

NODPA News



Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Albert Straus, of Straus Dairy Farm, and cows from the farm's herd.

FEATURED FARM: STRAUS DAIRY FARM & STRAUS FAMILY CREAMERY

TOMALES, CALIFORNIA

Albert Straus, farm owner and operator, and founder of the Straus Family Creamery

An Introduction to Straus Dairy Farm

*By Lia Sieler, Executive Director, Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance, Chico, CA
Photos courtesy of Straus Family Creamery*

It is nearly impossible to hear the word organic and not think of Albert Straus and the legacy he has created with his organic dairy farm in Tomales, California. Albert Straus was born and raised on his family farm, now home to 590 organic dairy cows, heifers and calves in the hills of Tomales, near the Pacific Ocean.

These cows spend most of the year grazing, getting 135 – 140 days of 30% or more dry matter intake, but have a comfortable freestall barn to shelter them during inclement weather conditions. All animals consistently have pasture access year-round. Calves are

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On December 1, 2025, Horizon Family Brands Announced It Had Acquired Maple Hill Creamery

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

While the news of the acquisition of Maple Hill Creamery by Horizon Family Brands, financed by Platinum Equity, may have been a surprise to many producers, the industry knew Maple Hill was on the market for some time. After its rapid growth

in the last year and its position in the Grass-Fed market, it needed capital investment to take full advantage of its expanded market position in the face of rapidly growing

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Message from NODPA Co-President

It's the time of the year when we look at last year and think about improving what we do around the farm. Of course, there are things out of our control, like the weather and prices for the product we produce; but there's never been a time when Milk was more in demand – especially organic and grass-fed milk. These are good times for organic/grass-fed dairy farmers, and the wintertime is a good time to plan for next year and figure out how we can do it better with what we have.

A good place to do some of this planning is at grazing conferences, which are often farmer-planned events and have topics that are relevant. Perhaps the most important part is meeting other farmers who are doing what we want to do and talking and hearing stories about their successes and failures. Usually, some farmers talk and give their experiences about transitioning or learning more about Organic and grass-fed. Experience is not always the best teacher. And, it's almost always the most expensive teacher. With so many great conferences and learning experiences, there's no excuse for ignorance. If you think knowledge is expensive, try ignorance.

It's hard to get a farmer to understand something when his living depends on not understanding it. So, as an organic or 100% grass-fed producer, your living depends on understanding more about what

you are trying to do. So, be in the know when it comes to organic and grass-fed production. It's like when you die, you won't know that you're dead. It's just hard for everybody else. Same way when you're stupid. So find out where these meetings are and attend at least one or two with your ears and eyes opened. These will do good for your soul and for your next year on the farm. Sorry if you missed the NODPA Field Days... as seen in last month's NODPA News editorial, because it was a profitable time for those who attended. There are just a lot of things to learn about doing our jobs better. Here are two conferences to consider: the 12th Annual Pro-Grassive Dairy Grazing Conference on February 17, 2026, 8:00 am-4:00 pm, Slavic Pentecostal Church, 2191 State Route 5, Utica, NY 13502; contact Melvin Zook with questions: 518-709-6335, and Lancaster Grazing Conference is February 18-19, 2026 in Quarryville PA; the contact is Roman Stoltzfoos at 717-278-1070.

And, one more thing for laughs: Why would you keep an empty milk carton in the fridge? Answer is simple... in case someone wants a black coffee. :)

Roman Stoltzfoos, NODPA CO-President

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— Jonathan Miedema



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Jonathan and Lisa Miedema

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"We are pleased with the early results from using this product. The **health of our calves is elevated** from the previous products we used. **Sick calves come back to life faster.**" -Maple Knoll Farm

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Dairy News: January 2026

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Wet spring, dry summer and a snowy, cold fall; nature is not being kind to the Northeast, and organic dairy in particular. In the last issue of NODPA News we highlighted the effect of the drought on pasture and forage production, with some producers losing up to 40% of their production, many culling some cows, selling young stock and using winter supplies of forage to supplement pasture. The availability of hay or baleage of a sufficient quality is now non-existent in the Northeast and Canada, with producers facing high costs for trucking on top of the cost of forage. Organic dairying has no federal safety net if the price of feed skyrockets. The high price for calves and organic replacements helps cash flow, but the higher prices in spring and summer are now moderating for all organic replacements. Organic brands sell high quality product at high retail prices, on the guarantee of pasture-raised and -fed livestock, and, for Grass-Fed, 100% grass-fed. Milk brands that promote themselves as supporting their farmers—whether those farmers are owners or partners—should immediately provide substantial financial assistance for feed purchases in order to fulfill their promises to consumers.

NOFA NY Appeals to Milk Buyers

NOFA New York initiated an appeal to organic dairy buyers in the region to issue immediate, per hundredweight market adjustment payments (MAP) to Certified Organic and Certified Grass-fed dairy farmers facing catastrophic feed shortages caused by the 2025 drought. They offered to meet with the milk buyers and discuss ways in which they could, in the absence of any immediate action by State and Federal governments, assist producers with costs outside of their capacity to pay. This letter was supported by NODPA, Organic Farmers Association (OFA), Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT), PCO Certified Organic, Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA) and Baystate Organic Certifiers. Copies of the letter were picked up by the media and generated interest among the regional newspapers.

NOFA NY received replies from just two buyers, Lactalis and CROPP. Lactalis explained that they had been monitoring the situation with their farmers since the summer, instituted a pay increase in July, helping farmers source feed and have a fund set

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ORGANIC DAIRIES



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

aside to help with cost of hauling in feed (usually a technical assistance fund of up to \$4,000 per farm/year (to the extent applicable)). They do not have a Grass-Fed certification requirement and reported that their farmers were pleased with this response. CROPP, who has their own Grass Fed brand, expressed support for producers; wanted more data but didn't want to single out an area for a MAP because it sows discontent in other regions. They are looking into bulk shipments of hay by rail to assess whether it is more cost effective than trucking.

Pay Price

This time of year, milk buyers are informing their producers about their plans for 2026 Pay Price and support services. Below, we have an incomplete explanation of what buyers in the Northeast are planning for 2026. A few (Maple Hill and Upstate) are transparent about what they are paying, and the many different levels of payments for components, volume, quality and animal welfare to name a few. The other buyers prefer not to be transparent and provide nothing publicly, with many warning producers not to share information and penalizing them if they do. This leaves producers unable to have clear information on what is one of the most important aspects of their business and encourages gossip, half-truths and misrepresentation of the pay price structure.

Please note that Pay Price will vary from farm to farm depending on many conditions that vary from each dairy, and from season to season. For example, some buyers pay more for components, or have a different structure for payments, than others, benefiting those Jersey herds on grass. A decision about which buyer to work with is also based on that buyer's history in the Northeast marketplace and the level of trust and responsibility they have had towards producers in the past.

As a guide to the cost of operating a organic dairy farm in New York, the Department of Animal Science, Cornell University did a survey of organic dairy farms (none of which were Grass Fed certified) in 2023. The survey found the 'Total Cost to Produce Milk', which incorporates the opportunity costs associated with operator and family contributions of labor, management, and equity capital to the business in 2023, averaged \$46.24 per cwt.

2026 Maple Hill Pricing in \$/cwt for Grass Fed OPT certification												
	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Base	45.36											
Avg Quality and Components	3.14											
Over	52.00	46.00	43.00	42.36	28.00	28.00	38.00	42.36	45.36	45.36	49.00	52.00
Under					5.00	5.00						
Volume >30K lbs.	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50					0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Volume 50k lbs.	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75					0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75
Volume >70k lbs.	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00					1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Hauling share	75/25											
* \$1/cwt of \$45.36 is prepaid for active producers on 1/10/2026												
Example of all in pay	49.00	49.00	49.00	49.00	48.50	48.50	48.50	49.00	49.00	49.00	49.00	49.00
**All in pay for a farm with Avg Q&C's, >30k volume, before over/under, and hauling, before Pay for Progress Over and under provision penalizes the producer if they go over their agreed volume during times when the supply is high (Spring flush) and rewards the producer when they produce more when supply is low (December).												

A full list of milk buyers and their contact information is on page 29 of this issue.

Maple Hill

Maple Hill has full transparency in a relatively easy to understand guide to Pay Price, below. Their increase of an annualized \$4/cwt in 2026 does help keep up with inflation and the increased expense of tariffs that are affecting all of agriculture, but not much more, based on 2023 data for Grass-Fed operations in a survey by Sarah Flack and the University of Vermont.

UNC (Upstate Niagara Cooperative)

They have increased their base pay price by \$3/cwt on their 2025 Pay Price and are looking for new or transitioning producers. Producers have found Upstate to be fair and accessible over the many years they have been in organics. Below are some of the details of the UNC 2026 Organic Program:

- Organic Base Price (3.5% Butterfat, 2.99% Protein, 5.69% Other Solids and components are adjusted to values based on the FMMO 1 for the month): \$32.50/cwt.
- Regional Organic Market Adjustment: \$2.75/cwt.
- Seasonal Production incentive: \$2/cwt. in January, February, March, October, November and December.
- Volume Premium: > 75,000 lbs. = \$0.15/cwt; > 150,000 lbs. = \$0.30/cwt.; >300,000 lbs. = \$0.50/cwt.
- Quality Premium: Minimum Bacteria Requirement = 10,000/ml or less to receive SCC premium.
- Somatic Cell Count per ml: 100,000 or less = \$3 per cwt; for every 50,000 ml increase a reduction of \$0.50/cwt premium until there is no premium between 310,000 and 400,000. Deductions for over 410,000 of \$1.50/cwt; over 500,000 a deduction of \$2.00/cwt and above 600,000 a deduction of \$2.50/cwt.

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- Every other day pick-up required and no charge for trucking.
- Incremental Growth Adjustment of \$5.00/cwt. will be paid each month for incremental milk production over the prior year.
- Transitioning Dairy Farm: support in the last year of transition and first three months of organic production, plus \$500 towards the cost of initial certification.
- Animal Care/Environmental Stewardship/Worker Care Premium up to \$0.15/cwt. assessed annually.

CROPP/Organic Valley

Reports from producers are that CROPP/Organic Valley no longer has a field rep for New England, but they have three for New York. Requests for verification of Pay Price and conditions from CROPP were not returned. Producers have reported a mailbox price for Grass Fed of approximately \$45/cwt that would include components and other premiums. Pay Price without the Grass-Fed certification reflects other buyers with an annualized average of approximately \$38/cwt. CROPP is based in Wisconsin and has been a national buyer for organic milk for nearly 3 decades. In the past few years they have not been a leader in Pay Price and slow to increase their Pay Price.

Origin Milk

It's rapidly growing its milk supply and has secured a major Grass-Fed dairy in New York to switch from its previous buyer. Reports from producers are that their Pay Price is over \$52/cwt. Their requirements are USDA Certified Organic and Regenerative Organic certified, 100% Grass Fed to the American Grass Fed Association standards, A2/A2 milk and Animal Welfare Certified. Origin has its own farm inspections 2 times per year. Their quality premiums are standard and based on the average quality for the month (see below)

Standard Plate Count	<5,000 = \$0.25; <10,00 = \$0.10
Somatic Cell Count	< 100,000 = \$1.00; 100,00-150,000 = \$.75; 150,001-200,000 = \$.5; 200,001-250,000 = \$.25; 250,001-300,000 = \$.10;
Preliminary Incubation Count	<10,000 = \$0.25 <20,000 = \$0.10
Coliforms (Reference)	<10

Lactalis/Stonyfield

They chose not to share their Pay Price but producers share that they are usually approximately the same as Upstate. They do not have a Grass Fed program and will bi-annually evaluate data

collected through its Technical Assistance Program and external market conditions associated with farms' cost of production, particularly the cost of feed. This information will be used to adjust the Base Pay Price to be responsive to both short-term and long-term changes in cost of organic milk production. It's base pay price is slightly lower than UNC at \$34.66/cwt as are their quality premiums, but their volume payments are slightly higher. Their components are fixed but UNC varies theirs with FMMO 1. Trucking for Lactalis is free if the volume is over 1,000 lb. every other day. They are looking for producers in eastern New York and have established another route with producers that have switched buyers in New England.

Byrne Dairy

They do not choose to share details of the Pay Price structure but remain competitive and are looking for producers.

Horizon Organic

They choose not to share their Pay Price but producers report a range of \$40 to \$45/cwt and report having a good relationship with the new owners, Horizon Family Brands. ◆

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On December 1, 2025, Horizon Family Brands Announced it Had Acquired Maple Hill Creamery

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consumer demand. Maple Hill Creamery has come a long way from Tim Joseph's start-up in 2009, surviving a setback in 2021-22, and now positioned for a profitable sale, although we don't have any details about the acquisition yet. It is an ideal fit for Horizon Family Brands whose mission, as described in their press release, is to "leverage its expertise in operational improvement and strategic management to drive growth and profitability for the newly acquired brand. The firm is likely to focus on optimizing operations and expanding market reach to maximize returns."

Maple Hill promptly notified its producers regarding the ownership and management transition. The company had already scheduled annual producer meetings for December and ensured that two formal letters were sent to producers via FedEx, without delay. Producers' reports are that the meetings were polite and respectful, with many reassurances that there would be no immediate changes

from the Horizon Family Brand executives that attended. Many producers had practical questions, for example:

- Will DFA members have to leave DFA and work with another handler, after DFA and Horizon Organic parted ways last year after failing to agree on a structure for handling Horizon organic milk? For some this will involve questions about loans and other DFA services. Because of DFA's policy for repayment of equity, it will take many years and perhaps a lifetime to get their DFA equity repaid.
- Will the certification requirement be changed from OPT to Horizon's current Grass-Fed certification using American Grass Fed Association certification?

But the overarching concern expressed more on Facebook and in private conversation, which Mitch Clark addressed in his letter to producers, is trust. The Horizon Organic brand has, under its many diverse owners, treated organic dairy producers badly, culminating in the largest cancelation of contracts organic dairy has ever seen in 2021-22, devastating the Northeast and particularly New England organic dairy producers. Mitch's argument in his letter to producers that many of the current executives of the company were previous Horizon employees does nothing to put substance behind promises of 'nothing will change.' Mitch has spent the last

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few years telling producers that Maple Hill has completely new management after the company cancelled many contracts in 2021-22. Maple Hill has grown as promised and increased Pay Price to reflect rising costs, with the 2026 \$4/cwt. increase reflecting that continued commitment and easing producers concerns over the change to new owners. Producers are now hearing the same platitudes and reassurance about how another new management will operate. Hopefully, Maple Hill will continue its transparency and commitment to local field reps and supporting consultants.

The fear is very obviously about how Horizon Family Brands, whose “focus on optimizing operations and expanding market reach to maximize returns,” will act in the future. When the new parent company addresses its supply side economics, how will they react when told the algorithms indicate that the most cost-efficient and profitable supply is from larger operations near to a processor? We all know that small scale dairy operations in the Northeast are more expensive to service than larger ones. Will its growth be based on milk supplied by Aurora Dairy, with its Grass Fed A2A2 brand (Grazeful Dairy) or similar large operations, with only a limited pool of milk from smaller operations to validate their commitment to family farms and their Environmental, Social, and Governance requirements of the capital portfolio? Will the success of the Grass Fed brand lead to the same problems that organic has had in the past: that the regulations need to be less strict to increase supply to manage this market better? Past reality indicates the economic pressure on the supply side will lead to a relaxation of the standards while not changing the image presented to consumers. Beyond the next few years, as supply is stabilized, what is the future with a parent company that specializes in Mergers, Acquisitions & Operations and whose home page states that they have a portfolio of approximately “60 companies operating in a diverse range of industry sectors, generating \$100B+ in aggregate revenue and employs ~200,000 people around the world.”

The immediate problem that the Horizon Family Brand faces is to provide substantial financial support to its producers this harsh winter to find and pay for high price forage

and trucking to keep cows fed, keep the lights turned on and maintain a high level of Animal Welfare. A \$1/cwt as a prepayment for a 50 cow herd will mean a one-time payment of approximately \$5,000. With hay at over \$450 per ton, it does not pay for many tons of hay. The extra increase of \$3 over the year may or may not cover increased costs and lower production into late Spring 2026. The 2023 survey of Northeast Grass Fed operations indicated that the ‘average’ farm needed a \$46/cwt Pay Price. Overhead and operational expenses have not gone down since then. ♦



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ORGANIC PRODUCTION



Ask the Vet

How should I manage Calf Pneumonia in my herd?

Kerry Schneider, DVM,
Midstate Veterinary Services,
Cortland, NY



Tis the season for calf pneumonia. And often trying to approach the problem, especially in the face of an outbreak, can be daunting. A practical way to troubleshoot the issue is to look at the age of the calves when they first experience symptoms. This provides an idea of potential breaks or holes in the protocols around that stage of life. When this does not reduce new cases or holes cannot be found, other options exist such as diagnostics and lung ultrasound.

Using age as a factor can help guide the initial approach to the problem. If seeing pneumonia in calves less than one week of age, aspiration pneumonia is commonly the reason. Tubing calves their first colostrum is a great way to have successful passive transfer but can increase the risk of aspiration. Ensuring proper tubing protocols and training for the responsible people can reduce this risk. Calves now have smaller average body weights (<80lbs) with the increased use of sexed semen and if aspiration seems to be a continued problem with proper training, splitting the colostrum feeding into two even feedings (such as 3qt and 3qt instead of 4qt and 2qt) within the first 8 hours of life can help reduce this issue.

Often pneumonia cases around two weeks of age are viral mediated. The big viral culprits are IBR, BRSV, and PI3. Mature cows can have latent viral infections which do not cause apparent disease, but immune suppression at calving can cause activation and viral shedding. This immune suppression is why cows are more prone to pneumonia after freshening and how calves can get exposed to the virus at birth. A common practice to mitigate the impact of this exposure would be an intranasal vaccine (Inforce 3 (Zoetis) or Nasalgen 3 (Merck)) for the calf at or around birth. These vaccines cover IBR, BRSV, and PI3, and due to the method of delivery, trigger an immune response through IgA not IgG, which provides additional protection beyond maternal antibodies. The intranasal vaccines can be given as part of calf processing (alongside naval dipping, colostrum feeding, etc), so it is easy to add into a standard protocol reducing the chance it will be done inconsistently.

Older calves can still be impacted by viral pneumonia but often there is a bacterial component. Two common bacterial pathogens (*Pasteurella multocida* and *Mannheimia haemolytica*) tend to be opportunistic, proliferating due to previous viral pneumonia or environmental stressors such as weaning, transport, grouping

or weather, all leading to immune suppression. Management can play a role in preventing bacterial pneumonia by focusing on stress reduction during a calf's life. This can include not weaning too early or avoiding large group transitions (single hutch to 10 or greater). Ensuring proper ventilation, not overcrowding calf barns, providing water and extra calories in winter is especially important. But outbreaks still occur and often calf housing is restrictive on stocking and transition. If management and housing fixes do not seem to reduce cases, adding another vaccine may help. There are injectable or intranasal vaccines that stimulate protection against *Pasteurella* and *Mannheimia* with the most common being Once PMH (Merck). This product can be combined



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with Nasalgen 3 (Nasalgen 3-PMH (Merck)) so that a viral booster can be provided at the same time. This vaccine should be given 1-2 weeks prior to the age outbreaks are seen. The intranasal vaccines work within hours, but often a calf will start to have lung changes and pneumonia well before you see clinical signs so vaccinating earlier will hopefully ensure the best protection.

Unfortunately, other bacteria can cause lung disease at varying ages, such as *Mycoplasma bovis* or *Salmonella* Dublin. S Dublin is most commonly spread via an oral route through maternal shedding in manure at calving or colostrum and *M bovis* from older calves to younger via nose-to-nose contact, shared waterers, or aerosols in overcrowded calf barns. Sampling calves is the most accurate method to diagnose these pathogens. There are several ways to collect samples with the least invasive being nasal swabs and the more invasive being tracheal/bronchial washes or even necropsy. It is easier to start with nasal swabs and if these do not determine the primary issue, having a veterinarian do more invasive diagnostics is always an option. For simple nasal swabs, two can be collected per calf with one placed in bacterial growth medium and another swab placed in sterile saline for viral PCR. This can help determine if the right vaccines are being utilized and they are provided at the right time.

Another tool a veterinarian can use to determine when pneumonia begins is by routine lung ultrasound. As stated before, lung disease starts before clinical signs are seen. A lung lobe may have congestion in one or two locations and the calf may not necessarily show the fast breathing, snotty nose generally associated with pneumonia. Ultrasound can help determine when it starts so that vaccination can occur prior to that or measures can be taken for early treatment, hopefully reducing severity.

As always, a veterinarian can help with every stage--whether its adding vaccines to protocols, working with maternity and calf processing to ensure a clean environment and proper colostrum management, or further diagnostics when basic core vaccines do not seem to be helping. ♦

Occasionally, we are fortunate to feature a guest veterinarian, and give Dr. Locitzer a much needed rest. This issue, we introduce Kerry Schneider, DVM, a graduate of Cornell Veterinary Medicine who can be reached at Midstate Veterinary Services, 806 Rte. 13, Cortland, NY 13045, (607) 753-3315, info@midstatevet.com

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.

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Evaluating Willow Bark Extract for Pain Management in Organic Dairy Calves after Disbudding: A Comparative Study of Analgesic Strategies and Their Impact on Calf Welfare

Madison E. Bacon, Department of Animal Science, University of Minnesota, Marcia I. Endres and Bradley J. Heins, West Central Research and Outreach Center, University of Minnesota

This is an AI summary of the original research paper. Dr. Heins has approved this version of the research and given permission to re-print.

Disbudding, the removal of horn buds in young calves, is a routine practice in dairy farming aimed at improving animal management and safety. However, the procedure is known to cause significant pain and stress, raising welfare concerns, especially in organic dairy systems where pain control options are limited. This article summarizes a recent study that assessed the effectiveness of willow bark extract versus lidocaine and sham treatments in alleviating pain and stress in organic dairy calves following cauterity disbudding.

Study Overview

The research involved 42 Holstein and crossbred calves aged 4 to 7 weeks. Calves were assigned to one of three groups: lidocaine (LID), willow bark extract (WB), or sham disbudding (SD). The study measured physiological and behavioral responses to evaluate the impact of each treatment on pain and stress levels.

Physiological and Behavioral Responses

Results showed that both LID and WB groups had higher heart rates (123.3 bpm and 124.5 bpm, respectively) compared to the SD group (110.8 bpm). Salivary cortisol concentrations, a marker of stress, were also elevated in the LID (103.8 pg/mL) and WB (103.4 pg/mL) groups versus SD (85.5 pg/mL). Ocular temperature, another physiological indicator, did not differ significantly between groups.

Behaviorally, lying bouts (periods of rest) decreased from 31.3 during the first 24 hours post-disbudding to 25.1 in the subsequent 24-48 hour period, suggesting some discomfort in the treated calves. However, no significant differences in overall lying behavior were observed between disbudded and control calves over 72 hours. Previous research had indicated more frequent transitions from lying to standing and less lying time after disbudding, which this study did not confirm.

Treatment Comparisons and Outcomes

When comparing treatments, neither lidocaine nor willow bark extract provided significant relief from pain compared to the sham group. Heart rate and cortisol levels were similar in both LID and WB groups, indicating no clear advantage of willow bark over lidocaine. Notably, lidocaine was effective in desensitizing horn buds to acute pain at the time of disbudding, while willow bark failed to mitigate pain and was ineffective for long-term pain management. The findings highlight the need for further research into pain mitigation therapies for calves undergoing disbudding.

Implications for Organic Dairy Farming

The study underscores a critical welfare issue in organic dairy farming: only 26% of organic dairy farms currently use pain control methods during disbudding. While interest in herbal

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remedies like willow bark is growing among organic producers, scientific evidence supporting their efficacy remains limited. The results call for the development of safe and effective pain relief alternatives that align with organic farming principles.

Calf Housing and Behavior

Housing conditions were found to influence calf behavior post-disbudding. Group-housed disbudded calves spent less time lying down compared to non-disbudded calves, indicating that rearing systems may affect recovery and welfare. This suggests that future research should explore how different housing arrangements impact calf well-being during and after disbudding procedures.

Study Limitations

The study faced several limitations, including a small calving season that restricted the number of calves available for enrollment. Additionally, the researchers were unable to include a flunixin meglumine treatment group due to the limited sample size, which may affect the generalizability of the results.

Recommendations for Pain Management

Current guidelines from the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) recommend a combination of local anesthetics, analgesics, and sedation for effective pain control during disbudding. However, in organic farming, flunixin meglumine is the only approved nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), and its use is contested due to concerns over synthetic substances. The study suggests that research should focus on identifying herbal analgesics that can be used in combination with lidocaine to improve pain management for organic dairy cattle.

Conclusions

In summary, lidocaine was effective in reducing acute pain during disbudding, as indicated by stable heart rate and cortisol levels. Willow bark extract, on the other hand, did not provide pain relief and was ineffective for long-term management. The authors recommend that organic dairy producers should at least use lidocaine to ease acute pain during disbudding

and underscore the urgent need for research into new long-term pain management strategies compatible with organic production standards. ♦

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There are barriers to including a link to the original research paper. To read it in full, do an internet search of the article title. Our apologies for the inconvenience.

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Unlocking Top Milk Quality: What Sets Exceptional Organic Dairy Farms Apart?

By Carlos Niño de Guzmán, Ph.D. Student, Graduate Research Assistant, Department of Animal Sciences, University of Florida, Gustavo Schuenemann, Gustavo M. Schuenemann, DVM, MS, Ph.D., College of Veterinary Medicine, The Ohio State University, and Albert De Vries, Department of Animal Sciences, University of Florida



Carlos Niño de Guzmán, Ph.D. Student, Graduate Research Assistant, Department of Animal Sciences, University of Florida

Every morning as the day starts, cows get ready to be milked in every organic farm across the country. For many producers, the goal is clear: healthy cows, high-quality milk, and sustainable dairy operations. Yet, one adversary remains at the forefront: mastitis. Being one of the most common and challenging problems in the dairy industry, it does not only impact welfare but also cuts into productivity and profitability.

Over the last 28 years, the U.S. dairy industry has celebrated tremendous improvements in milk quality. Somatic cell counts, a key measure of milk quality, has dropped by almost 43%, signals of

sustained producer innovation, attention to detail, and research. Still, for organic farms, the challenge is clear and unique: success without antimicrobials means prevention, vigilant management, and creative solutions are not only preferred, but they are essential.

This is the challenge we set to address with our USDA-funded project: “Solutions for Controlling Mastitis and Improving Milk Quality in Organic Farms: An Integrated Approach.” Together, with a dedicated team of researchers from the University of Florida, Colorado State University, Ohio State University, Cornell University, University of Wisconsin—Madison,

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University of Minnesota, and most importantly—organic dairy producers themselves, we embarked on a nationwide journey looking for answers. Organic dairy farmers—many of them Amish—should be proud of what they have accomplished. Despite working without antimicrobials and often with smaller herds and fewer external inputs, many organic farms achieved exceptional milk quality that rivals or exceeds national benchmarks. These results reflect deep commitment, strong stewardship, and a culture of care passed down through generations.

Looking for Top Management Practices

One of our questions was simple but crucial: What are the top management practices behind the best milk quality in organic dairy farms?

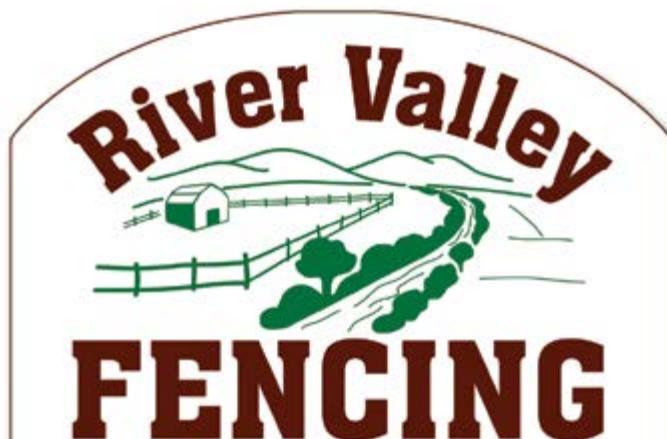
To get to the heart of this, our project teams visited 72 certified organic dairy farms across 12 states. From the West to the East coast, we visited small farms averaging 49 cows per farm, medium farms averaging 408 cows per farm, and large farms averaging 2,489 cows per farm, totaling more than 31,000 organic dairy cows. Alongside surveys related to management practices, milking routine and housing and bedding management, we

also conducted hands-on management evaluations such as evaluating milking systems, timing milking routines, scoring udder and teat end hygiene, and facility conditions.

Data Tells a Story

The best milk quality was not the result of a single practice, but rather a well-executed system built on simple, effective processes. Top-performing farms consistently applied a set of management practices that began at dry-off, included frequent evaluation of milking equipment, and relied on strict, repeatable milking routines. When these practices were implemented together, farms were far more likely to achieve and sustain excellent milk quality. After collecting data across the country, we found that the top 10% farms were those consistently below 100,000 somatic cell counts in cells/mL, and less than 3.8 clinical mastitis cases per 100 cows per year. But what practices set these farms apart? The answers were not as simple as a single management practice but emerged through careful analysis and identification of multiple strategies.

One theme that stood out: farms that frequently evaluated their milking systems—for claw vacuum levels, pulsator function,



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vacuum stability, and milking routines—were more likely to achieve low somatic cell count and low clinical mastitis incidence. Thirty percent of the farms we visited never or rarely evaluated their milking systems or routines, leading to problems like low claw vacuum levels, uncalibrated pulsators, and unstable vacuum, which was seen in 31% of the herds. Over-milking was another common issue, explained by the fact that 53% of the farms used manual takeoffs. It is crucial to be on top of the milking routine, especially when manual cluster removal is used.

After each milking, udders are exposed to the environment, particularly the bedding. Therefore, keeping bedding clean and dry is crucial as well.

We found that 66% of the farms clean their bedding daily, and 30% replace or add more bedding weekly. However, almost 20% never clean the bedding, and 14% never replace or add bedding. Farms that keep their bedding fresh, clean, and dry are more likely to excel in milk quality and control mastitis.

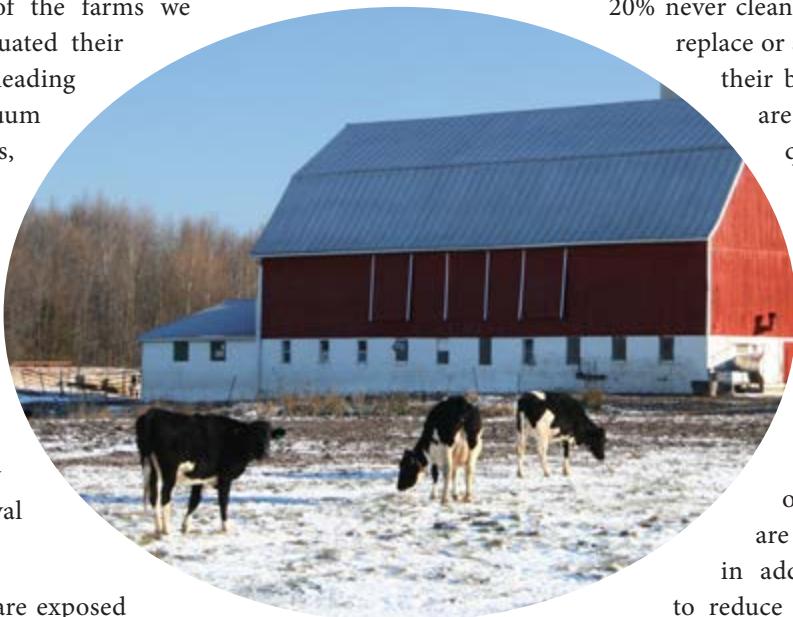
It is well known that the dry-off period is the most important risk factor for mastitis. Organic dairy farms face the challenge of not being able to use antimicrobials, meaning dry cow therapy is not an option. We found top farms are reducing milking frequency in addition to changing the diet to reduce energy intake and therefore lower milk production before dry-off.

Reducing pressure in the mammary gland, which can delay keratin plug formation and teat canal closure, is another key management practice for herd health and reducing mastitis in the next lactation.

Taking advantage of health programs that are permitted under organic regulations is essential—and vaccination is one of them. We found that 61% of the farms do not use vaccines to prevent mastitis, and over 50% of farmers do not think vaccines are important. With only a few vaccines allowed, it makes sense to take full advantage of those options. Farms that use vaccines as part of a veterinary-guided mastitis control program tend to have better milk quality, which benefits cow welfare and increases the milk check.

Almost 40% of the farms do not test individual cows for somatic cell count using a Dairy Herd Information (DHI) service, and around 30% do not identify sub-clinical mastitis cases. Because sub-clinical mastitis is not visible, testing is the only way to identify cows contributing high somatic cell counts to the bulk tank. Being informed and keeping good records allows for good management decisions, such as culling high-somatic cell cows or diverting milk from “millionaire” cows—those with millions of somatic cells—from the bulk tank.

Last but certainly not least, labor management and training of milking personnel are key practices linked to milk quality and mastitis control. Only 7% of the farms we visited provided monthly training for milking personnel. While training is



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essential, compliance with milking routine largely depends on motivation and understanding the reasons behind each step and valued by those doing the work. We found several farms where the milking routine differed significantly from what the manager or owner intended, often because personnel believed their own shortcuts were more efficient. In the case of family-operated farms, it is required that everyone who milks cows follows the same well-defined procedures, with emphasis on hygiene and positive animal-people interactions.

Key Takeaways: What Successful Organic Dairies Do Differently

Farms that excel in milk quality and mastitis control consistently prioritize careful evaluation of their milking systems, maintain clean and dry bedding, implement strategic dry-off management, and make use of allowed health programs such as vaccination. They also monitor cow health by testing for somatic cell counts and identifying sub-clinical mastitis cases, enabling informed decisions on milk quality management. Regular training and communication with milking personnel also proves key, ensuring that best

practices in milking routines are followed and maintained for the health and productivity of the herd. ♦

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Common Organic System Plan or an uncommon Organic System Plan?

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The current initiative to standardize the Organic System Plan (OSP), an essential part of the certification process, in order to bring a more uniform approach to the interpretation of the Organic regulation was initiated with a call to action from Dr. Jenny Tucker, Deputy Administrator of the National Organic Program (NOP) at the 2024 National Organic Standards Board Meeting (NOSB) where she challenged the community: "This is a chance for the industry to step up and lead the way-can we rise to meet it?"

Since the beginning of the NOP, there have been requests from producer groups and others for a common OSP to make it easier for producers and certified operations to complete the forms and have more choice about which certifiers to use. We always assumed that the NOP would oversee all aspects of a common OSP. The reasons for a common OSP are tied to the many examples of certifiers interpreting the regulations differently, including, from a livestock point of view, the pasture requirement, origin of livestock and hydroponics, and requiring different information from producers. An example of this is a detailed list of livestock that some certifiers wanted

and others ignored. This has created a division among the organic community and an inconsistent and unfair playing field between different certified operations. There has been differing opinion among certifiers regarding the necessity of a universal OSP. Some prefer to maintain their autonomy due to their affiliation with parent non-profit organizations, while others have appropriately included additional requirements in their OSP to address varying scopes and regional conditions.

The NOP has clearly said that they cannot mandate a common OSP that all certifiers must follow, and they do not have the staff capacity or the budget to develop and update a template for an OSP that they can approve and post on the USDA NOP website. Jenny Tucker's appeal in 2024 was to encourage an individual or company or group of individuals to develop an OSP that the NOP could approve and publish on their website. Anybody could use the complete template and certifiers could choose to use either the whole template or parts of it, to improve their OSP and to bring them into compliance with the NOP audit requirements.

The development of an Organic System Plan

Connie Carr, consultant and associate at Wolf and Associates, Inc., and Chief Certification Liaison at Quick Organics, was previously at Oregon Tilth for 24 years, the last 12 years as the Certification Director. She is well respected within the organic certification community and has used her expertise to assist many certification organizations. Connie took up Jenny Tucker's challenge and has been working with many partners and the NOP to develop an OSP that could be applied universally across many regions and scopes. Partners involved in the process include Wolf Associates, Organic Trade Association, Accredited Certifiers Association, California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF), Rodale Regenerative and other certification



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specialists. Ms. Carr is working with Quick Organics, which now has the plan as part of their digital software platform, to simplify and optimize the sometimes-complex process of completing an OSP that can be used by farmers, certifiers, and agents. This subscription platform, like many others and very similar to standard accounting programs like QuickBooks, achieves this by digitizing record-keeping, providing comprehensive compliance tools, and offering resources aimed at minimizing paperwork and reducing stress. I don't imagine that there are any producers who do not find the certification paperwork requirements stressful! Many certifiers now have their own platforms and have developed their own software that allows producers to complete paperwork online and/or receive pre-filled applications with their most current information.

CCOF has been piloting this new OSP for nearly a year and the Rodale Regenerative project has suggested to certifiers that their certified operations use this OSP rather than the certifier's own OSP. In Fall 2025, National Organic Coalition, Organic Farmers Association (OFA), NODPA and Western Organic Dairy Producers (WODPA) were able to view the draft of the OSP and offer comment and suggest edits. Apparently, the livestock OSP is the most complicated so the NOP was keen to have input from certified livestock producers, especially dairy. My reply to those that ask why the livestock requirements are so complicated is that the NOP and certifiers could not stop fraud without some specific and detailed regulations that would be legally successful in any non-compliance. An example is the case against Aurora Dairy in 2008 about adequate access to pasture which is nutritious, and another example comes from an Inspector General investigation in 2013 which found that three of the six certifiers interviewed were allowing producers to continuously transition additional conventional cattle to organic production, which effectively permitted "organic factory dairy farms" to lower production costs and potentially create an unfair market for small family farms that were following a stricter interpretation. The other three certifiers prohibited this practice, highlighting a lack of uniform enforcement across the industry. The NOP were unable to enforce any non-compliances until the regulations were

changed, and certifiers were afraid of being sued because they didn't have the backing of the NOP.

The Current Situation

NODPA, WODPA, and OFA formally requested a meeting with the NOP in December 2025 in order to clarify the circumstances regarding the OSP being developed by Connie Carr in collaboration with the NOP. This request was prompted by ongoing confusion about the process and expectations of what was being called a Common OSP. We met with Jenny Tucker and Robert Yang, NOP Director, Accreditation Division, and they agreed to delay announcing or rolling out their version of an OSP template until March or April to allow for more feedback,

review and comments by livestock producers. Jenny Tucker emphasized that while these OSP templates will receive approval from the NOP, their use will not be required for all certifiers. The new templates, which will be made available on the USDA website, are set to replace the current versions that have been in use for 13 years. They will be provided as downloadable Word documents at no cost through the NOP website. The OSP will not be directly tied to Quick



Organics, or any digital platform or company, so there would be no license fee for certifiers and producers if they wanted to use the complete document or parts of it. It is still not clear who will keep them up-to-date and be responsible for their compliance after initial publication. NOP/USDA does not have the money or resources to do so.

The approval by NOP of this OSP template will be an incentive for certifiers to adopt it or parts of it to lessen their potential difficulties during an NOP audit. Certifiers might also receive this OSP from individuals who either downloaded it as a Word document from the NOP website, or as a PDF from Quick Organics or other digital software subscription platforms. Certifiers will have a number of different options when presented with the USDA OSP:

- Accept the different USDA OSP template to be used alongside their own and to train their staff and inspectors on how to use the OSP.

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- Save expenses and not risk losing clients, adopt the USDA template as their own either with a license agreement with Quick Organics or another platform. Certifiers may have to pay a license fee to use Quick Organics or another platform's USDA approved OSP, instead of their current software but will reduce staff time and maintenance of their own systems.
- Insist the producers use the certifiers' own OSP.

There is no requirement that the certifier accepts the USDA OSP.

Hopefully the most likely outcome is that the process will be seamless for most producers who currently use their certifiers OSP digital software. Producers are used to dealing with updates and certifiers are used to training their inspectors and desk auditors on how to implement any changes. The decision will be made by certifiers about which OSP they will use and how to update it.

Producers may decide to use Quick Organics or other subscription services to manage their information. They should ensure that their agreement with that subscription service maintains their control of their data and information, rather than the subscription service having that control to use either, individually, or by aggregate to help fund the service company.

The OSP used by certifiers will be audited with every NOP audit and it will be up to the certifier to make any changes that the NOP audit requires. Quick Organics or other non-certified platforms will not be audited by the NOP but will have to respond to what changes their clients are instructed to make by the NOP.

Concerns arise about what happens next, especially with the USDA template. The OSP's are often updated every year to make sure that the questions being asked receive answers that are clear and cover the intended question. They are also updated to cover new risks, emerging issues, and in response to regulatory changes. It is unclear how a USDA OSP template would be updated. The NOP will not be doing it annually, if at all, unless they find more staff and have an increased budget to support a \$71.6 billion industry. Would there be a part of ACA that would receive and vet the asked-for changes? Would a separate body review changes? How will they be able to incorporate feedback from multiple certifiers and other organic community members in a way that works for most people? Will NOP approve the updated version?

We don't want to devolve into a "check the box" type of OSP that doesn't let operations describe what they are doing. If certifiers are asking narrative questions, the wording of the question can be very important. Experience shows that open-ended questions can sometimes garner answers that don't adequately



answer the question. At that point the certifier must go back to the operation for clarification and to further explain the question. The certifier will probably also change the question to get a clearer response.

The OSP may be downloadable for free from the USDA website, but it does not make it any easier for those that don't have good electronic connections or have religious/cultural restrictions on using the internet. They will still be assessed an extra fee by certifiers. The USDA web-based template may well be redundant within a year if there is no process for updating it and therefore cannot be used as a downloadable independent OSP.

If every certifier adopted the new template and the ACA oversaw presenting updates to the NOP, would that lead to more consolidation between certifiers? A very powerful central system for data storage could be set up by a digital software program that would be efficient and cost-saving with economies of scale. It would allow for more consistent training for inspectors, plus allowing producers to move from one certifier to another more easily. It would also solve the financial difficulties that many certifiers are facing. Unfortunately, increasing consolidation has, historically, had adverse effects on the small to mid-size operations (both farms and handlers). It could also place a lot of power within the leading certifiers to decide on what is organically certified and how it is inspected. Examining the rise of hydroponics reveals how it came to be included under organic farming: After several certifiers approved it as organic and its popularity and economic importance grew, it became impractical to revoke organic certification from users of the system. Hydroponic products are now approved for organic certification status by many certifiers, and recognized in the domestic and international markets as organic without any formal approval by the NOP. ♦

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

National Organic Standards Board Rescheduled Fall 2025 Meeting

The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) generally meets twice each year in a public forum to discuss and vote on recommendations to the USDA. These recommendations help the Department meet the needs of the organic industry. This meeting replaces the NOSB meeting scheduled for November 4 – 6, 2025, which was cancelled due to the government being closed. This meeting is particularly important because it deals with many Sunset issues which have been discussed at previous meetings by members of the Board. Five of the NOSB members who have worked on the recommendations for sunset and other priorities, will end their term on the NOSB on January 20th, 2026, and will not be available to explain their recommendations at the Spring 2026 NOSB meeting. There has been no announcement of who will be replacing these members.



NOSB Meeting Details

Public Meeting (2 days): Jan. 13-14, 2026, 11:00 am - 5:00 pm Eastern Time

Location: Virtual (Zoom)

Watch/Listen to the meeting virtually (use the same link for both days.): Join from a PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone or Android device:

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Summary of the meeting agenda is January 13 in the morning : - Call to Order/Welcome; NOP Introductions; Agenda Overview; NOSB Introductions; Secretary's Report; NOSB Report; USDA/AMS/National Organic Program Update. In the afternoon: Crops Subcommittee (CS) and Handling Subcommittee (HS). January 14 will be Livestock Committee in the morning and everything else in the afternoon.

*"We are
stewards of
the land.
Organic is
about life—
it's talking
about life in
the soil and
the plants."
- Forest
Stricker*



Save the Date for the
26th Annual
NODPA Field Days

**SEPTEMBER
24th & 25th
2026**

Field Days will be held in
the Wernersville, PA area.
One of the farm tours will
be at Spring Creek Farms,
with Forest and Greg
Stricker as hosts.

**SAVE
THE
DATE**

*More information about location and educational program
is coming in the March 2026 NODPA News. If you have
recommendations, ideas or questions, contact Nora Owens,
NODPA Field Days Coordinator at 413-772-0444.*

FEATURED FARM



Straus Dairy Farm cows graze on 1 - 3 acre paddocks, moving every 24 to 48 hours.

STRAUS DAIRY FARM & STRAUS FAMILY CREAMERY

TOMALES, CA

continued from page 1

kept in their individual hutches until they're ready to join group pens out on the pasture. He credits a successful calf program to attentive caretakers who have the patience and skill necessary to raise his next generation of livestock replacements. Albert owns and manages the dairy, but he has a team of 4 full-time and 2 part-time employees that make the day-to-day operations happen.

Albert manages around 420 acres of pasture and crops, harvesting his own silage, and has been officially certified organic since 1994. Long before receiving certification, he was already using organic methods like no-till planting and spreading manure. His parents, Bill and Ellen, inspired his commitment to the environment as they were pioneers in community environmental stewardship groups. However, it was Albert who led the family to stop using chemical fertilizers in the mid-1980s. During his early adulthood, Albert focused on incorporating food waste into cow feed, and now successfully includes tofu in his milking cows' diet. The farm

milks 290 Jerseys and crossbreeds using a double 7 herringbone system, with an average butterfat content of 4.55% and an SNF of 9.1, which is on the higher but typical end for cows grazing on the rich grasses of the Northern California Coast.

Straus Dairy Farm uses electric fencing to manage rotational grazing for its herd but is looking to upgrade to virtual fencing in the future. The milking cows are divided into two groups, "high string" and "low string," and they graze on 1-3 acre paddocks, moving every 24 to 48 hours based on pasture growth, feed availability, and weather conditions. Heifers and dry cows also participate in rotational grazing, though they usually graze on pastures that are dual purpose, sometimes following silage harvests when grass grows too tall. Thanks to favorable rainfall and weather last year, the farm produced over 1,200 tons of silage! Albert attributes his productive fields to informal compost made from manure, rice hulls, wood chips, and other materials, which is regularly spread across the land—resulting in organic matter levels between 5% and 15%. He also reseeds almost annually with oats, annual rye, peas, and purple vetch. Inspired by a trip to Scotland, Albert is trying out an "herbal blend" field featuring California red oats, red clover, chicory, bachelor button, white yarrow, plantain, coriander, and white poppy, among other species. This method

FEATURED FARM

aims to introduce diversity, as different plants mature at various times, benefiting both the soil and the animals. It's his first time testing this blend, and everyone is eager to see the results!

Albert is dedicated to expanding his herd by utilizing artificial insemination with jersey sexed semen for his dairy cows, choosing not to breed for beef. He values the advantages of vaccinations, udder balms, electrolytes, and the use of blankets for calves, particularly given the cold evenings, characteristic of California's coastal climate. Albert collaborates closely with local businesses to secure specialized support in areas such as feed supply, nutrition management and veterinary services.

Achieved Distinction as the First Certified Organic Dairy Farm Located West of the Mississippi River

In 1994, Albert made the bold choice to convert his family's dairy farm into an organic operation and established Straus

Family Creamery, which became the first fully certified organic creamery in the country. Today, the creamery sources organic milk from 12 network farms, owned by 10 different families in Sonoma and Marin Counties. Albert and his team value strong relationships with these partner farms, connecting with each one over 25 times a year. These interactions include quarterly producer meetings with Albert and Joseph Button, Straus Family Creamery's Vice President of Sustainability & Strategic Impact, as well as individual conversations with each farm owner at least every quarter. Management members also personally deliver monthly statements, encouraging visits to the farms so everyone can gain insights before the milk reaches the plant. All this face-to-face interaction helps foster a positive, trusting relationship between the creamery and its network farms. As Joseph Button put it, "Trust is earned over time through communication and collaboration."



Joe and Kathy Tresch with Son, Joey Tresch of Tresch Family Farms. Tresch Family Farms is one of 12 network farms providing organic milk to Straus Family Creamery.

FEATURED FARM

Placing Value On a Cost-of-Production Survey

Straus Family Creamery demonstrates a commitment to transparency and excellence in communication. They use a third-party consultant to conduct quarterly cost of production surveys to maintain an up-to-date understanding of the expenses involved in producing the raw milk used for their premium products, in addition to compiling an annual aggregate cost review. This data is compared with the prices paid to network farms to ensure alignment. Straus strives consistently to exceed both the cost of production and a generational viability metric, aiming to support sustainable farming for future generations. Information derived from these assessments is shared with participating farms, enabling them to benchmark their operations against other dairies within the network. Ultimately, Straus is dedicated to ensuring that its network of farmers receives fair compensation for the organic milk they provide.

Farmers-First Approach

Farmers in the Straus network are required to maintain only one certification: USDA Organic Certification, widely regarded as the gold standard for organic farming. This approach lets farmers concentrate on farming and running their dairy operations rather than managing multiple certifications, while also fostering trust and respect between farmers and consumers. Network members consistently express pride in being Straus shippers. All farms in the network are part of the local community, with Straus Family Dairy—located less than 20 miles from the Creamery—being the furthest away.

Operating With a Mission-Focused Approach

As a Certified Beneficial Corporation

Straus Family Creamery is a mission-driven business and registered as a California Beneficial Corporation. This designation means Straus Family Creamery strives to balance profit with purpose, factoring in social and environmental impacts. Directors are legally protected as they pursue these goals, and the company is required to publicly report on its results. As Straus explains, "Our mission is funded by producing the highest quality organic dairy. Selling a cup of yogurt isn't just about the product itself—it supports our farms and our values." Beyond yogurt, Straus Family Creamery offers 12 different flavors of super premium ice cream, cream-top milk in both glass bottles and plastic jugs, chocolate milk, half & half, heavy cream, eggnog, Greek and traditional yogurts (including European and kefir varieties), sour cream, ice cream base, soft serve base, European style (85% butterfat) butter and a barista blend. The barista blend is crafted specifically for coffee because its partial homogenization creates micro foam, ideal for espresso drinks.



Straus Family Creamery offers a multitude of products including Greek and traditional yogurt, European style (85% butterfat) butter, cream-top milk in glass bottles and more.



FEATURED FARM



Part of Albert Straus' focus on reducing carbon emissions are vehicles on his farm that have been converted to electric power.

Being a Change-Agent

Albert has consistently led efforts to reduce carbon emissions in our industry. Eight years ago, he converted a feed truck to operate with full electric power. Building on this achievement, three years ago he proceeded to convert a 544E John Deere Loader to electric operation as well. His latest advancement on the farm is an electric skid steer equipped with an eight-hour lithium battery. Albert reports that his farm is currently halfway toward achieving carbon neutrality!

Albert owns a dairy and founded a processing facility. He is actively engaged in his local community, regularly advocating for its interests. He has played an instrumental role in supporting farms across the North Bay and serves as a prominent proponent of the Marin Agricultural Land Trust (MALT), which was co-founded by his mother in 1980. Albert's contributions have been recognized with several honors, including the Organic Trade Association's Organic Lifetime Achievement Award and the Climate Action Champion Award from the Agricultural Institute



of Marin (AIM) in 2025. Additionally, he received the Vision Leadership Award from the Specialty Food Association in 2017 for his pioneering work in advancing the organic milk movement within the United States. These acknowledgments represent a selection of his numerous accomplishments. ◆

If you are interested in learning more about Albert Straus, his organic dairy farm and Straus Family Creamery, check out the website at <https://www.strausfamilycreamery.com/>.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS



Opportunity to participate in a National Survey of Management of Organic Dairy Youngstock

Your voice matters!

Veterinary scientists at the University of Minnesota are leading research studies to better understand current youngstock management practices on organic herds. We are recruiting farmers involved in organic dairy production to complete a survey on management practices of calves and heifers on organic dairy operations.

By completing this survey, you'll help us better understand current youngstock management practices on organic herds in the United States. Your insights will be combined with current on-farm sampling to help identify key factors that influence calf and heifer health on organic operations.

Farmers involved in organic dairy production are encouraged to participate. Responses remain anonymous and are compiled into summary statistics to describe the diversity of practices and establish benchmarks for the industry. The on-line survey should take approximately 45 to 60 mins. The questions focus on management practice and health observations for calves, heifers, and the lactating herd. Participants who complete the survey receive \$200 compensation for their time.

Follow this link to complete the national survey: <https://tinyurl.com/moodysurvey25>

If you would like more information about our studies in the northeast, you can contact

John Barlow, University of Vermont at john.barlow@uvm.edu or complete this information request form at
<https://docs.google.com/forms/moodyresearchinfo>

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.familyfarmsteaddairy.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

Website & E-Newsletter Advertising

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

Website Advertising

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

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

Cost: Display-ready ads are \$150 per month.

E-Newsletter Advertising

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

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

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

Discounted rates for commitments of 6 months or more.

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

Email: noraowens@comcast.net

Phone: 413-772-0444

Go to the following web page for more information:

<https://www.nodpa.com/p/36/Advertising-with-NODPA>

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance



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Dairy Industry News
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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices January 2026

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Market Information Branch published estimated national organic fluid milk product sales for September and October 2025, compiled with data from the Federal Milk Marketing Order. Total US sales of packaged organic fluid milk products were estimated at 251 million pounds in September 2025, with organic Whole Milk sales at 136 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduced Milk at 114 million pounds. In October 2025, total sales of organic packaged milk were 248 million pounds, with sales of organic packaged Whole Milk at 131 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduced Milk at 113 million pounds.

In September 2025, the data shows an increase in sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged fluid products of 3.8% over September 2024, and the October 2025 data shows a decrease in sales of 4.0% from October 2024. There was a 2.5% decrease in Organic Fat Reduced Milk in September 2025 over September 2024, and a 3.1 % decrease in October 2025 over October 2024. Year to date, September 2025, organic fluid milk sales are 1.2% lower than the same period in 2024 and in October 2025 they are 1.4% lower than the previous year. Year-to-date through October 2025, the growth of Organic Whole Milk fluid sales are lower than the past few years at only 2.6% higher than at the same time in 2024. Whether this is partly due to a tight supply, higher retail price, fluctuating economy or

more organic milk diverted to more profitable cultured products is difficult to determine.

The average national retail price for organic milk, as recorded by Federal Milk Marketing Order in October 2025, dropped to \$5.35 per half gallon for Whole Milk and Organic Reduced Fat 2% milk. In November 2025, there was a national average price of \$5.36 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 \$4.34 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 November 2025. You will find many different variations in supermarkets and convenience stores as retailers set their own prices, for example in one supermarket in Massachusetts, Organic Valley Grass-Fed Milk was \$7.20 per half gallon. Converted to a cwt price, \$5.35 at retail is worth \$124/cwt. The farm share averages \$38/cwt and spot milk is reported at \$55/cwt., heading to \$60+/cwt. Approximately 70% of that income, almost \$85/cwt., goes to other costs, including processing, packaging, transportation, retailing, advertising, management and profit. When Equity Capital is one of the largest investors in organic dairy, they obviously see that profitability for their portfolio.

Organic milk and cream are still very short in the Northeast and with the lack of high-quality feed and harsh winter weather, it's not

likely to improve. Reports are that supply is tight in other parts of the US. The wet spring and severe drought in some areas of the Northeast have cut production by up to 40%, forcing producers to use their winter supply of forage. Reports are that there is no organic hay available for sale in New York, New England and Canada, with some producers going as far as Colorado for a load of hay suitable for lactating cows.

There is serious competition between milk buyers and some, including Lactalis, are bringing new producers on-line to supply co-packers and possibly their own plants in the Midwest, where Pay Price has increased to match what is paid in 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, with Grass Fed organic certified dairies Pay Price ranging from \$38/cwt up to \$50+/cwt. Grass Fed A2A2 regenerative organic certification herds are

Estimated Fluid Milk Products Sales Reports

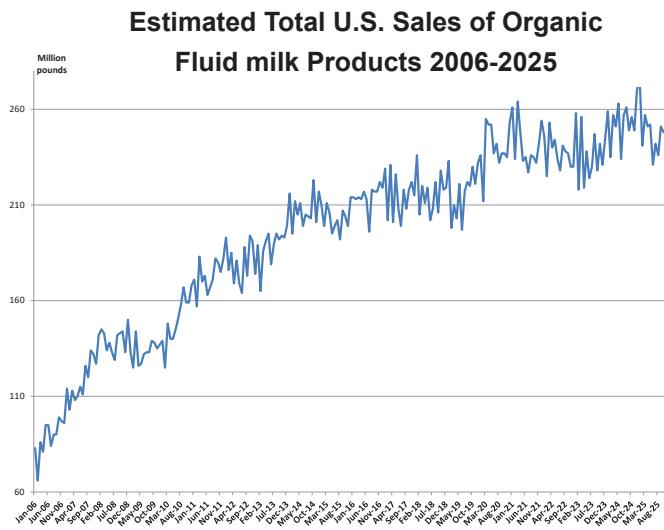
Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	September 2025	2025 Year to date	September-2024	Year to date -2024
			Million pounds	Percent
Organic Whole Milk	136	1,223	3.8%	3.4%
Flavored Whole milk	1	6	-13.2%	-16.5%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	83	720	3.9%	0.5%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	17	152	-18.8%	-19.0%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	9	90	-9.5%	-10.3%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	5	44	-19.5%	-25.5%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	3	-68.3%	-26.1%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	114	1,006	-2.5%	-6.0%
Total Organic Milk Products	251	2,238	0.5%	-1.2%

Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	October 2025	2025 Year to date	October-2024	Year to date -2024
			Million pounds	Percent
Organic Whole Milk	131	1,354	-4.00%	2.6%
Flavored Whole milk	2	8	71.6%	-3.5%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	83	803	1.8%	-0.3%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	15	168	-24.9%	-19.5%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	10	100	-1.3%	-9.4%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	5	49	0.2%	-23.6%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	1	4	-0.8%	-20.6%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	113	1,120	-3.1%	-5.7%
Total Organic Milk Products	248	2,486	-3.2%	-1.4%

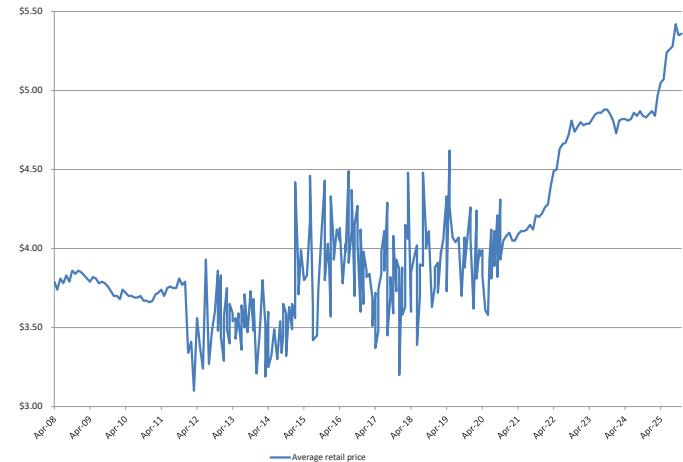
Data may not add due to rounding to the nearest million pounds

- continued on page 30

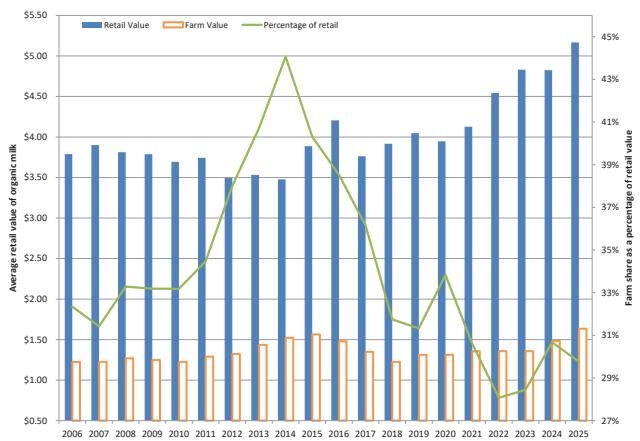
ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS



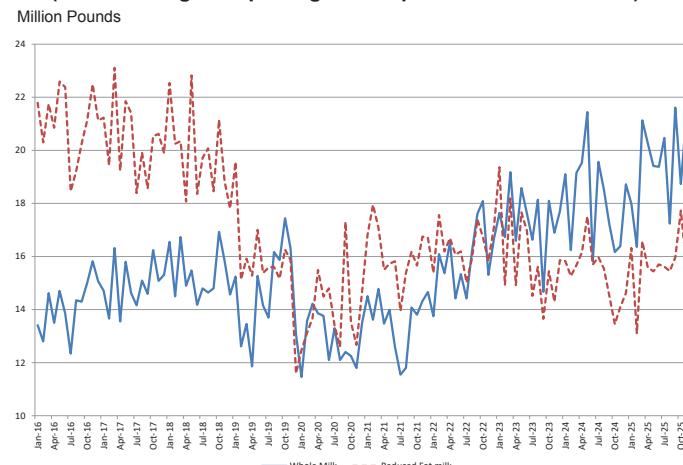
Average Organic Retail price for 1/2 gallons as reported by USDA AMS 2012-2025



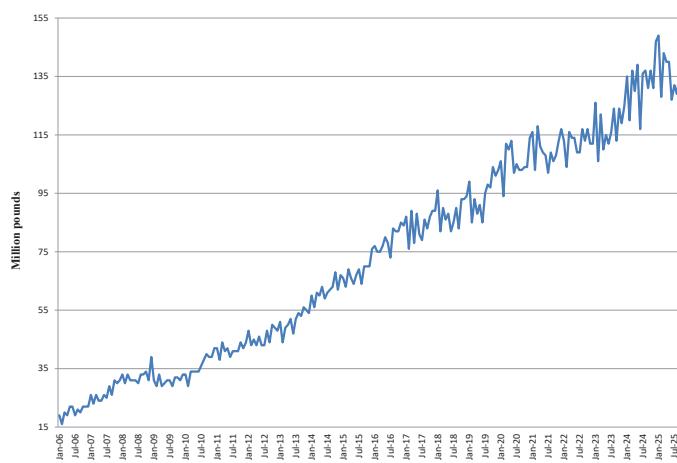
Average retail price, average farm share and percentage for half gallon of organic milk



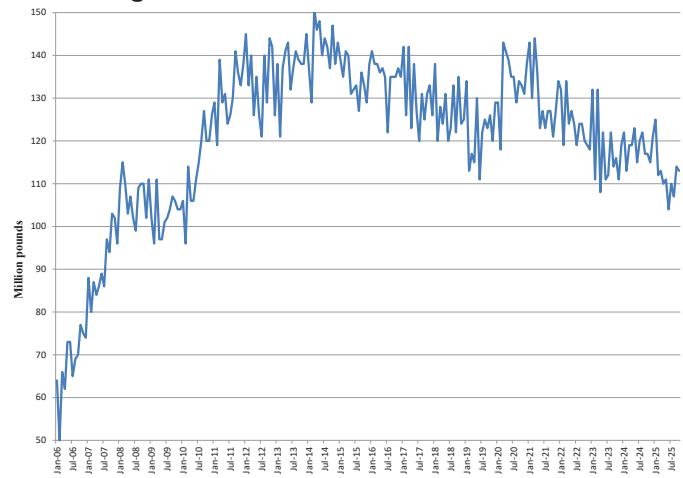
Utilization of Organic Fluid milk in FMMO 1 2016-2025 (not including fluid packaged milk processed out of order)



Organic Whole Milk Retail Sales 2006-2025



Organic Reduced-Fat retail sales 2006-2025



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices

continued from page 28

in the \$50 to \$60 range. The Pay Price and, more important, the mailbox price will vary mostly depending on the component value of different herds, size and location, plus competition within the region.

Federal Milk Marketing Order 1 (Order) reported that in October 2025, fluid Organic Milk, packaged and utilized within the Order, totaled 36.46 million pounds; higher than the previous year of 29.62 million pounds. In October 2025, sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged in the Order were 18.73 million pounds, 2.56 million pounds higher than October 2024. In October 2025, sales of Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged and utilized in the Order was 17.73 million pounds, 4.28 million pounds higher than October 2025. Total Class 1 milk (both conventional and organic) packaged outside the Order, but sold within the Order, increased by 1.59 million pounds in October 2025 over October 2024.

In November 2025, sales of fluid Organic Milk packaged and utilized within the Order totaled 36.94 million pounds, higher than the previous year of 30.48 million pounds, an increase of 6.46 million pounds or 21%. In November 2025, sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged in the Order were 21.31 million pounds, 4.92 million pounds higher than November 2024. In November 2025, sales of Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged and utilized in the Order were 15.63 million pounds, 1.54 million pounds higher than November 2024. Packaged milk coming into the Order in November 2025 decreased by 1.23 million pounds over the same period in 2024.

Organic milk averages approximately 19% of the fluid milk packaged in the Order. From January to November 2025, FMMO 1 reports an increase of 5% or 18.19 million pounds in organic packaged milk, from 368.82 million pounds in 2024 to 387.01 million pounds in 2025. Packaged milk coming into the Order during the same period, both conventional and organic, has increased by 62.03 million pounds as of November 2025 compared to November 2024, from 1,512.01 million pounds to 1,574.04 million pounds. The Stonyfield/US Lactalis plant in New Hampshire (Stonyfield); Brattleboro VT (Commonwealth Dairy) and those plants that either co-pack (use their own organic milk) or package Lactalis owned organic milk (tolling) are not included in this data because they do not process organic fluid milk and they have chosen not to be regulated under the Order.

UTILIZATION OF ORGANIC FLUID MILK PRODUCTS (Class 1) (Million pounds) in FMMO 1 (Northeast) not including packaged product 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	36.46	29.62	33.54	34.83	29.47	25.78
NOVEMBER	36.94	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	51.94	5.68	46.26	50.36	5.89	44.47	49.73	5.65	42.48
November	46.75	5.00	41.76	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

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 October 2025, of the 248 million pounds packaged and sold as Class 1 organic milk in the US, 51.94 million pounds were from Order 32 (Central), of which 46.26 million pounds were utilized in other Orders. Order 51 (California) packaged 42.55 million pounds of organic milk in October 2025, of which 763,676 pounds were sold in other Orders. Order 33 (Mideast) packages less than Order 1, 32 and 51, with 21.63 million pounds in October 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.

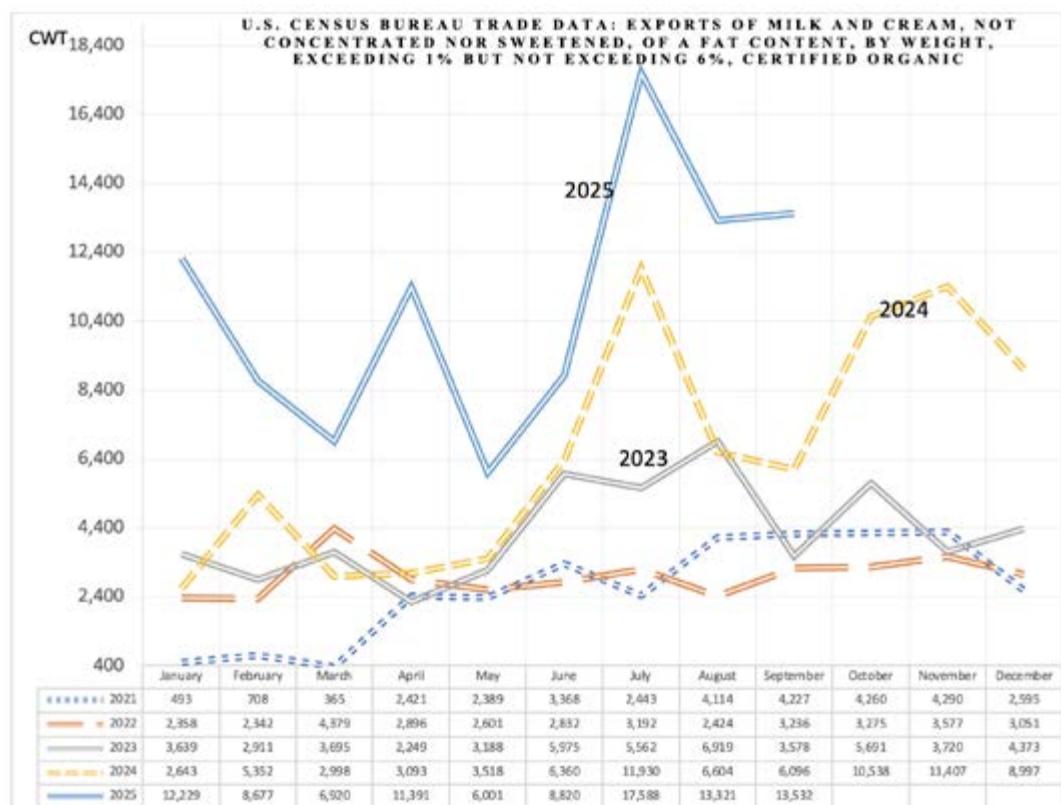
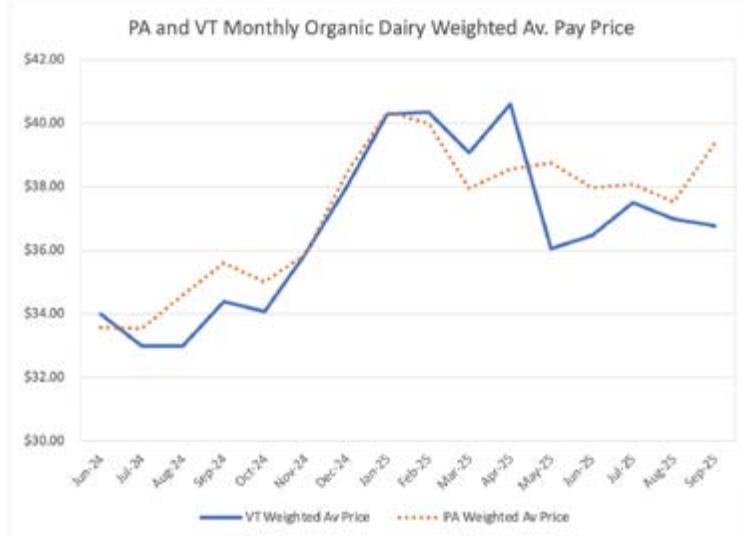
ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

The USDA AMS Market News Vermont Report has published data since November 2023. The weighted average Pay Price is \$38.24/cwt for year-to-date September 2025, with a range of \$36.06/cwt to a maximum of \$40.29/cwt (does not include any deductions for hauling). The average daily production per cow, year-to-date, averages 47 lbs./cow. The milk buyers in Vermont are CROPP Cooperative, US Lactalis direct supply, Upstate Niagara (newly named UNC) and many small processors or direct-to-consumer operations. The total number of organic dairies in VT is 117 according to the VT Department of Agriculture.

The USDA AMS Market News Pennsylvania Report shows a 2025 September year-to-date range of Pay Price from a low of \$37.52/cwt to a high of \$40.37/cwt. The average weighted price over the 9-month period is \$38.74, slightly higher than the Pay Price shown for VT. The average daily production per cow for the 9-month period is 32.64 pounds, 14.36 pounds lower than the VT average.

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. With the government back open, we now have figures for August and September 2025. The data from August 2025 shows organic milk HS-10 exports were 13,321 cwt. The same month in 2024 was dramatically lower at 6,604 cwt - a 101.7% increase from 2024 to 2025, or 6,717 cwt. September 2025 data showed an increase of approximately the same amount, with exports at 13,532 cwt an



increase of 7,436 cwt. over September 2024 amount of 6,096 cwt or 122% increase. Year-to-date January to September 2025 exports are 98,481 cwt, up 102.6 percent, compared to the same time period one year ago. 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 remain high but buyers are more selective, especially in the Northeast with a shortage of feed. Those operations that are stretched for feed or suffering from cash flow difficulties because of the high price of purchased forage, are culling some of their herd; although most go for a cull price much below the high price for selected A2A2 organic certified bred heifers and milking cows. With the national beef herd still at the lowest level for many years, demand for beef calves is still high but in some areas of the country they have started to drop to a more normal good price, instead of exceptional price.

At Hoskins Livestock Auction in New Berlin NY in December 2025, producers saw high prices for week old bull calves averaging \$13.60/lb. with a top price of \$17.10/lb. Heifer calves were not so high averaging \$8.90/lb. Organic milking age cows topped out at \$2,400 each with organic bred heifers at \$1,950. The cull price averaged \$1.12/lb.

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.

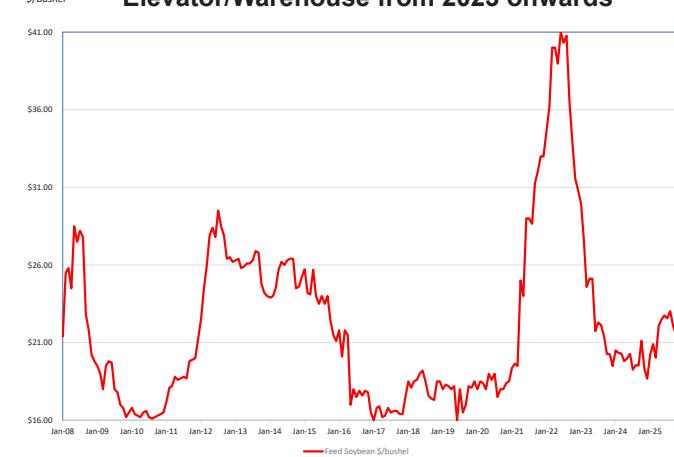
Feed

A common inquiry concerns the existence of tariffs on Canadian hay and grains; currently, there are none and producers should not be paying this import tax despite any claims from sellers and confusion at the border. There are tariffs on equipment and other products. The import HS code for Canadian hay is 1214.90 but don't expect to find any on the open market. Please ensure correct testing of any hay you receive before accepting or paying for the load, and get expert advice on how to incorporate the feed into a nutritious ration. National data from USDA has organic feed corn delivered to the elevator averaging \$8.23 per bushel in November 2025. Organic feed soybean delivered to the elevator averaged \$22.57/bu. in November 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 \$7.40/bushel in November 2025. Soybean meal is trading at \$850-900/ton in November-December 2025. I have no accurate information on the price of hay, which depends on availability, and expensive trucking. ♦

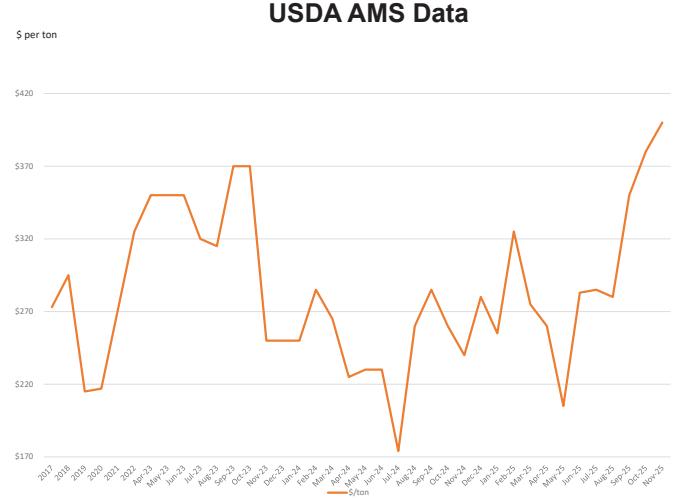
Organic Corn Price \$/bushel 2008-2025 supplied by USDA AMS FOB the Farm and FOB Elevator/Warehouse from 2023 onwards



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



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



Calendar

January 22–24, 2026

GrassWorks 34th Annual Grazing Conference: Pastures to Prosperity: Building financially smart grazing systems for today's land stewards

La Crosse Center La Crosse, Wisconsin.

This year's focus highlights practical, innovative, and profitable approaches to grass-based livestock production, equipping farmers with tools to strengthen both environmental and economic sustainability.

Keynote speakers: Melinda Sims, Wyoming cattle rancher and Ranching for Profit instructor, known for her expertise in financial decision-making and resilient ranch business models; Dwayne Estes, Executive Director of the Southeastern Grasslands Institute, a leading voice in grassland restoration, regenerative grazing, and agricultural landscape resilience. Registration Details: Registration for the conference is still open. Registration information can be found here: <https://grassworks.org/events/grazing-conference/>

Learn more at <https://grassworks.org/>. Media Contact: Patty Laskowski Morren, Executive Director, director@grassworks.org

Friday, January 30 & 31, 2026

The 2026 Northeast Grazing & Livestock Conference, DoubleTree in Manchester, New Hampshire or Online via Whova.

A Confluence of the Northeast Grazing & Livestock Conference & the Northeast Pasture Consortium Annual Meeting. A deep dive into topics specific to raising pasture-based livestock in the Northeast. "We're especially delighted to welcome Loren and Lisa Poncia of Stemple Creek Ranch as keynote speakers. They'll share insights from their years of ranching experience alongside regional grazing experts and practical farmer panels covering all aspects of grazing."

Click here,
<https://www.negrazingnetwork.com/2026-grazing-conference/>
to learn more and register today!

Saturday, January 31, 2026

NOFA NJ 36th Annual Winter Conference the Berkeley Oceanfront Hotel, Asbury Park, NJ 9AM – 9PM Educational Workshops 9AM – 6PM Post-Conference Fun 6PM – 9PM

This year and next, our Annual Winter Conference will explore the stories within our community, highlighting the people and the passion behind the work we love. In collaboration with The Moth, we're making space and taking time to listen, learn, connect and create.

Building a better food system starts by telling a better story! Post-Conference: After the workshops, join NOFA NJ for more fun – enjoy small bites from featured food artisans, local mocktails and cocktails, live music, film screenings, and more! Click Here to Register <https://nofanj.org/https-nofanj-org-event-calender-calendar/#!event/2026/1/31/nofa-nj-36th-annual-winter-conference>

February 7, 2026 - 8:00am-6:00pm

NOFA Mass 39th Annual Winter Conference, Healthy Soils in Action UMASS Amherst, MA

Join us for the 39th Annual NOFA/Mass Winter Conference — a one-day gathering to learn about healthy soil principles put into practice. This year, we'll explore what makes soil thrive: from the rich microbial life underground to the human communities and cultural practices that sustain it above.

Part of a broader effort to advance healthy soil goals across Massachusetts farms and gardens, in alignment with the Massachusetts Healthy Soils Action Plan. For more information and to register, visit their website: <https://www.nofamass.org/home/nofa-events/winter-conference/>

February 14 & 15, 2026, 9:00am-4:00pm

NOFA-VT Winter Conference

St Michael's College, 1 Winooski Park, Colchester, VT, 05439

Each year, the NOFA-VT Winter Conference provides a valuable opportunity for farmers, homesteaders, gardeners, earth tenders, land stewards, educators, students, policy-makers, and other food system activists to participate in our vibrant community event and share ideas, resources, and skills.

Saturday, February 14

Dig into the food and farm topics you care about! There is something for everyone passionate about a just and verdant local food system, from commercial farmers to gardeners, policy wonks to grassroots organizers, and agriculture professionals to home cooks. Check out the full lineup of activities, including speakers, workshops, roundtables, and more.

Children's Conference

Make it a family affair and register your kids for their own conference! Children ages 5–12 can attend the all-day Children's Conference on Saturday, February 14, and enjoy a variety of farming and nature-themed activities on the Saint Michael's College campus. (Parents and caregivers are not required to attend the Winter Conference—you're welcome to drop the kids off for an engaging day of learning and fun!)

Calendar (continued)

Sunday, February 15

Intensive workshops devote a full day to deeply exploring a single topic. Led by knowledgeable presenters, there is plenty of time for discussion, question and answer, and networking with peers. Intensive workshops can be added to your registration for the main Saturday conference or purchased separately. Lunch is included with Sunday registration.

This year's intensive options include:

- The New OLC Paradigm: Organic Land Care in a Changing Climate
- May We All Be Free: Powerbuilding and Organizing with NOFA-VT
- Planning for Water Resilience for Vegetable and Fruit Growers
- The Work That Reconnects
- Leadership for Liberation: Practicing Antiracism in Vermont's Food System

Cost \$120-\$320 sliding scale, free for BIPOC. Visit our conference website for more info and to register: <https://web.event.com/event/767deceef15e-449e-a794-f078f56d5e83/summary?RefId=nofa-website>.

February 17, 2026, 8:00 am-4:00 pm

12th Annual Pro-Grassive Dairy Grazing Conference

Slavic Pentecostal Church, 2191 State Route 5, Utica, NY 13502.

The Pro-Grassive Grazing Conference is an educational day for 100% grass fed dairy that will cover: maximizing pasture utilization and building soil fertility through grazing management, maintaining a healthy herd and producing wholesome, nutrient dense dairy products, and bringing economic proficiency to the family farm. Contact Melvin Zook with questions and to register: 518-709-6335.

February 18-19, 2026

Lancaster Grazing Conference

Solanco Fair Grounds, Quarryville PA,

This two day conference is hosted by the Lancaster County Graziers and has a full educational program with a large trade show and normal attendance of 400-500 people. For more information and to register, contact Roman Stoltzfoos at 717-278-1070.

Friday, March 6, 2026, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 pm

2026 Cornell Organic Field Crops & Dairy Conference

The Lux Hotel & Conference Center, Waterloo, N.Y.

Co-hosted by New York Soil Health and Cornell CALS, the annual conference brings together leaders in organic grain, dairy, and livestock systems to share practical tools, new research, and farmer-tested strategies to support resilient and profitable organic production.

This year's program features: Michel Cavigelli, Lead Scientist, USDA Agricultural Research Service Farming Systems Project: Findings from the Beltsville Long-term Cropping Systems Project; Amber Lambke, Co-Founder, Maine Grains: Connecting Farms, Food, and Community with Maine Grains;

David Mortensen, Emeritus Professor of Agroecology, University of New Hampshire: Organic Grain Production in the Northeast: Cultivating Our Path Forward. The full agenda includes breakout sessions, soil health and crop management workshops, farmer-led roundtables, and a networking hour featuring beers brewed with locally grown grain. Registration opens at 8:00 a.m., with the first session beginning at 8:30 a.m. The conference concludes at 4:30 p.m.

Evening Networking Event – March 5

On Thursday, March 5, attendees are invited to a Regenerative Organic Networking Event from 5-8 p.m. at Fleur de Lis Brew Works in Seneca Falls. The evening includes dinner, a drink ticket, and informal conversations focused on soil health practices and organic transition. For more information, visit their website: <https://newyorksoilhealth.regfox.com/cornell-organic-field-crops-dairy-conference> or contact Kristen Loria, kal52@cornell.edu. Lodging: A room block is available at the Lux Hotel & Conference Center for \$99 per night. Mention the Cornell Organic Field Crops and Dairy Conference when booking, or use the reservation link on the event website.

March 7, 2026

44th Winter Conference of CT-NOFA

Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT

This conference will be featuring a series of virtual workshops on March 3-5 in the lead up to our full day, in-person gathering and celebration on March 7th. Learn more about our 44th annual conference at:

<https://ctnofa.org/winter-conference/2026-winter-conference/>

March 10 and 11, 2026, 8:00 am-5:00 pm

DYNAMIC DAIRY Opportunities at Every Scale

2026 Northeast Dairy Innovation Summit

Crowne Plaza Albany--The Desmond Hotel
660 Albany Shaker Rd., Albany, NY

Join us in Albany, NY for two days focused on innovation, modernization, and finding opportunities at every scale across the dairy sector. Along with engaging workshops, you'll have time to network, ask questions, and offer your own insights toward what's working and what's needed to innovate and strengthen the dairy sector. Register today for an early-bird discount by January 16th, and please share with your networks! Learn more and register at <https://summit.nedairyinnovation.com/>

Classified Ads

ANIMALS

COWS FOR SALE AT AUCTION: 12 Breeding quality OPT certified Holsteins and some of their offspring will be for sale at the Linwood Organic Auction, Ronks, PA on March 13, 2026. Call Benuel Stoltzfus at 717-383-2655 if you have questions.

Location: Lebanon County, PA

COWS FOR SALE: 15 certified organic crossbred cows for sale. Mixed ages, all in milk since last spring. These are preg-checked and mostly due in June. They are sound cows but we have decided not to freshen cows in the summer. Contact Geordie Lynd, northwindvt@gmail.com, 802-472-5383.

Location: S. Walden, VT

COWS FOR SALE: 3 BRED HEIFERS, vet preg checked 9/19. Grass fed, other than a little organic grain to get them in the barn. Lineback, Missy, polled, is due 1/4/26 and is bred to Disco Jersey bull - A2A2 and polled. Mighty, is a Jersey cross, polled - due 12/21/25 - bred to Mayfield Jersey bull - A2A2 and polled. Mercy, polled, is due 1/1/26 and is bred to Mayfield Jersey bull - A2A2 and polled. My farm is certified organic and these heifers have been raised organically. BUT they are not certified. I have raised them since they were under a week old, milk fed to 3-4 months old. I believe they could be certified under the NOFA rule that allows a one time whole herd transition to organic. All 3 heifers are A2A2. Tie stall trained. Carpenter Farm, carpfarm@fairpoint.net, 802-426-3331, \$2000 each.

Location: Cabot, VT

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

DAIRY FARM POSITION WANTED: Looking for employment on a Dairy farm, with the potential to take it over, after a period of employment. **HOUSING REQUIRED** Contact Nick, armato.nick@icloud.com, 959-229-0852.

Location: Madison County, NY

DAIRY AND LIVESTOCK FARM MANAGER

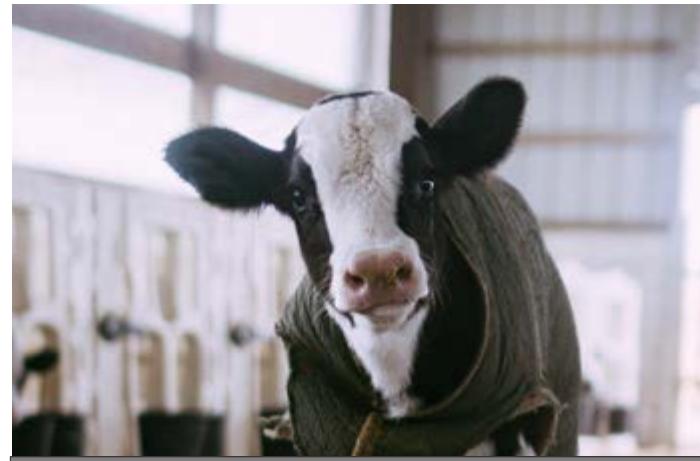
Shelburne Farms, Shelburne, VT Year Round, FULL TIME, \$65,000 - \$75,000 (includes housing)

Our Dairy and Livestock Farm Manager will provide day-to-day management coordination and oversight for our pasture-based dairy and livestock operations, collaborating with farm colleagues to advance the Farm's mission, vision and goals. We're seeking someone who loves being a farmer, wants to grow professionally, and is excited to become part of the farm-based education community at Shelburne Farms. For more information: <https://shelburnefarms.org/about/join-our-team>. If you need assistance at any time during the application process or have questions, please contact us at jobs@shelburnefarms.org or 802-985-8686.

EQUIPMENT

EQUIPMENT FOR SALE: J.D. 800 15' Swather with hay conditioner, \$1500.00/best offer; Hesston 2000-150 chopper with 3 row 30" corn head and hay head, \$1500/bo; 15' packer, \$1995/bo; 51' New Idea grain elevator, 3 hay racks, 8'x16' on flotation tire trailer, each \$1200/bo; 10 x 16 hayrack on flotation tire trailer \$1200/bo; and JD 336 square baler, \$3500/bo. All equipment has been shedded. Contact Cathy at 320-219-6117.

Location: Alexandria, MN



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

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

2026 Ad rates and sizes listed below.

**Deadline for advertising in the
March 2026 issue is February 15, 2026.**

Full Page Ad (7.5" W x 9.75" H) = \$660

1/2 Page Ad (7.5" W x 4.75" H) = \$340

1/4 Page Ad (3.625" W x 4.75" H) = \$190

1/8 Page Ad/Business Card: (3.625" W x 2.25" H) = \$100

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

Classified Ads:

Free to organic dairy farmers and business members.
All others pay a flat rate of \$30.

For advertising information call Nora Owens:
413-772-0444 or email noraowens@comcast.net.

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