be able to do her daily tasks, leading to decreased food and water intake. She will likely not show heats and if you have a bull, she certainly won't stand for him. This in turn leads to decreased milk production and decreased fertility. Making sure you attend to the hoof health on your farm is integral to animal welfare as well as efficient production of milk.

One of the most important but often overlooked aspects of hoof health is ensuring that your cows get proper lying time. Cows should ideally have 12-14 hours of lying time. This gives them ample time to give their feet a rest and focus on making milk. Imagine carrying around 1,400 lbs of weight every day? That is a lot of work. When cows are lying down blood flow can prioritize the rumen, uterus, and udder instead. Achieving proper lying time means giving the cows enough time, comfortable places, and protection from the elements for resting. For pasture based dairy cattle, lying time can be significantly affected by hot summer days when cows are bunched and standing. With that weather, we often see more hoof issues due to these heat abating behaviors. In the winter time, inadequate bedding and space will deter animals from lying down. Cows that lie down more make more milk, this is due to a number of factors but one of those is improved hoof health.

Nutrition is another factor in hoof health. This is a foundational element for dairy farming, and is foundational to good feet. One aspect of nutrition that is integral to get right is proper mineral balance. This can be challenging on organic dairies, especially ones that are low or no grain. Making sure your farm has a strategy for getting adequate minerals into your cow's diet is vital. Take zinc for example: zinc is one of the most important minerals related to hoof health because it provides the hooves with their structural integrity. Having a zinc deficiency will negatively impact your hooves as well as many other health parameters.

Good nutrition and adequate lying time will only get you so far. Making sure your cows have good surfaces to walk on is one of the most pressing issues facing pasture based dairies. Organic dairy cows have to walk to and from pasture daily. The laneways they use must be dry and smooth. Walking through mud can create wet feet that will be breeding grounds for bad bacteria. Walking through laneways with lots of little stones can also be dangerous because those stones can get lodged in between their toes or in soft spots of their hooves. Another footing issue faced on pastured dairies is the area around the water trough. Those are high traffic areas as well. When the trough is in a wet spot in the pasture or the trough is leaking a treacherous mud pit filled with wet ground and small rocks is created. I have lost my boot in that situation once or twice.

Hoof health is not only dependent on the conditions on the farm but it is also related to the cow's genetics. Black hooves of Jerseys tend to have less problems then the white hooves of Holsteins. Cows with more vertical pasterns will be able to carry their weight better and wear down their hooves more appropriately. When a cow has pasterns that are dropped lower, she tends to wear her sole down more. Paying attention to feet and leg conformation when

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Emerging Trends and Success on Northeast Grass-Fed Dairy Farms

By Sarah Flack, Sara Ziegler, Avery Anderson, and Heather Darby

The Northeast Grass-Fed Dairy Project has been doing research, outreach and education to help support success for the growing number of grass-fed dairy farms. Current research includes high-energy forages, soil fertility and nutrient cycling on grass-fed farms, sensory and nutritional quality of grass-fed milk, youngstock rearing and development, farm economics and cost of production and we have conducted several national surveys on production practices and farmer perceptions. Information on how to find results and details from this project is included at the end of this article.

As part of the grass-fed dairy project, our team has been collecting and analyzing financial data from 100% grass-fed dairy farms in the Northeast with the goal of better understanding the cost of production. Since 2018, dairy farms located in NY, NH, and VT that ship 100% grass-fed milk have been eligible to participate. Each year participants receive a report on their own farm's cost of production along with the benchmark we have created with several years of data.

In 2023 and 2024, based on input from grass-fed farmers, we began collecting additional farm management information in conjunction with the farm financial information so we could explore how management systems correlate with cost of production. The remainder of this article will explore some of the trends emerging from this grass-fed dairy cost of production work.

Farm Demographics in 2023 and 2024:

In 2023 and 2024, 32 farms from NY, VT and NH participated annually in the cost of production study. The farms had been organic for an average 11.7 years and grass-fed for 6.6 years.

Farms managed 62.5 cows on 330 acres, or 5.17 acres per cow on average. However, within the group this ranged from just 1.9 to 12.9 acres per cow as some farms were purchasing a significant portion of their stored forages, while others produced all their own feed or even sold hay. On average, they grazed for 185.5 days, during which they averaged 82% dry matter in-take (DMI) from pasture. Herds were mainly composed of crossbreeds, although there were farms milking pure-bred Holstein, Jersey, and other breeds which differ in milk and fat production. While most farms milked year-round (84%), there were some fully seasonal herds (16%) and there were also some herds milking at frequencies other than twice a day (19%).

Milk Production and Milk Sales:

Farms sold an average of 8,457 lbs. of milk per cow, but this also had a very wide range from 2,338 to 12,984 lbs. Note that this is milk SOLD per cow, not total milk produced, so it does not include the amount of milk fed to calves or diverted for family use. To get a better idea of actual milk production, we collected information on how much milk was fed to calves. For farms raising some or all calves on dams or with nurse cows, we were unable to accurately quantify milk fed to calves so we could not estimate milk produced. Farms not using nurse cows or dams to raise calves (76%), on average fed 1.81 gallons of milk per day to each calf for 5.25 months. This totaled an average of 2,464 lbs. of milk per calf. Therefore, when this milk is added to milk sold, milk production was 9,228 lbs. per cow compared to the 8,457 lbs. sold per cow

On average, farms were raising 4.5 more calves per year than what would be needed to meet their reported replacement rate. This represents an average of $4,578 in lost milk income per year per farm. If extra animals are going to be raised to sell, the value/cost of milk and high-quality forage fed prior to sale of that animal should be considered. In recent years, pay prices for replacements have been high, and may actually cover both the direct costs and the opportunity cost (in lost milk income) of raising extra calves. However, when the price paid for replacement heifers goes down, raising extra calves on a grass-fed dairy may no longer be a financially viable decision.

In every year of this study, farms selling more milk per cow had lower costs of production. Simply stated this means there is more milk to spread the costs over. So, employing strategies to increase milk sold per cow will support higher net income as long as they do not require significantly higher input or labor costs. Some potential strategies to increase milk sold per cow are listed here.

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Labor Efficiency:

On average, farms had 2.3 FTEs (full-time equivalents). One FTE equals 3000 hours of work per year (and yes, most farmers work more than 3000 hours per year). The number of cows managed per FTE was 29 on average but ranged from 11 to 52. Farms that managed more cows per FTE had lower costs of production with each additional cow managed representing a $0.56 per cwt eq. reduction in cost.

With limited labor resources, farmers often look to installing milking parlors that require fewer employees and less time to milk, freeing up labor for other tasks and reducing costs. Interestingly, the number of cows milked per labor hour did not differ significantly between farms with parlors and farms milking in tie stalls. Farms with tie stalls did, however, manage about 6 fewer cows per FTE compared to farms with other systems and they sold 652 fewer cwts. milk per FTE. These farms also had production costs averaging $8.32 per cwt eq. higher than farms with other milking and housing systems. Overall, farms selling more milk per cow and selling more milk per FTE had a lower cost of production and higher net income.

Grazing and Forage Production:

Without grain supplementation, forage quality becomes one of the top priorities for a grass-fed dairy farm. A grass-fed cow requires a large quantity of forage with high nutrient content and fiber digestibility to allow her to consume enough dry matter and nutrients to support her bodily maintenance and milk production needs.

Farmers who ranked their forages as "excellent" quality produced 1,432 lbs more milk per cow than those who ranked their forages of lower quality. This included farms making all their own forages as well as farms buying in some or all of the forage needs

Grass-fed dairy farms are required to provide an average of 60% of the herd's DMI from pasture during the grazing season which must be at least 150 days in length. Participating farms exceeded the requirement and grazed for an average of 185.5 days, during which they averaged 82% DMI from pasture.

Strategies to Increase milk sales per cow

- Reduce crowding
- Reduce competition for feed
- Reduce stress
- Increase laying/resting time
- Improve reproduction (breed back on time)
- Genetic selection and improvement
- First calf heifers big enough when bred/calving
- Care of dry cows/pre fresh and fresh cows
- Walking distance
- Improve forage fiber digestibility
- Access to water/water quality
- Adequate minerals
- Raise fewer calves

Farms with longer grazing seasons had lower costs of production with each additional grazing day representing an $0.18 per cwt eq. reduction in total cost of production. Some strategies which can be used to extend the length of the grazing season include maintaining fertile healthy soils, thoughtfully managing a diverse mix of well adapted pasture species, carefully adjusting the overall farm stocking rate and good grazing planning.

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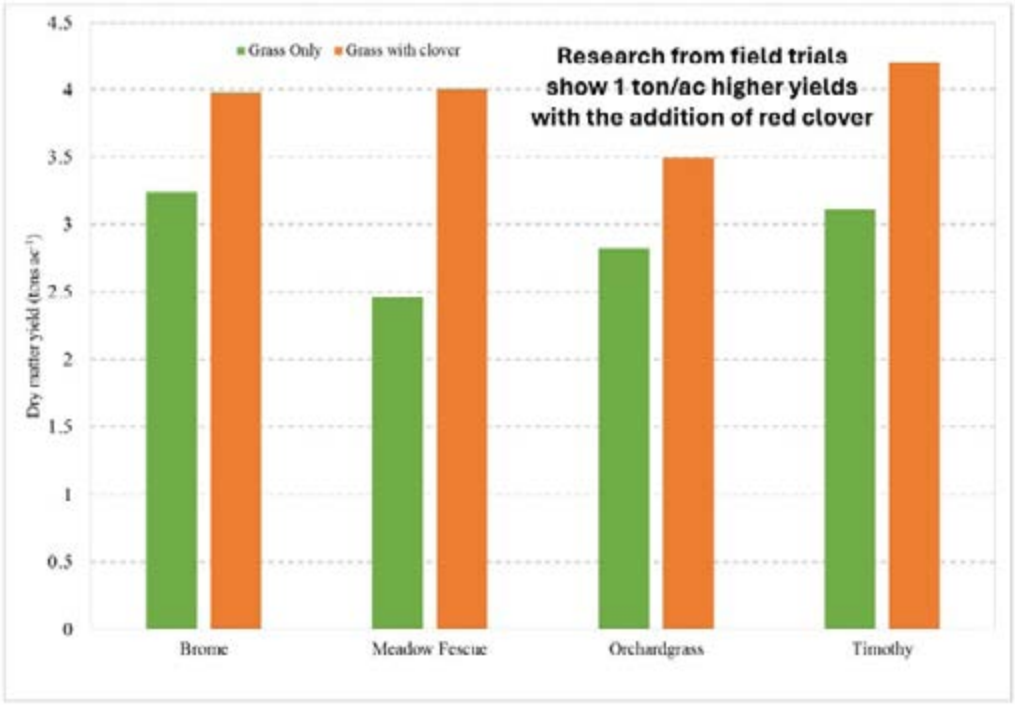
Figure 1. Grass species with and without clover and impact on dry matter yield.



Data also showed that farms spending more per acre on seed and fertilizer produced more milk per cow. This may be related to farms continuing to improve perennial forage stands by introducing improved grass species/varieties, adding legumes, and adding soil fertility amendments to support higher yields and quality. One of the least expensive methods to improve forages is through frost seeding legumes. The addition of fertility inputs such as lime or wood ash to keep soil pH in an ideal range (6.2 to 6.8) can also support improved plant diversity and density to enhance forage quantity, quality, and soil health.

Interestingly, data from both the cost of production study and the 2024 national survey showed that farms including a higher proportion of pasture in the diet produced less milk per cow. However, higher pasture intake may lead to higher net income. Depending on the cost of managing the grazing system and the value of milk produced, pasture could be a lower cost feed source compared to stored forages. Different farms will have different "break-even" points for pasture intake and each farm will have to determine what works best.

There are many potential reasons milk production may be lower with higher pasture intake levels. Pasture productivity and quality change over the course of the grazing season as plants mature. Generally, forage quality decreases as plants progress in maturity and fiber becomes less digestible. This limits the amount of forage the cows can eat, and the amount of energy they are able to get from digestible fiber or plant sugars. In addition, the relative amounts of protein and energy also changes seasonally with changes in plant maturity and pasture composition. Excess protein relative to energy can lead to high milk urea nitrogen (MUN), loose manure and poor productivity in the herd. Growing conditions, including temperature, moisture, soil fertility, and pest/disease pressure can also impact pasture productivity and quality. Relying more heavily on pasture also often requires more land to be utilized in the grazing system. Long walking distances between the barn, water, and pasture can expend energy that could have otherwise been used to support milk production. Similarly, other conditions like heat and flies can negatively impact cow grazing behavior. All these could lead to a lower dry matter intake despite a higher proportion of it coming from pasture. Finally, when cows

are managed off pasture during the non-grazing season, there may be more opportunities to observe and manage the herd more effectively. For example, in the winter, farmers may be able to push feed up to the animals more frequently supporting increased forage intake. Similarly, it may be easier to spend time observing cows in the barn to catch heats and illnesses which can impact the breeding and health programs which ultimately impact milk production. These are some of the factors that may explain why herds that receive more of their nutrition from pasture may be less productive.

Summary:

Overall, grass-fed dairies that spent more on seed and fertility and had "excellent" quality forages produced more milk per cow. Farms with better labor efficiency, higher milk sales per cow, and longer grazing seasons had lower costs of production. ◆

You can read all the grass-fed dairy farmer resources on the University of Vermont Northwest Crops and Soils website: https://www.uvm.edu/extension/nwcrops/grass-fed-dairy. If you don't have computer access, contact Sara Ziegler at 802-309-3472 to receive a copy of the grass-fed production manual or other resources of interest by mail. If you are a grass-fed farmer shipping milk in VT, NY or NH and would like to participate in the cost of production project this winter, contact Sarah Flack at 802-309-3714.

We would like to thank all the farmers who graciously participated in this project. The information gathered through this project is helping us identify aspects of grass-fed dairy management critical to helping farmers be successful in this system. This project is part of a larger research project led by the University of Vermont, supported by funding from the USDA's Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), titled Enhancing the Viability of Grass-Fed Dairy Production in the U.S. Through Comprehensive Research and Extension (Project no. 2023-51300). For more information about the grass-fed project, contact Heather Darby at heather.darby@uvm.edu or 802-524-6501.

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Beef-on-Dairy: Breeding Decisions Today for the Future
Beef and Calf Prices Continue to Climb

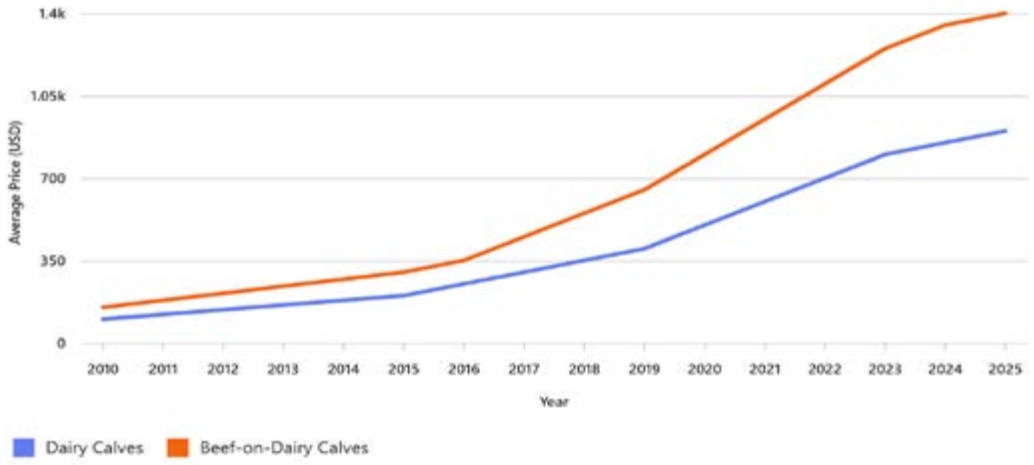
By Robert Goodling

Beef prices — for both livestock producers and consumers — have been on the rise for the past six years. While dairy producers have historically had limited involvement in the beef industry, today's strong prices make it increasingly important to maximize returns from both calves and cows leaving the farm.

Fifteen years ago, the value gap between dairy calves and beef-on-dairy calves was minimal, with prices typically under $200 per calf. As shown in Figure 1, prices for both dairy and beef-on-dairy calves have climbed steadily since then, but the value of beef-on-dairy calves has consistently outpaced their dairy counterparts.

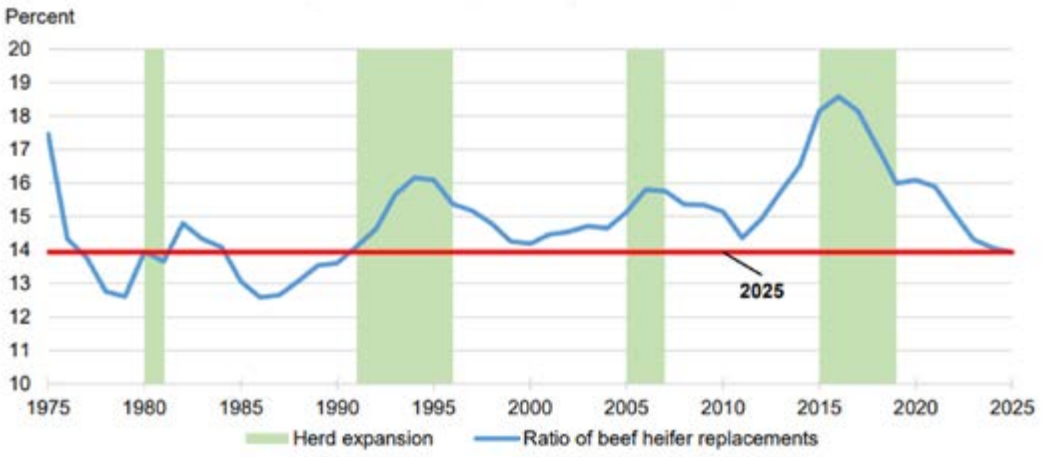
Although this data reflects conventional calves, organic markets tend to follow similar trends — particularly during periods of high prices and tight supply. Recent data from the FINBIN database shows that organic calf and cull cow sales, as a percentage of gross margin, closely mirror those of conventional herds (FINBIN, 2025). Both markets have seen these percentages double in the past five years, with continued strength expected through the end of 2025.

Figure 1: 15-Year Historical Dairy Calf and Beef-on-Dairy Calf Prices



Source: USDA, AMS 2025. "National Dairy Comprehensive Report." https://www.ams.usda.gov

Figure 2: 40-Year Historical Trend for U.S. Ratio of Beef Replacement Heifers



Note: The historical low for beef replacement heifers could not be established as NASS's current classification system is different prior to 1970.
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service calculations using data from USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Why Beef-on-Dairy Calves Are in Demand

While dairy heifer calves remain valuable, this discussion focuses on the beef side of the equation.

Beef-on-dairy calves are in high demand due to historically low numbers of beef replacement heifers (Figure 2). In 2025, replacement heifers made up just 14% of the national beef herd — meaning fewer than one in seven beef calves were retained as replacements. Without more heifers entering the system, the beef industry must continue sourcing calves elsewhere, such as from beef-on-dairy programs.

Imports of feeder calves have also been constrained by health and biosecurity concerns, particularly from traditional suppliers like Mexico. These challenges are expected to keep domestic calf supplies tight and prices elevated, even as demand remains strong. As with any commodity, fluctuations in supply or demand will ripple through

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the broader market, influencing profitability across both beef and dairy sectors.

How Dairy Producers Can Benefit

Calf and cull cow sales can significantly strengthen the net margins of both conventional and organic dairies. To fully capture these opportunities, producers should carefully evaluate their replacement heifer program before breeding for beef.

Understanding herd dynamics—including how many heifers are needed to sustain the milking herd—is critical. Several factors influence how many calves are required and how many ultimately enter milk production, including:

- Average calving interval: How frequently cows produce a calf
- Age at first calving
- Percentage of heifer calves born
- Calf mortality rate

In addition, factors from the adult herd affect replacement needs, such as:

- Culling rate
- Age at first calving
- Non-completion rate of heifers (those that leave the system before entering the milking herd)

A thorough evaluation of both the heifer program and herd management practices ensures the operation maintains the optimal number of replacements. Once that foundation is established, dairies can explore beef-on-dairy breeding opportunities with greater confidence.

However, these decisions carry financial implications. Raising too many heifers increases costs — feed, supplies, and labor — that may not be offset by older animal sales. Conversely, maintaining too few replacements can drive up expenses from purchasing outside animals, elevate veterinary costs due to biosecurity risks, and reduce income from cull sales.

In Summary

In recent years, dairy operations have seen stronger profits from calf and cull cow markets — and prices are expected to remain favorable in the near term. Dairies that optimize reproductive performance and maintain a balanced replacement heifer program will be well-positioned to capitalize on these trends, enhance profitability, and secure a more resilient financial future. ◆

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NODPA & WODPA's shared statement on organic exemption from paying into the FMMO

The Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (NODPA) is the largest grassroots organization of organic dairy producers and has remained true to its original goal of advocating on behalf of producers, regardless of who they sell their milk to, for a sustainable pay price, plus protect the integrity of the USDA Organic Regulations.

The Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA) strives to preserve, protect and ensure the sustainability and integrity of organic dairy farming, representing organic dairy farms in the western United States. WODPA is committed to advocating for organic dairies, their livelihoods and issues impacting the sustainability of the organic dairy industry.

NODPA & WODPA unite under a common goal of advocating for organic dairy producers while protecting the integrity of the USDA organic seal. We believe that resources derived from organic dairy should stay in the organic dairy ecosystem. We believe this is possible through an organic dairy exemption of the FMMO but there is still a need for organic producers to be protected. We are aware that 15A petitions were filed separately with the USDA by CROPP Cooperative, Aurora Organic Dairy Corp. and Horizon Organic Dairy LLC. to exempt them, as organic milk handlers, from paying into the Pool. To view those petitions, click here.

The Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) system was created in the 1930s to guarantee fair milk prices, ensure an adequate supply of milk, and prevent the exploitation of producers by milk buyers. While changes to organic dairy's role in FMMO participation should be considered, these must occur transparently, with cooperation between handlers and producers and thorough review by the USDA. WODPA & NODPA advocate that any cost savings from exempting organic fluid milk handlers from pooling should be passed directly to producers and included in any official decisions. If organic dairy handlers are exempted from the obligation to contribute to the pool, it remains essential for producers to receive the protections and administrative services offered by the Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO), which should be maintained and expanded as necessary.

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The FMMO establishes a minimum price for all producers. Organic dairy producers are not paid based on the final use of their product or on a calculated All Milk price and do not have a safety net program based on the cost of organic inputs. NODPA and WODPA have noted cases where organic producers received approximately two-thirds of their agreed pay price during periods of surplus, faced quota impositions, and experienced milk disposal at prices as low as $14/cwt. These outcomes are related to challenges in the marketing practices for organic milk by handlers.

The organic dairy industry is consolidating in a way that makes us concerned. As non-profit organizations, WODPA & NODPA are committed to continuing our work on policy measures like the Organic Dairy Data Collection Act and the Organic Dairy Assistance, Investments, and Reporting Yields (ODAIRY) Act of 2025 . We agree that data collection and reporting should be done as an administrative function. However, in the absence of paying into the pool, we ask that handlers commit to providing, supporting and funding the provision of data both currently collected and reported on as well as the data still missing that can form the basis of an organic dairy safety net program. We do expect that the FMMO will continue its monthly publication of the existing retail price of organic half gallons and provide monthly reporting of organic product that is packaged under one Order and sold at retail under another Order. This allows for accurate tracking of the volume of organic milk sold in each Order. In the event that an exemption is granted, producers do expect that the handlers will pay for the continuation of existing publication of data and tracking of organic milk by each Order and will be expanded to include all 11 FMMO Areas.

NODPA & WODPA support keeping organic dairy resources within the organic dairy sector. An exemption from the FMMO could enable this, but protection for organic producers remains necessary.

Signed,

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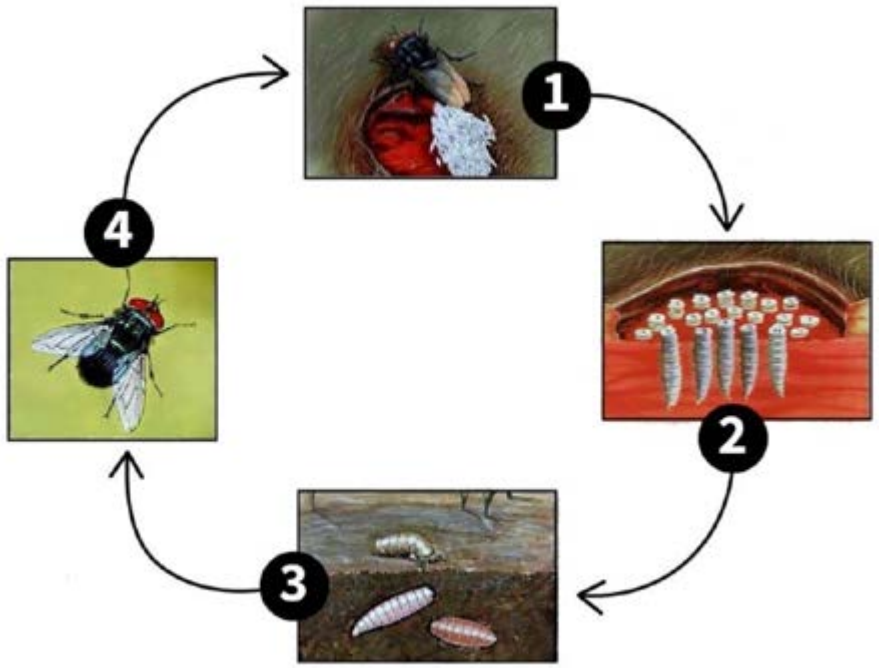
ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Update on the New World Screwworm and H5N1

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

New World Screwworm (NWS, Cochliomyia hominivorax) Life Cycle

1. **The adult screwworm fly is attracted to the smell of an open wound and lays her eggs on the edges of it.**
2. **Within a few hours, the eggs hatch into larvae, which burrow into the wound to feed. This worsens the wound and attracts more flies, which lay more eggs.**
3. **The larvae feed for about 1 week and then fall off and burrow into the ground to pupate.**
4. **After at least 7 days, an adult fly emerges.**



Source: USDA

The New World screwworm (NWS) fly, Cochliomyia hominivorax, is endemic to Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic and countries across South America. It is named for the way its larvae burrows into living flesh. The fly can cause disease in livestock, wildlife, pets and humans.

Eradicated from the United States in the 1960s and a decade later from Mexico, efforts to eradicate the insect throughout Central America were successful by the early 21st century. Since then, it has returned, and a recent report suggests it was discovered 70 miles south of the U.S. border with Texas, marking its closest confirmed detection in recent history.

Reuters reported that Mexico's agriculture ministry and sanitation agency, Senasica, recently mandated that, in Mexico, Ivermectin must be given 72 hours in advance of the movement of cattle under the supervision of staff from the International Regional Organization for Animal and Plant Health. Mexico recorded 6,703 cases of animals infested with screwworm as of September 13, 2025, since the start of the outbreak in November of last year. On November 6th, 2025, Mexico's agriculture ministry discovered a new case of NWS in Nuevo León, a state bordering the United Sates.

The movement of live livestock from Mexico into the US has been halted, although Mexico is lobbying at the end of October 2025 to open the border for live animals. Currently, the US does not have enough sterile flies available to stop the expansion of the screwworm and are in the process of building a new factory to manufacture more sterile screwworm flies. Texas does use baiting stations and work has been started on a vaccine that may be available in 9 months to a year. Texas has the highest number of organic dairy livestock in the US. Texas 'exports" large number of dairy animals across the country. H5N1 proved how quickly a disease can spread from that practice.

There are two recognized treatments for screwworms. Pour-on Ivermectin and a recent FDA approved injectable drug, Dectomax-CA1, produced by Zoetis, that aims to treat New World screwworm larval infestations and prevent reinfestation for 21 days.

Ivermectin has been removed from the National List and our assumption is that Dectomax is not on the List for use by organically certified operations. Certifiers should be aware that there may need to be treatments for infected cattle. This is clearly a case where public investment in the sterile insect control

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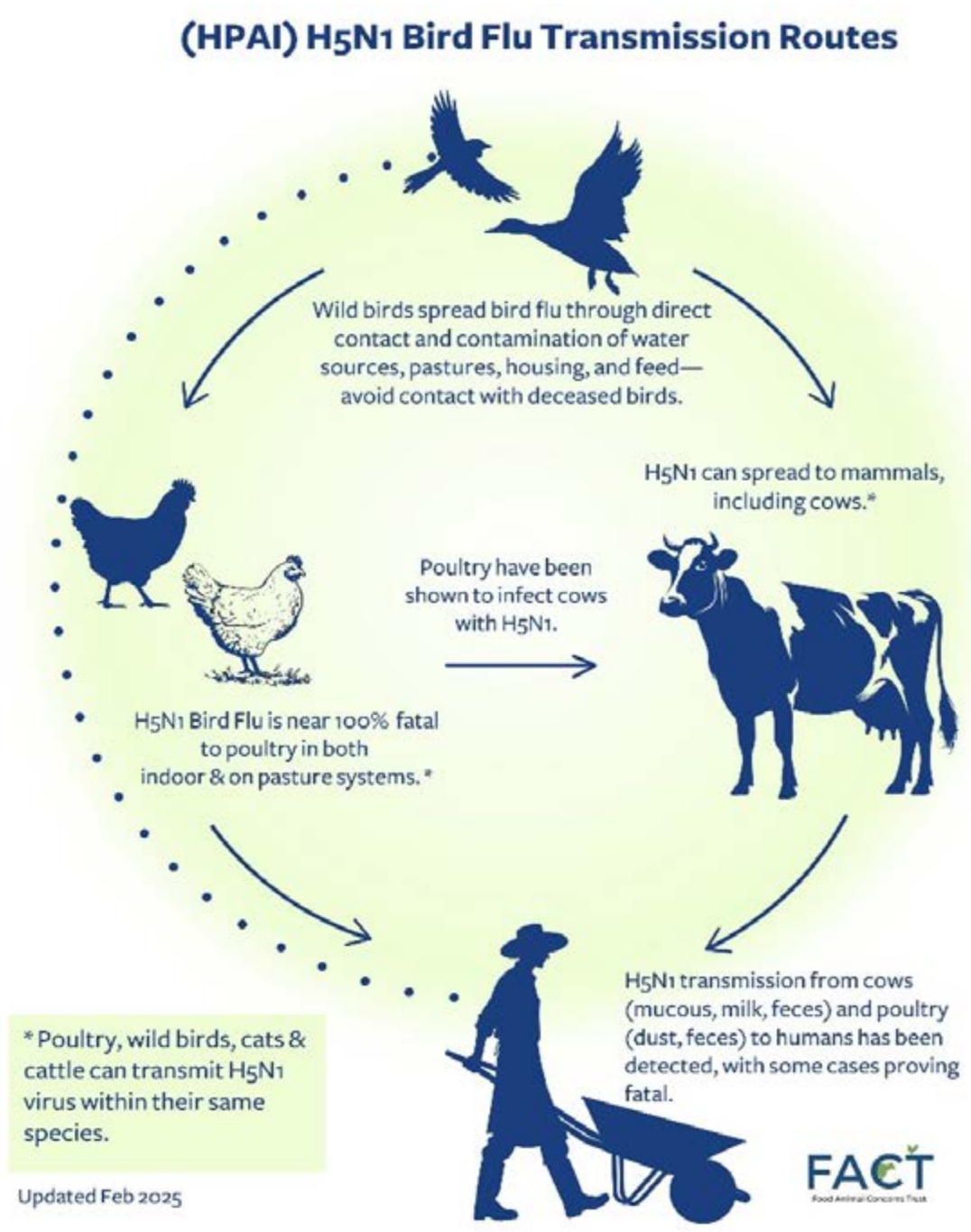
facilities has a significant return on investment in the prevention of screwworm issues.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (H5N1) has experienced a resurgence as a result of the migration season. USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) reports that after a summer pause, H5N1 has returned in significant numbers. Reports of infected wild birds have surged this fall, and three states, Idaho, Nebraska and Texas have identified outbreaks in dairy cows. Between January and August 2025, 26 human infections with H5N1 were detected globally, with 11 deaths in Cambodia, India, and Mexico. Three human cases in the US were reported earlier in 2025, with no cases identified since mid-February. These infections were associated with contact with infected poultry and dairy cattle; and human-to-human transmission has not been identified.

Health experts are concerned that more people will become infected as the virus continues to mutate and jump to mammals around the world. The high fatality rate is also a major concern.

The virus has been found to live for weeks in raw milk and for months in cheese made from raw milk. ◆



ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Ask the Vet

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considering what heifers to keep will help the future hoof health of your herd.

Another valuable investment is building a good relationship with a hoof trimmer. Most farms would benefit from having every cow gets her hooves trimmed at least once a year. Hoof trimming should be used for more than just lame cows. Regular hoof trimming can help prevent issues before they become a problem. The hoof trimmer will also get a sense of what hoof lesions are seen commonly on your farm and can advise about management changes that are needed. Getting your cows hooves trimmed regularly will help prevent lameness and preserve the longevity of cows in your herd.

When problems do come up, get an accurate diagnosis. Knowing what lesions are common on your farm will help you make the management changes necessary to prevent them. The common lesions found on pastured dairies are ulcers/abscess, white line disease, overgrown claws, and hoof rot. Less common but very important to accurately diagnose is digital dermatitis (aka hairy heel wart). All of these lesions have unique treatments and stem from different environmental conditions. I can discuss these differences in a future article.

Prioritizing hoof health will provide the farm with many benefits: more milk, better fertility, longevity in the herd, and improved animal welfare. Hoof health is multi-factorial. We see factors that relate to the environment, the farmer's decisions, and the cow herself. Taking all these into consideration will help you achieve those benefits. ◆

Dr. Dayna Locitzer has over 10 years of experience working with pasture-based dairies in the Northeast. She worked on organic dairy farms in the Hudson Valley of New York for six years before starting vet school. After veterinary school, Dr. Locitzer spent four years in the Brattleboro, Vermont area serving the small dairies in that region. She recently moved back to the Hudson Valley to join Columbia Veterinary Services in Hudson, NY where she works exclusively as a farm animal veterinarian.

Do you have a question for Dr. Locitzer, or an area you'd like her to focus on in future issue? Please send them to the NODPA News editor, noraowens@comcast.net who will share them with her.

FEATURED FARM

ROCKY TOP ACRES, LLC

HUBBARDSVILLE, NY

continued from page 1

Autumn, Mary and Chuck Blood.

Chuck Blood said. "There are organic farmers who believe in what they're doing and have a passion for it and have a deep commitment to the land and the animals."

And things would continue to evolve, as the Blood family - Chuck and Mary, along with their daughter Autum - focus on their continued dedication to the land they value, and the life they love. Striving for constant improvement and finding the best practices for their land is written into their mission statement: "We believe we are stewards of the land and creatures that inhabit it and it is our responsibility to maintain it as a viable, thriving environment for us and the future generations."

Chuck is one of the organic pioneers, lobbying for national standards of practice, and is very active in the organic farming community. The Blood's farm has been certified organic by NOFA-NY for 28 years, although they could have done so prior to that, as they were waiting for the development of an organic milk market and the associated incentives. The farm became certified grass-fed in 2011, under Organic Plus Trust Standards.

Farm Origins

In 1982, Chuck and Mary began working for the Danisevich Farm as hired help. In 1987, Chuck and Mary approached and created a partnership to purchase the farm which became Rocky Top Acres. They gradually purchased the animals, machinery and land, and their dream of owning their own dairy farm came to fruition. From the beginning, Chuck and Mary practiced low input sustainable agriculture, eventually becoming certified organic, and certified grass-fed. They are currently shipping to Organic Valley and are Real Organic Project (ROP) certified.

Autum, now a partner with her parents in the farm's LLC, returned full-time to the farm nine years ago. For Autum, returning to the farm was never in question, "I initially wanted to stay on the farm right after high school, but my parents felt all of us (myself and my three sisters) needed to experience other aspects of life off a farm to make sure we understood the commitment," Autum said. "The next night after that conversation an army recruiter called, and I took that as a sign. I spent four years in the Army. I still didn't come back full-time to the farm, even though I built my home down the road, until after I completed a four-year degree in Human Nutrition and worked a few years in the field. I kept coming back realizing my heart was at the farm."

Chuck and Mary felt that Autum's desire to return the farm was a "blessing and a curse," as they were farming with no retirement plan, no succession plan, and didn't want to see any of their children in the same stressful position.

But Autum kept coming back to the farm, helping part-time while working full-time or going to school. After multiple discussions, Autum and her parents committed to a goal of her eventually taking over the dairy. They created an LLC, which allowed ownership of the liquid assets of the dairy farm to be divided between Chuck, Mary and Autum, with the flexibility for Autum to gain more ownership percentage, until the farm is fully transitioned.

The key to working together as a family has been respect, mutual goals and Autum's ability to prove herself - and her parent's desire to listen - when she wants to implement changes on the farm. If Autum can show them the facts, and make a solid argument, her parents are open to changes she suggests. "For everything you think that I did right, I probably did it wrong 99 times," Chuck said, emphasizing the farm's focus on continually adapting and improving practices. "Make sure to learn from your mistakes."

Allowing Autum to introduce new ideas and implement new methods of management is a part of that overall philosophy, and the ongoing evolution of the farm. "It is something I really do value about my relationship with my parents. I have to prove it is something we should try, with some evidence," Autum said. "We respect each other's strengths, we balance each other."

These strengths happen to complement each other, making division of labor easier. Mary feeds the calves and sets up the milkhouse, while Autum and Chuck handle the milking together, as well as the field work. They have a contract hire who assists with milking. Despite the informal division of labor, they work together on all aspects of farming to keep the dairy running smoothly. "There is no job specific to any one person," Chuck said. "I rely on Autum for her natural ability with the animals"

FEATURED FARM

Pasture and Forage

The farm consists of 528 acres of owned land of which 414 acres are tillable - although they do not till any land. They also rent 212 acres of cropland. The only crop grown on the farm is pasture and hay.

The first cutting of hay is taken off of most fields, and a second cutting taken from certain flexible fields, to meet the needs of the grazing system. Fifty acres of land are considered flexible, and can be used for additional pasture each season, as needed. The pastures are a native grass mix of orchard grass, Kentucky blue grass, big stem and multiple clovers. "I'd like to establish more reeds canary grass and birdsfoot trefoil, however they have been challenging to establish and also to source organically," Chuck said.

Cows eating in the HUFA.

A goal is to have 30 percent of the forage in each pasture coming from clover, which will then provide 65 -70 pounds of nitrogen to feed the grass. They will rejuvenate fields as needed by frost seeding or no-till methods. In winter, after good snow coverage and a January thaw, they will throw down Mammoth or Medium Red clover seeds. These hard-shelled seeds will germinate when conditions are right for the seed to do so. They do brushog the pastures, to prevent weed seeds from developing. They clip back weeds that get too high, with Queen Anne's lace being a particular concern. "This has been the most effective means of rejuvenating the pasture," Chuck said of clipping and frost seeding.

For several years, while renovating the 1929 stanchion barn, the cows were outwintered, with an option to return to the barn. They utilized winter pastures with natural wind breaks for several years prior to erecting a heavy use feeding area (HUFA) in 2022. The renovated former stanchion barn contains the holding area, as well as maternity and calf pens.

Today, the new HUFA provides a designated area for them to feed the herd during the winter, preventing damage to the pastures during inclement weather. This change from outwintering and feeding in the pasture has resulted in an increase in milk production of about three to five pounds per cow. They attribute that increase primarily to the cows maintaining optimal comfort and homeostasis.

Cows are moved into the bedded pack the day before hunting season starts, typically around November 15th. If there is excessively wet fall weather, they may also move them in for a period before that. "We don't want to sacrifice our pasture," Autum said.

The HUFA is a hybrid system, not a true bedded pack, as they do not allow the bedding to pile up. Rather, it is cleaned out approximately every two weeks, with new bedding added daily,

which consists of fine shredded, first cut dry bales (and yes, the cows do eat it). They clean the areas where cows stand daily, along with the holding area and pad.

Manure from the HUFA is spread in the fall, in the form of stored pack manure. They recently enhanced their manure storage to comply with New York State environmental regulations, using a covered concrete pad to store manure and prevent spreading on saturated or frozen ground. This pack style manure is not exposed to the elements as their old open air piles previously were, which allows better containment. They are not seeing the same microbial action as had occurred in their open piles, but after being spread in the fall, the manure will "get all winter to deteriorate" in the fields", Chuck said.

The new manure storage is "almost fully enclosed," Chuck said, with walled and roofed storage, mostly blocking the free flow of air. The manure is not as wet as daily spread manure content. The NPK nutrient profile is 7-8-2, and it is spread at the opportune times for fertility and to prevent runoff.

Increasing soil health, and enhancing forage nutritional quality and cow health, is an ongoing goal. If the soil isn't productive, the cows will let them know. "I use my girls. If they don't eat it, I don't feed it." Chuck said. "What they are willing to eat and what is left" tells him what he needs to know about the forage quality.

They do believe in being proactive, and soil tests are done a minimum of once every three years on the pastures and fields. They use soil amendments, like bone meal, lime and gypsum, to improve the soils.

Grazing Goals

Cows are fed stored feed while in the HUFA during late fall and winter. In the fall, the DMI from pasture ranges from 40-50 percent, and is supplemented with baleage and hay. "What changes as winter approaches, when paddocks are not providing sufficient food, we feed in the pasture during the daytime allowing them to still graze some if desired but still meet their requirements by feeding them. In the evening, they are still free to go to a pasture, however they are able to choose to stay in the winter barn and eat at the rail, where we feed a bale for that evening," Autum said. "Many eat what they desire and choose to leave the barn to spend the night in the paddock."

Once there is snow, the cows are fed at the rail with two bales of baleage in the morning and two baleage bales at night. These amounts are adjusted up or down, depending on the cows' needs. Cows always have access to a dry bale of first or second cutting hay. The milking herd always has free access to the outdoors.

As spring green-up occurs, the cows are allowed to graze for a few hours per day, with the duration of grazing gradually increasing to prevent digestive upset. They will be supplemented at the rail, until they are fully transitioned to pasture. The DMI during the summer grazing season is 95 percent from pasture grazing, as the cows are out grazing all of the time, with access to a high-quality first cutting of hay on the way out to pasture. "The hay adds some needed fiber to the pasture diet, Chuck said, adding roughage to help increase butterfat content of the milk. The hay lasts a long time since the cows are most interested in grazing"

"The majority of our animals are meeting their nutritional needs through grazing only," Autum said. "The only exception is our youngest age group - less than six months - being supplemented additionally with high-quality, dry second cutting. We made our grazing systems all-inclusive for all age groups even though technically the youngest bracket, less than 6 months, does not have to be on pasture, because we have found the animals benefit substantially from the access to outdoors."

They are constantly re-evaluating their grazing system. They want to increase the pasture intake from grazing, improve forage nutritional quality, and therefore enhance cow nutrition. "Our grazing system is the backbone of the operation," Chuck and Autum said. "We are still learning how to graze. With intensive management grazing, you must watch your cows."

Paddocks are designed to grow a bit more than the cows can consume. Permanent fields have permanent fencing of high-tensile wire with wooden posts every 40 feet, while

FEATURED FARM

temporary wires and step-in posts are used in the flexible fields. The permanently fenced pastures vary in size depending on topography, trees and soil type. Some are three acres; others are one and one-half acre. They are 24-hour paddocks.

"Our animals are out to pasture 24/7 except for milking times," Autum said "When it's a hot day, we change our rotation pattern to our paddocks that provide natural shade and water, allowing the cows to properly keep themselves cool and comfortable."

Free choice minerals are available to all age groups, even new born calves. Phosphorus is important because they don't feed grain. They use T& P Pasture Pack, a local feed mineral mix along with Redmond Conditioner®, which is an all-natural volcanic clay, Redmond Garlic Salt, kelp, dicalcium phosphate, and diatomaceous earth.

Breeding age and bred heifers graze together on 74 acres, divided into eight paddocks, in a rotational system. Calves less than six months of age are in a four-paddock system, across two acres, with supplemental feeding of the best organic second cutting hay and milk.

Those animals which are older than six months of age, but are not yet ready to be bred - basically the animals between 200 and 600 pounds - are grazed on 9 total acres of land, and rotated every three to seven days on nine divided paddocks, depending on pasture conditions.

Following low-input, sustainable farming practices, they use natural water on the farm. A recent grant from the National Farmers Organization provided a solar water pump system to move water from a farm pond and into grazing paddocks for the milking herd. They use seven natural springs on the pond and a gravity-fed pipe system as well, supplying water to the paddocks for breeding age group.

Making Milk

Rocky Top Acres has been with Organic Valley since 2010. They had previously shipped to Hood, Horizon, and The Organic Cow (which was bought by Horizon) Juniper Valley, and Butternut.

The milking herd ranges throughout the year from about 60 to 80 head, depending on the number of dry cows they have at any given time. There are 60 head milking currently, and there will be approximately 70 cows milking by the first of the year, with a high of 80 milking by February.

The milking now occurs in the double six herringbone parlor they installed in 2020 and started using in 2021.The parlor hardware was 30 years old when they purchased it and took it out from another farm. "It didn't change production levels from stanchion milking, Chuck said, but the cows definitely are more motivated to milk. It's a comfort issue, and a safety one, for both the cows and the humans."

The parlor was designed with the animal's comfort and human contact in mind. They researched parlors at other farms and asked farmers what they wish they had done differently. Then, they designed their parlor to have a wider and deeper pit, to allow for room to maneuver safely in all circumstances, and to account for the height of those doing the milking. "We don't want to lose quality time with our cows," Autum added. "We wanted the parlor to be as wide as ours is."

Keeping in close contact with the cows, by being able to freely move amongst them and have the ability to treat them in the parlor, was an important part of the parlor design decision-making process. The wide design allows them to observe the cows and monitor their needs, as preventative treatment and observation are critical

FEATURED FARM

Cows lining up for milking.

components to the farm's organic management practices. "We aren't trying to be efficient as much as we are trying to take care of our animals," Autum and Chuck said. It also allows for "economics of labor," as one person could milk the cows without issue.

Five years after making the switch to parlor milking, the cows remain as acclimated to human contact as they were, attesting to the effort they put in and the decisions they made when designing the parlor. The age of the cows in the milking herd currently averages eight years old. The oldest cow milking is 13 years, however, they have had cows up to 17 years old in the milking herd. "We don't turn over animals very quickly, animals tend to have a long life here," they said.

Their annual production averages 9,300 pounds per cow. The somatic cell count averages 188,000. Milk butterfat content averages 3.8 percent, and protein averages 3.04 percent on an annual basis. Total solids are approximately 12.2, hovering around the new Organic Valley premium pay percentage. They test their milk monthly, using Dairy One.

The cows are primarily Milking Shorthorn crosses. They have some Hereford crosses, which they introduced in the late 1990s, while some Dutch Belted Holstein genetics remain in the herd. They also have some Lineback's and Jersey crosses. They recently added some Fleckvieh genetics, from breeding with a Fleckvieh bull two years ago, and are quite pleased with the results. The Milking Shorthorns have a great disposition, and Fleckvieh genetics add to the body conditioning.

While Chuck can breed by artificial insemination, he chooses not to do so, instead they use a herd bull. The primary issue with AI is the cost of the semen, as well as conception rate. During the summer, while grazing 24/7, they don't always observe the heats as easily and the bull can breed the herd, and they get better conception results than they did with AI. They use the best bull they have in their own herd for breeding each year. They will buy in a bull, which is the only reason they aren't a closed herd. They select for feet, legs, chest cavity - the traits that indicate strength, seeking a cow that "can walk a mile and still make milk," Chuck said.

Increasing body condition is a goal without sacrificing milk production. Because they are grassfed, they are regularly scored on body conditioning. They are currently raising another Milking Shorthorn bull for breeding age heifers this fall, and he will be introduced into the milking herd the following year. They would like to find another Fleckvieh bull calf to raise for future breeding.

With a low turnover rate in the milking herd, they aim to raise 12 replacement heifers annually. Calves that are not raised are sold to the local market, however, there is no organic dairy calf market. They did have an organic beef calf buyer, but that person is no longer in business.

FEATURED FARM

They do send some bred heifers or cows to an organic buyer if they must cull some animals. "Certain things we consider when we cull are, surplus numbers, udder configuration of the animal, or we don't like her attitude."

Animals six months and over are vaccinated for pink eye in the spring, and in the fall, are given a 10-way vaccine, primarily for pneumonia. This year they are introducing apple cider vinegar as a preventative for upper respiratory issues, adding it to the milking herd's feed. "Along with some research on the benefits and our own observations after using it with a sick cow this past winter, we find it is worth trying it with the whole herd as a preventative" Autum said. "The prevention is the critical piece."

Adding diatomaceous earth to minerals is another beneficial preventative. "When you are a grazing herd you have to be concerned with parasite load. It is critical to watch for signs of parasitic infestation in your livestock - especially your youngest age groups - like body condition, manure composition, and mineral consumption," Autum and Chuck said. "That is why we continue to supplement dry second cutting to this age group and keep them on milk up to five months. They don't have that immunity foundation yet that can handle the detrimental attack of a parasite infestation and demands of development."

Dr. Guy Dettloff, a retired Organic Valley veterinarian, taught them the importance of diatomaceous earth in parasite control. They credit his teaching as the impetus behind their use of diatomaceous earth for parasite control in the herd, which has been beneficial to herd health.

They currently dehorn calves using a burner method and dull-it to reduce pain sensation for the calves. They also use some polled genetics and about 20% of their calves are now polled.

Calf Care

Six calves are raised in the spring and six in the fall. The calf stays with the mother for 12 to 24 hours, in a maternity pen, which they've found increases calf and cow health. Calves are not vaccinated at birth. They have six newborn calf pens, where the calves can see one another and socialize. They are bottle fed from fresh cow's milk via pail milker for approximately two weeks and then moved to a group type pen. Once calves are in group pen, they are already on milk pails and have free access to water and minerals. All calves from newborn to grouped calves have access to minerals, second cutting and water throughout the day. The second cutting bales are processed, so they are easier to digest.

They have been introducing mob feeders into the group pens but have had issues with cross-sucking. The flow from the nipples is too fast, and they are working on a design to slow things down. A slower flow will allow the calves to spend more time sucking on the feeder, thereby lowering the desire to cross-sucking.

The calf pens are bedded with kiln dried shavings, which provide a clean, dry, and long-lasting bedding, absorbing moisture well. Calves go out to pasture as early as three weeks of age.

Organic Dairy Insight

Utilizing social media platforms would be an effective means of spreading the word about organic dairy farming, and Autum would like to see the organic dairy industry optimize their use of social media to better market the products and the organic dairy farming culture. Connecting the milk back to the stewardship of the land and the mission of the farm raising that milk would enhance the value of organic milk. "Organic farming is not just about the product we produce, and sadly that seems to be all that is highlighted when it comes to a defining characteristic that people talk about," she said. "I want people to say, 'I chose organic milk because I like how the farm raises their cows or how they implement certain standards, not just about how the milk tastes.'"

While Chuck was involved in lobbying for the National Organic Program standards, he felt the DMI of 30 percent from pasture was too low, and that as things developed, the standards would be raised. Today, he laments the large, "organic" dairy farms,

FEATURED FARM

and the lax enforcement of even the existing standards. He is seeking solutions, not excuses, to protect and enhance organic certification.


Rocky Acres farm barns.

Currently, Chuck is serving on Organic Valley's Dairy Executive Committee (DEC). There are five DEC representatives in New York, elected by the cooperative's members. Their role is to serve as a liaison between the dairy farming members and Organic Valley's executives, listening to complaints or suggestions from members and representing their concerns.

Chuck also wants to see improvements in local certified organic infrastructure. "The organic community needs to look into an organic slaughter facility," Chuck said.

Autum and Chuck feel it is important to learn from other farmers and they routinely attend pasture walks and conferences. "It's important to continue to learn something new every day," they said. "It's the simple things that sometimes can make the biggest impact." At Rocky Top Acres, LLC they are still improving, learning and growing. ◆

The Bloods can be reached at Rocky Top Acres, LLC, 1659 Quaker Hill Road, Hubbardsville, New York, 13355, rockytopacres@frontiernet.net , or rockytoporganics@gmail.com , 315-899-8907.

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PLC payments, and some forms of disaster assistance — while operating with very limited staffing. It's still unclear exactly which tasks and programs within those categories FSA employees will be allowed to work on.

Without NOP staff, new complaints aren't being processed, variances on regulations as in the case of the drought in the northeast, aren't being processed and active investigations/ appeals are stalled. Under normal circumstances, the NOP is tracking suspicious imports at ports of entry and working with Customs and Border Protection to stop fraudulent products from coming into the U.S. The lack of oversight due to the shutdown weakens the deterrent effect that protects honest farmers and brands. Accreditation and oversight of certifiers is also paused.

Don't expect any progress on the Organic Certification Cost Share Program, as USDA FSA continues to work through their process for reconciling 2024, despite the program being funded for 2025/2026 year.

The November National Organic Standards Board Meeting in Omaha was cancelled. It is not yet clear if the National Organic Program will reschedule this meeting and cancellation of the fall meeting means that important votes on sunset materials and proposals did not take place. An important procedural note is that five of the NOSB members who have worked on the recommendations for sunset and other priorities, will end their term on the NOSB in the middle of January 2026, and will not be available to explain their recommendations at the Spring 2026 NOSB meeting. NODPA, and many others, did file written comments to the NOSB ahead of the October 8, 2025, deadline via the federal register.

Farmer Emergency Fund -

https://www.nofavt.org/farmer-emergency-fund

NOFA-VT's Farmer Emergency Fund, established in 1997, helps organic and NOFA-VT member farmers who have experienced impacts from natural or unnatural events. The Fund offers two types of grants; $2,500 grants are available for NOFA-VT farmer members that are in good standing for at least one year and $5,000 grants are available to any farm that is VOF certified organic with no waiting period. Applications are accepted and reviewed continuously by a loan review committee with successful applicants being notified within two weeks of submission.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices November 2025

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Market Information Branch published estimated national organic fluid milk product sales for July and August 2025, compiled with data from the Federal Milk Marketing Order. Total US sales of organic fluid milk products were estimated at 242 million pounds in July 2025, with organic Whole Milk sales at 132 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduced Milk at 110 million pounds. In August 2025, total sales of organic packaged milk were 236 million pounds, with sales of organic packaged Whole Milk at 129 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduced Milk at 107 million pounds.

In July 2025, the data shows a decrease in sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged fluid products of 3.2% over July 2024, and the August 2025 data shows a decrease in sales of 6.2% from August 2024. There was an 8.4% decrease in Organic Fat Reduced Milk in July 2025 over July 2024, and a 12.9 % decrease in August 2025 over August 2024. Year to date, July 2025, organic fluid milk sales are 0.2% lower than the same period in 2024 and in August 2025 they are 1.4% lower than the previous year. Year to date August 2025 Organic Whole Milk fluid sales are only 3.4% higher than at the same time in 2024. Whether this is partly due to a tight supply, higher retail price or more organic milk diverted to cultured products is difficult to determine.

The average national retail price for organic milk, as recorded by Federal Milk Marketing Order in September 2025, rose to $5.42 per half gallon for Whole Milk and Organic Reduced Fat 2% milk. In October 2025, there was a national average back down to $5.35 for Organic Whole Milk half gallon and Reduced Fat 2% milk. There was the usual range in prices for different locations, with a low of $4.19 in Syracuse, NY; $5.17 in Boston, MA; $5.39 in Hartford, CT and $4.39 in Houston, Texas and a high of $6.89 in Pittsburgh, PA for July 2025.

Converted to a cwt price, the $5.35 at retail is worth $124/cwt.. The farm share averages $38/cwt. Approximately 70% of that income, almost $85/cwt., goes to other costs, including processing, packaging, transportation, retailing, advertising, management and profit. As a reminder, retailers set the retail price depending on many variables and that is usually why the store brand/private label is less expensive to consumers than the branded product.

Estimated Fluid Milk Products Sales Reports

Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	July2025	2025 Year to date	July-2024	Year to date
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	132	959	-3.2%	4.8%
Flavored Whole milk	1	5	4.5%	-18.3%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	79	561	-3.1%	0.5%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	17	118	-15.6%	-19.5%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	10	71	-16.2%	-9.3%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	4	34	-39.5%	-27.1%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	2	-46.5%	-12.9%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	110	786	-8.4%	-5.5%
Total Organic Milk Products	**242**	**1,751**	**-5.7%**	**-0.2%**

Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	August 2025	2025 Year to date	August-2024	Year to date
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	129	1,087	-6.2%	3.4%
Flavored Whole milk	1	5	-8.2%	-17.0%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	75	637	-11.1%	-1.0%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	17	136	-15.5%	-19.0%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	9	80	-18.0%	-10.4%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	5	39	-19.1%	-26.2%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	2	-19.5%	-13.5%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	107	892	-12.9%	-6.5%
Total Organic Milk Products	**236**	**1,987**	**-9.4%**	**-1.4%**

Data may not add due to rounding to the nearest million pounds

Organic milk is still short in the Northeast and across the country, heightened by severe drought in some areas and a shortage of organic hay in New York, and now Canada. There is serious competition between milk buyers, some of whom have widened their search for supply and co-packing to the Midwest, where Pay Price has increased to match the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. Pay Price ranging from an annualized average of $35/cwt to $45/cwt for grain and pasture fed organic dairies. Grass Fed organic certified dairies with A2A2 cows range from $38/cwt up to $55/cwt, depending on how much the buyer is paying, to reflect the increased costs and lower production of Grass Fed production and extra certification costs.

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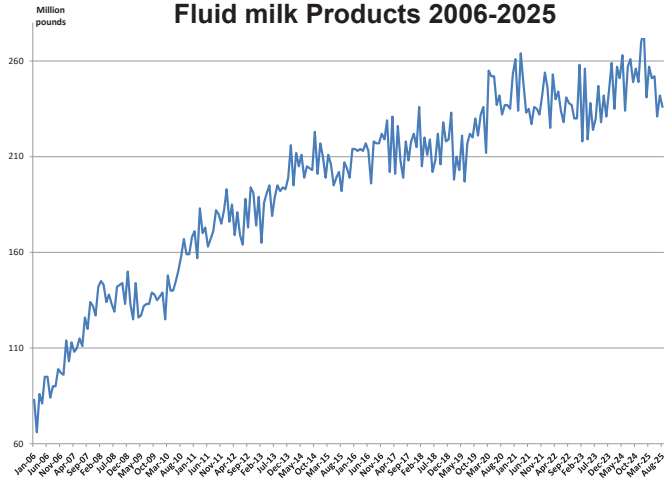
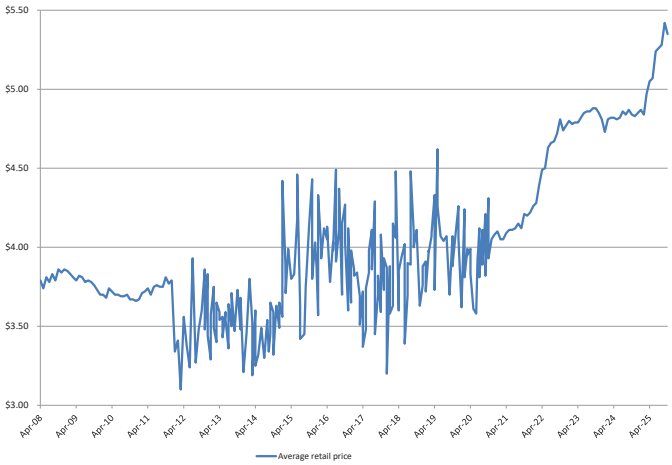
ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

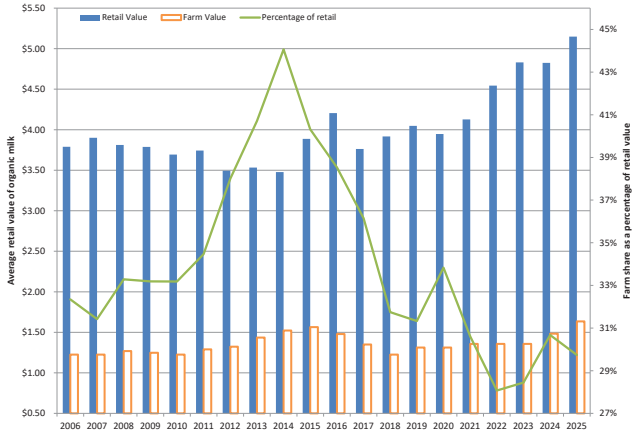
Estimated Total U.S. Sales of Organic Fluid milk Products 2006-2025



Average Organic Retail price for 1/2 gallons as reported by USDA AMS 2012-2025

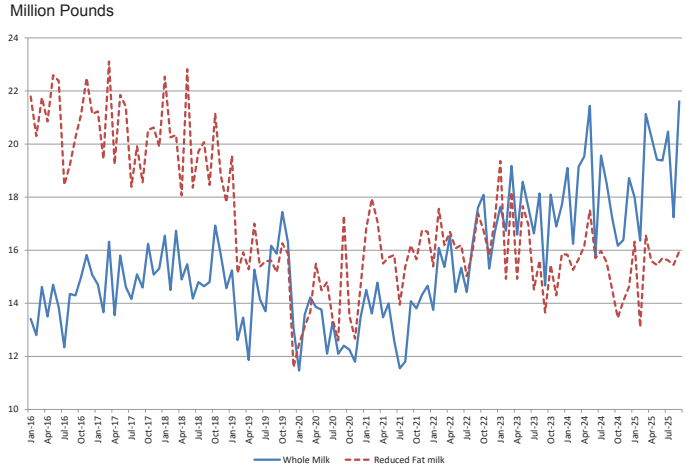


Average retail price, average farm share and percentage for half gallon of organic milk

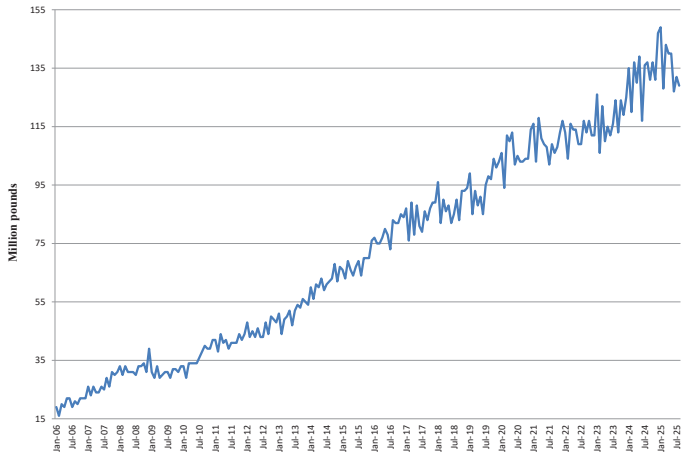


Utilization of Organic Fluid milk in FMMO 1 2016-2025

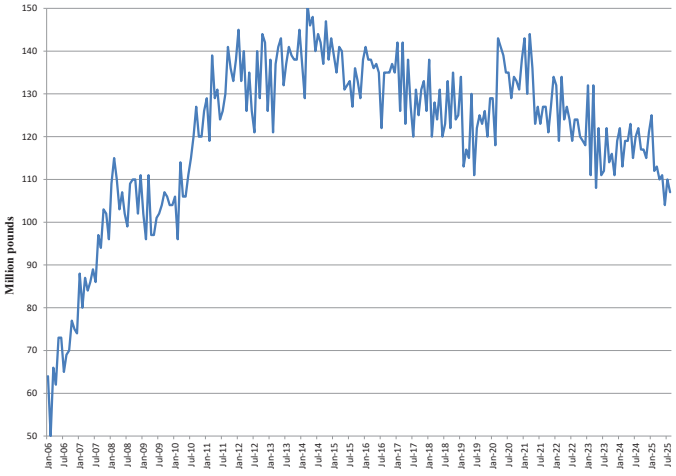
(not including fluid packaged milk processed out of order)



Organic Whole Milk Retail Sales 2006-2025



Organic Reduced-Fat retail sales 2006-2025



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices

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Federal Milk Marketing Order 1 (Order) reported that in August 2025, fluid Organic Milk packaged and utilized within the Order totaled 32.69 million pounds; lower than the previous year of 34.07 million pounds. In August 2025, sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged in the Order were 17.24 million pounds, 1.28 million pounds lower than August 2024. In August 2025, sales of Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged and utilized in the Order was 15.45 million pounds, approximately the same as the 15.55 million pounds in June 2024. Total Class 1 milk (both conventional and organic) packaged outside the Order, but sold within the Order, increased by 14.47 million pounds in August 2025 over August 2024.

In September 2025, sales of fluid Organic Milk packaged and utilized within the Order totaled 37.57 million pounds, higher than the previous year of 31.72 million pounds. In September 2025, sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged in the Order were 21.61 million pounds, 4.4 million pounds higher than September 2024. In September 2025, sales of Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged and utilized in the Order was 15.96 million pounds, 1.46 million pounds higher than September 2024. Packaged milk coming into the Order in September 2025 increased by 17.27 million pounds over the same period in 2024. Organic milk averages approximately 19% of the fluid milk packaged in the Order. From January to September, FMMO 1 reports an increase of 1.58% or 4.89 million pounds in organic packaged milk, from 308.72 million pounds in 2024 to 313.61 million pounds in 2025. Packaged milk coming into the Order during the same period, both conventional and organic, has increased by 61.67 million pounds as of September 2025 compared to September 2024. The Stonyfield/US Lactalis plant in New Hampshire is not included in this data because it does not process organic fluid milk and has chosen not to be regulated under the Order.

There are 3 other FMMO's that publish reports on the volume of Class 1 organic packaged milk in their Order, two of which report how much is 'exported' to other Orders. In August 2025, of the 236 million pounds packaged and sold as Class 1 organic milk in the US, 46.74 million pounds was from Order 32 (Central) of which 41.32 million pounds were utilized in other Orders. Order 51 (California) packaged 38.77 million pounds of organic milk in August 2025 of which just over 700,000 million pounds were sold in other Orders. Order 33 (Mideast) packages less than Order 1,

UTILIZATION OF ORGANIC FLUID MILK PRODUCTS -Class 1 (Million pounds) in FMMO 1 (Northeast) not including product packaged out of order

Month	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2025	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2024	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2023	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2022	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2021	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2020
JANUARY	34.31	34.93	37.00	29.14	31.32	23.93
FEBRUARY	29.46	31.50	31.65	33.65	31.56	26.69
MARCH	37.70	34.82	37.37	31.56	31.87	27.90
APRIL	35.86	35.68	31.51	33.23	28.97	29.35
MAY	34.85	38.95	36.24	30.49	29.72	28.25
JUNE	35.08	31.51	34.59	31.53	28.41	26.90
JULY	36.09	35.54	31.15	29.44	25.50	26.70
AUGUST	32.69	34.07	33.75	32.12	27.18	24.70
SEPTEMBER	37.57	31.72	28.32	35.00	30.26	29.70
OCTOBER		29.62	33.54	34.83	29.47	25.78
NOVEMBER		30.48	31.19	31.13	31.07	24.47
DECEMBER		33.34	33.56	33.78	31.36	28.13
ANNUAL		402.16	399.87	385.90	356.68	322.50

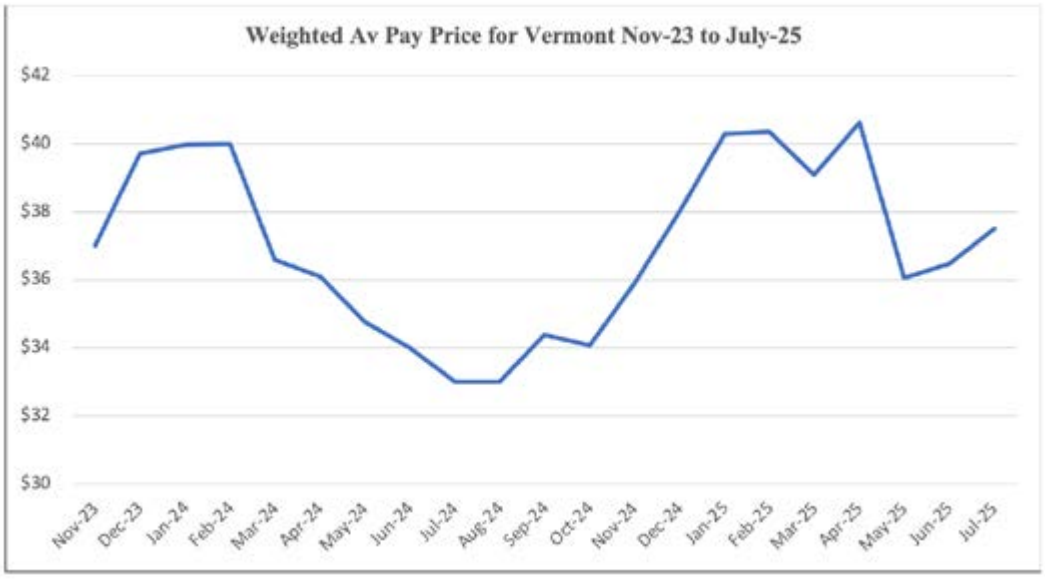
UTILIZATION OF ORGANIC FLUID MILK PRODUCTS - (Million pounds) in FMMO 32 (Central)

Month	2025	2025 in Order	2025 out of Order	2024	2024 in order	2024 out of order	2023	2023 in order	2023 out of order
January	55.36	6.59	48.77	56.23	6.41	49.82	55.21	6.51	48.70
February	47.93	5.43	42.49	51.88	5.77	46.12	49.11	5.49	43.63
March	50.05	6.28	43.78	53.96	5.93	46.29	52.73	5.59	45.44
April	47.65	5.45	42.20	54.13	6.04	48.09	49.18	5.64	43.53
May	48.28	5.70	42.58	51.32	5.81	45.51	48.21	5.40	42.78
June	44.98	5.32	39.66	52.56	5.51	47.04	45.20	5.57	39.63
July	50.18	6.25	43.93	52.68	5.63	47.04	48.45	5.70	42.75
August	46.74	5.42	41.32	55.63	6.26	49.37	48.47	5.63	42.85
September	49.37	5.76	43.62	50.68	5.41	45.27	48.76	5.58	43.18
October				50.36	5.89	44.47	49.73	5.65	42.48
November				48.04	5.99	42.04	49.60	5.48	44.12
December				53.98	6.73	47.21	54.17	6.08	48.10
Total				631.45	71.39	558.25	598.82	68.31	527.18

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

THE VERMONT REPORT

Month	Volume(lbs.)	Ave. daily production per cow (lbs.)	Min Price	Max Price	Weighted Av Price	Ave. Butterfat	Ave. Protein	Avg Monthly Production/cow (lbs.)
Nov-23	1,155,583	39.60	$28	$44	$37			
Dec-23	1,227,212	39.30	$28	$47	$40			
Jan-24	1,224,497	40.20	$35	$47	$40	4.21%	3.03%	1,246
Feb-24	1,073,895	41.90	$36	$47	$40	4.82%	3.43%	1,299
Mar-24	1,088,144	46.40	$34	$43	$37	4.64%	3.38%	1,139
Apr-24	958,104	44.50	$33	$42	$36	4.59%	3.34%	1,239
May-24	1,105,985	51.00	$32	$39	$35	4.38%	3.32%	1,580
Jun-24	860,631	50.70	$32	$39	$34	4.20%	3.22%	1,541
Jul-24	1,013,388	48.40	$31	$37	$33	3.99%	3.13%	1,500
Aug-24	1,169,419	47.80	$31	$39	$33	4.03%	3.21%	1,482
Sep-24	1,066,596	48.30	$30	$39	$34	4.09%	3.29%	1,449
Oct-24	1,066,596	46.50	$30	$39	$34	4.39%	3.37%	1,443
Nov-24	1,411,221	42.69	$30	$41	$36	4.45%	3.34%	1,280
Dec-24	1,746,250	48.60	$30	$45	$38	4.46%	3.34%	1,489
Jan-25	1,670,009	46.68	$30	$46	$40	4.46%	3.35%	1,488
Feb-25	1,530,661	47.25	$30	$47	$40	4.50%	3.35%	1,323
Mar-25	1,550,491	48.65	$30	$45	$39	4.42%	3.27%	1,497
Apr-25	1,500,571	45.93	$32	$68	$41	4.44%	3.29%	1,378
May-25	1,009,010	55.45	$32	$40	$36	4.14%	3.16%	1,719



32 and 51, with 21.25 million pounds in August 2025. Texas has claimed that they are the largest producers of organic milk but their FMMO Order, Southwest F.O. 126, does not publish any breakdown of Class 1 organic milk or any other data on organic milk. Saputo Dairy Foods US LLC in Sulphur Springs, Texas, processes extended shelf-life organic dairy products, and WhiteWave Foods, Dallas Texas (Plant Number: 0994) are two of the many exempt distribution plants pooled under the Northeast Order.

The Vermont Report

The Vermont Report has published data since November 2023. The weighted average Pay Price was $36.99/cwt for 21 months, with a range of 27.92/cwt to a maximum of $47.38/cwt (does not include any deductions for hauling). The average daily production per cow averages 46.60 lbs./cow. The milk buyers in Vermont are CROPP Cooperative, US Lactalis direct supply, Upstate Niagara (newly named UNC) and some small processors. The total number of organic dairies in VT is 117 according to the VT Department of Agriculture.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

THE PENNSYLVANIA REPORT

Month	Volume(lbs.)	Ave. daily production per cow (lbs.)	Min Price	Max Price	Weighted Av Price	Ave. Butterfat	Ave. Protein	Ave Monthly Production/cow (lbs.)
Jun-24	1,331,605	31.23	$ 25.05	$ 41.74	$ 33.57	3.98%	3.07%	
Jul-24	1,170,262	27.90	$ 25.50	$ 41.43	$ 33.55	3.88%	2.99%	
Aug-24	1,167,928	27.93	$ 28.45	$ 42.32	$ 34.60	3.99%	3.11%	
Sep-24	1,268,946	30.76	$ 28.70	$ 43.22	$ 35.61	4.17%	3.30%	
Oct-24	1,299,953	28.80	$ 25.85	$ 45.95	$ 35.01	4.41%	3.39%	
Nov-24	1,243,522	33.75	$ 28.80	$ 44.05	$ 35.88	4.49%	3.40%	1,013
Dec-24	988,840	32.80	$ 32.58	$ 45.35	$ 38.43	4.60%	3.41%	984
Jan-25	1,064,485	35.62	$ 35.83	$ 46.12	$ 40.37	4.52%	3.34%	1,104
Feb-25	977,836	36.80	$ 35.95	$ 16.12	$ 40.02	4.51%	3.35%	1,030
Mar-25	1,044,172	36.81	$ 33.23	$ 44.34	$ 37.96	4.36%	3.23%	1,141
Apr-25	1,047,295	36.06	$ 34.32	$ 44.31	$ 38.56	4.27%	3.22%	1,082
May-25	1,045,720	34.30	$ 34.32	$ 45.08	$ 38.76	4.27%	3.20%	1,063
Jun-25	893,061	30.98	$ 32.77	$ 43.46	$ 37.98	4.13%	3.15%	959
Jul-25	793,120	28.40	$ 32.79	$ 43.74	$ 39.10	4.08%	3.11%	852

Pennsylvania Report

The data from PA does show a very wide range of Pay Price from a low of $25.05/cwt to a high of $46.12/cwt. The average weighted price over the 14-month period is $37.10, slightly higher than the Pay Price shown for VT. The average daily production per cow for the 14-month period is 32.30 pounds, 14.30 pounds lower than the VT average.

EXPORTS OF MILK AND CREAM, NOT CONCENTRATED NOR SWEETENED, OF A FAT CONTENT, BY WEIGHT, EXCEEDING 1% BUT NOT EXCEEDING 6%, CERTIFIED ORGANIC 2021-2024 (data in CWT).

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Increase on previous year
January	493	2,358	3,639	2,643	12,229	9,586
February	708	2,342	2,911	5,352	8,677	3,325
March	365	4,379	3,695	2,998	6,920	3,922
April	2,421	2,896	2,249	3,093	11,391	8,298
May	2,389	2,601	3,188	3,518	6,001	2,484
June	3,368	2,832	5,975	6,360	8,820	2,460
July	2,443	3,192	5,562	11,930	17,588	5,658
August	4,114	2,424	6,919	6,604		
September	4,227	3,236	3,578	6,096		
October	4,260	3,275	5,691	10,538		
November	4,290	3,577	3,720	11,407		
December	2,595	3,051	4,373	8,997		
Annual Total in cwt	31,671	36,163	51,499	79,536		

Organic Milk Exports

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) releases monthly export data which includes export volumes and values for organic milk categorized as HS-10 code 0401201000, milk and cream, not concentrated nor sweetened, of a fat content, by weight, exceeding 1% but not exceeding 6% certified organic. The government closure has restricted reports from USDA FAS. The most recent was for July 2025 which shows organic milk HS-10 exports were 17,588 cwt. The same month in 2024 was dramatically lower at 11,930 - a 47.2% increase on the previous year, or 5,658 cwt. Year to date January to July 2025 was 71,627 cwt. nearly double the same year to date in 2024 of 35,894 cwt. 74% of these exports were to North America. None of this milk is subject to tariffs under the USMCA and any increase will still fall below the level where current agreements mandate tariffs being added.

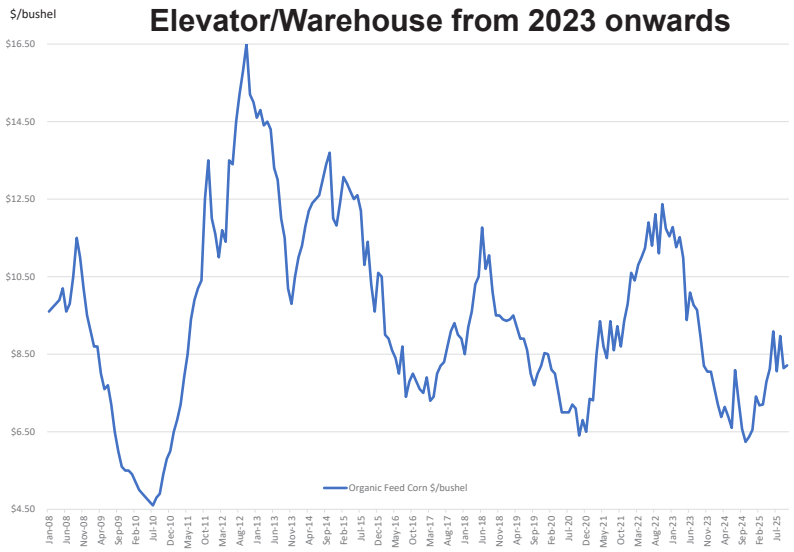
ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Auction News

The demand for both organic and conventional calves, cows, and heifers is currently elevated, while supply remains limited. At the NODPA Field Days, presenter Robert Goodling estimated that it may take approximately two more years of high prices for beef crosses before the market reaches equilibrium. Obviously, this could be impacted by the Mexico border being opened up for live animals as the Mexican government is lobbying for, and the spread of the New World Screwworm, but hopefully common sense will take precedence over politics. Reports indicate that Argentina's potential increase in exports to the US is not expected to significantly affect the market, though it may benefit packers. Australian beef exports to the US have risen despite tariffs, partly due to limited US cattle supplies, reduced domestic production, and increasing demand for lean trimmings, which has led to higher prices for Australian beef. Australia continues to be the main supplier, supported by record production capacity, is anticipated to remain a key contributor to US import programs through 2026, given ongoing supply constraints and competitive positioning relative to Brazil and other exporters.

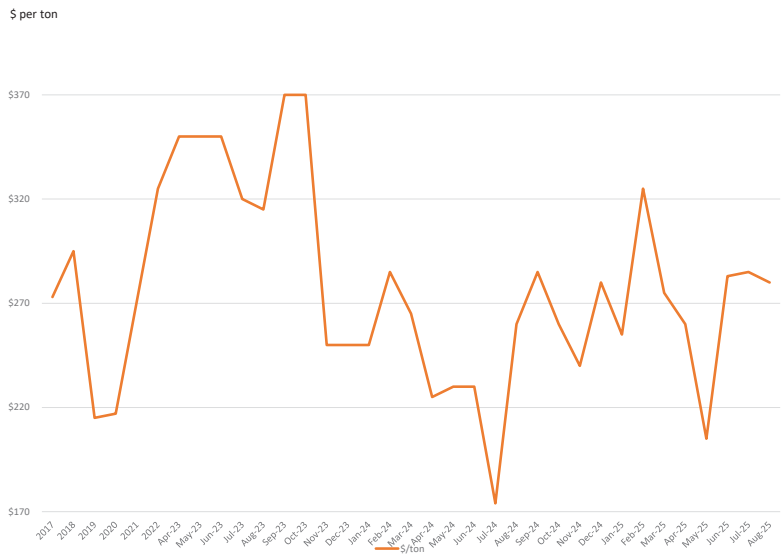
Anecdotal feedback from producers that have sold their herds is that Florida, Texas and Colorado are the favored destinations, especially with the drought in the northeast and the tight supply of hay impacting any regional producer's expansion plans. Reports are that there is culling already taking place as the economics of purchase and trucking of organic hay don't match the producers' current Pay Price. Hoskins Livestock Auction, a NOFA-NY-certified livestock auction in New Berlin, New York, is no longer publishing the auction reports. There were good reports on the sale of 140 head of organic cattle, including 62 milking and dry, 14 bred heifers, 18 breeding age, 28 8-months to 16-months, 15 calves to 8-months, 4 A2A2 Holstein crosses, all bred to A2A2 bulls on October 25 in Philadelphia NY. Reports were that that the top cow brought $4,700, and the others were mostly in the $2,000 to $4,000 range. A2/A2 cows did not seem to bring a premium, and some decent looking dry cows brought less than $2,000. Market reports from Premier Livestock and Auction, which sells organic dairy animals exclusively on Tuesdays, indicate that on 9/17/2025, 100 organic cows and heifers were auctioned. Top quality cows sold for up to $5,200, while lower quality cows averaged approximately $2,400. Organic springing heifers were priced between $2,500 and $4,500.

Organic Corn Price $/bushel 2008-2025 supplied by USDA AMS FOB the Farm and FOB Elevator/Warehouse from 2023 onwards



a n d

Organic Hay Dollars per ton (Average/year) - USDA AMS Data



A reminder: organic livestock do not need to be shipped separately from non-organic when they are trucked to auction or direct to slaughter. They do need to be identified clearly as organic with all the correct paperwork that is required by your certifier and buyer to prevent fraud and maintain the integrity of the organic market.

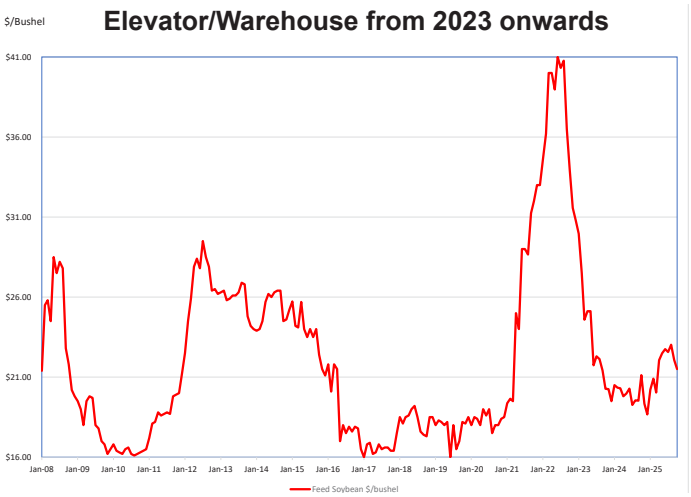
Feed

A common inquiry concerns the existence of tariffs on Canadian hay and grains; currently, there are none. The import HS code for Canadian hay is 1214.90. National data from USDA has organic feed corn delivered to the elevator averaging $8.11 per bushel in September 2025 and $8.21 per bushel in October 2025.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic feed soybean delivered to the elevator averaged $22.57/bu. in September 2025 and $22.81 in October 2025. This national data does not represent the Northeast which may be $2 dollars higher depending on where it originates from. Organic feed wheat averaged $7.20/bushel in October 2025. Soybean meal is trading at $900/ton in September and October 2025. I have no accurate information on the price of hay, which depends on availability, which is limited in the Northeast and Canada. Reports are that trucking is as expensive as the hay purchased. ◆

Organic Feed Soybean $/bushel 2008-2025 - USDA Market News Data - FOB Farm and FOB Elevator/Warehouse from 2023 onwards



2017-2024 Soybean meal Ave. $/ton delivered FOB dealer/warehouse - USDA AMS Data

Organic Milk Buyers

Below we have a list of contacts for milk buyers who responded to our request to have their information made public or suggested contacts for those that didn't respond:

- **Byrne Dairy:**
  Leslie Ball, Director of Dairy Programs,
  cell phone (315)382-2782, lball@byrne1933.com
  Greg Capozzi, Farm QC Inspector,
  cell phone (315) 632-2981, gcapozzi@Byrne1933.com .
- **CROPP Cooperative - Organic Valley brand:**
  Farmer Hotline at 888-809-9297 or
  farmerhotline@organicvalley.coop or
  Abbie Teeter Abigail.teeter@organicvalley.coop
  representative for western NY;
  Ethan Garrison ethan.garrison@organicvalley.coop
  rep for south central and eastern NY.
- **Family Farmstead Dairy, NY:**
  Thomas McGrath, tom@familyfarmsteaddairy.com,
  607-397-4044; www.familyfarmmsteaddairy.com ;
- **Horizon Organic LLC**: no reply to our inquiry but try
  Carriel Schmitt, Producer Relations Manager, NY:
  carriel.schmitt@horizon.com and Jacquelyn Oliver,
  Quality Control, jacquelyn.oliver@horizon.com
- **Maple Hill:** Farm Service Number: 518.516.6090 ext. 1.
  Their team contact information is
  Christina Reginelli (Director of Farm Services)
  518-275-3627, christina@maplehillcreamery.com
  Grace Knott (Field Manager, Northern NY, Central NY and Group Milkhouses) 518-231-0428,
  grace@maplehillcreamery.com ,
  Ashley Pierce (Field Manager, Central and West NY)
  518-610-5099, ashley.pierce@maplehillcreamery.com .
  Mark Martin (Field Manager, OH Farms) 419-895-1297,
  mark.martin@maplehillcreamery.com
  Roman Stoltzfoos (Field Manager PA) 717-278-1070,
  roman.stoltzfoos@maplehillcreamery.com .
- **Origin Milk:** David Campaniello; Business Development & Product Innovation, david@originmilk.com ,
  718-404-6924 ; Michael Mackay, 419-733-6833,
  Michael.mackay@originmilk.com
- **Stonyfield/Lactalis USA:**
  The contact information for their team is:
  Jason Johnson, jason.johnson@us.lactalis.com,
  (802) 356-0908;
  Erin Marlowe: erin.marlowe@us.lactalis.com,
  (603) 496-9499;
  Jeremy Russo: jeremy.russo@us.lactalis.com
  (802) 236-1920
- **Upstate Niagara:**
  Mike Davis: General Manager, Membership Division and Bulk Sales; Office: (585) 815-6820 ext. 6441,
  Cell: (585) 409-1544 and mdavis@uncdairy.com

Classified Ads

ANIMALS

COWS FOR SALE: Five short bred heifers for sale. 1 full Guernsey and 4 cross-bred (Brown Swiss, Guernsey, Jersey) heifers that are due to freshen April/May 2026. All first service conception and bred to Black Angus, pregnancies have not been veterinary confirmed at this time. All heifers are Certified Organic and formerly Certified Biodynamic and as a result have horns still intact. Prices range from $1,600-$1,800 with a discount possible for the whole group. Contact: Jacob at Churchtown Dairy, jacob@churchtowndairy.org , 207-230-9301.

Location: Hudson, NY

COWS FOR SALE: 5 OPT grass-fed, certified organic Jersey cows for sale. This farm has been 100% grass fed for the past 19 years. Call Milk N' Cream Jerseys at 814-349-5675, x4.

Location: Center County, PA

COWS WANTED: Certified organic Holsteins for new freestall/parlor. Individuals or a herd considered. Will start milking by December or January. Contact Steven at 585-554-6747.

Location: Middlesex, NY

COWS WANTED: 50 organic Holsteins, either milking or bred heifers for some small farms in WI. A message can be left with Dan Shaffer at 608-732-9456.

Location: Wisconsin

ANIMALS FOR SALE: Registered Jersey Heifers 2 bred January and April and confirmed pregnant, 3 recently bred. A2A2 and A1A2. Contact Allyson Grove, dvmgrove@gmail.com , 717-320-2696

Location: Clear Spring, MD

EQUIPMENT

2023 Maschio Veloce 350 high speed disc. 11'6' wide 3 point mounted with knife style packing roller. Hydraulic depth adjustment. Very nice tool for high speed, shallow tillage. Will incorporate cover crops in one pass. Less than 1000 acres total on the machine. Not using enough going forward to justify keeping. $21,000 or best offer, delivery available. Contact Nathaniel Stephens, N.stephens4020@gmail.com , 973-459-2691.

Location: Sussex, NJ

FEED, GRAIN, HAY

HAY FOR SALE: 3x3x7 big square bales of first cutting grass hay. Mostly orchardgrass, but has some Timothy and clovers mixed in. Bales weigh around 600 pounds. Baled later but good dry cow and heifer feed. Baystate certified. 120 bales available, $180/ton, delivery available. Contact Nathaniel Stephens, N.stephens4020@gmail.com , 973-459-2691.

Location: Sussex, NJ

HAY FOR SALE: NOFA-NY Organic BALEAGE (grass/alfalfa mix) 4x4 round bales. DRY HAY (grass mix) 4x4 1/2 round bales -Stored Inside. BEDDING HAY 4x4 1/2 round bales. Contact Jeff @ 607-566-8477 or Mitchellorganics@hotmail.com .

Location: Avoca, NY (Steuben County)

LAND/FARM FOR SALE

ORGANIC FARM FOR SALE: 102-acre certified organic farm for sale located near Marathon, NY. The land consists of pasture for grazing, tillable for growing crops and some woods. The farm features two nice spring-fed ponds. It has a two-story conventional barn with an attached new addition. 2 machinery and storage buildings. A newer enclosed building that can be used for office and storage. Greenhouse. The farm is well-set and the land can be easily worked. 5-bedroom home. Call Kara at Posson Realty LLC, 245 Posson Road Norwich, NY 13815 for details. 607-316-6597

Location: Marathon, NY

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

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