NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Member Info

Above: Greg and Forrest Stricker of Spring Creek Farms in Wernersville, PA

FEATURED FARM: SPRING CREEK FARMS

Wernersville, PA

Owned and operated by the Strickler families.

Nature and Nurturing: Organic, grass-fed dairy is a calling for the Strickers

By Amy Anselm, NODPA Contributing Writer, Tioga Family Farm, Truxton, NY.

Spring Creek Farms in Wernersville, Pennsylvania has been certified organic since 1999, and the family-run dairy has managed multiple evolutions and additions to its operations since. Greg Stricker now manages the majority of the farm's day-to-day operations, in continued partnership with his father, Forrest, as well as his wife, Stacy, his mother, Barb, and children Rachel, Jonathon and Joel. The dairy includes an annual average of 130 mature cows—including their milking herd and dry cows—and uses a once-a-day milking regime for optimum labor efficiency.

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Creating a Grazing Plan: How to Meet the Challenges and Opportunities of a Changing Climate

Farmers across the Northeast are still reeling from the challenging 2025 growing season, with unprecedented rainfall in the spring followed by crippling drought leading to severe hay and feed shortages. In this issue, in light of these dramatic climatic changes, and as we develop the 2026 NODPA Field Days educational program, we are taking an in-depth look at how producers can mitigate and take advantage due to these changes with three articles on strategies for creating a grazing plan that meets the challenges of climate change. Klaas Martens

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Message from NODPA Co-President

I hope this finds everyone doing well this winter. Things are going well here on the farm, although shorter on forage than I would like to be. (Also, more than a little tired of plowing snow.) I've started ordering in spring fertility to try and get at least half of our 1st cutting acres hit with an early dose of chicken litter to help bolster our first cutting yield and quality to refill our dwindling supplies. From my experience, the last few years with the weather being so unpredictable, I thought I'd take every opportunity to get more forage yield starting early this year when I know we will have the moisture to make use of the fertility. I'm hoping the year starts off on the dry side to make applying much easier on our usually wet ground.

In our last NODPA Board meeting we were discussing/planning for this year's upcoming 26th annual NODPA Field Days event in PA at Forrest and Greg Strikers Spring Creek Farms, Wernersville, PA. We have some great speakers lined up that I'm really looking forward to seeing. I also always enjoy the farm tours and speaking with other farmers as I've found them to be one of my favorite ways to learn/see very practical ideas used on farms and different ways of doing things. I feel like if I just take home one useful piece of knowledge that I can apply at our farm it's been a very worthwhile time.

All the Best, Kirk

Kirk Arnold, NODPA Co-President
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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Dairy News: March 2026

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

First, an apology to John Cleary and a correction. In the January 2026 NODPA News I mistakenly said that there were no CROPP field reps in New England. I took John's title of New England Regional Manager and his many years of service to indicate a more supervisory role. All CROPP field staff hold the title of Regional Manager, so he was, and is, the field rep for New England. John continues to demonstrate outstanding commitment by supporting CROPP members and organic dairy farm families in New England.

Horizon has made an intelligent decision that will benefit producers and the Maple Hill brand. Because of a supply shortage, they will not penalize Maple Hill producers for increased volumes of milk during the spring flush and summer grazing season. Christina Reginelli (Director of Producer Relations) and Troy Thomas, (Head of Milk sourcing, Horizon) informed Maple Hill producers on 2/2/2026, that "Horizon is increasing the 'Over' price to match the base price of $45.36/cwt, March through August 2026." In practical terms, this means that all milk, no matter the volume, shipped in March, April, May, June, July, and August 2026 will be paid at a base price of $45.36/cwt. The May/ June 'Under' amount will stay at $5. Quality/ Components, and all other pricing program details remain unchanged.

Buyers should recognize producers' current need for support and consider Horizon's example; ongoing organic milk shortages and challenging weather in the northeast through 2025 and early 2026 persist and follow their lead.

Good news for those that signed up for Dairy Margin Coverage for 2026. On February 28, 2026, the USDA released January's DMC margin of $7.81 per cwt. This margin triggers a $1.69 payment for operations enrolled in Tier I at the $9.50 per cwt coverage level. Projections point to improvements in the All-Milk price for March and moving forward, with feed prices staying low, so no significant payouts are projected for the rest of 2026.

Circana OmniMarket Total Store View data reported in *Market Trends by Dairy Foods* that among the top 10 sellers in the Refrigerated White Dairy Milk subcategory, Organic Valley was fifth with an excellent year. The top seller remains private label and fourth in that subcategory was Horizon Organic Dairy LLC with a 4.5% increase in dollar sales but a slight drop in unit sales to 103,542,194. In contrast, the Organic Valley brand was fifth with a dollar sales increase of 20% and unit sales increase of 14.4% to 51,030,440. Unrelated, is the unconfirmed

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but credible rumors that CROPP is purchasing 4-5 tankers of organic milk a day from Texas. Request for comments from CROPP went unanswered as did request for information about whether CROPP is replacing their New England Regional Manager that left last year.

A new 2,000-cow organic dairy has opened in Texas and a 6,000-cow organic dairy in Ohio.

USDA

USDA is moving forward with its reorganization plan to move 2,600 of the 4,600 DC area-based USDA employees out of DC. Under the plan, the staff will be moved to 5 lower-cost regional hubs around the country. On February 25, the Administration announced the sale of the USDA South Building (where NOP staff are located). Since September 2024, USDA has lost 27% of its workforce (24,000) and with it a lot of institutional knowledge and experience. NOP lost approximately one third of its employees in the last year and there is no news as to when and if they can rehire to fill important and necessary positions.

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) has made slow progress on moving forward the 2025 and 2026 Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP), despite money for the program being appropriated in 2025. Don't hold your breath for any quick resolution.

Certification

Having trouble finding certifiers? NOFA NY is now taking on new organic dairy clients. Global Organic Alliance, Bellefontaine, OH, phone 937-593-1232 is taking on new organic dairies as is Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association - (614) 262-2022. They all do Grass-Fed certification through Organic Plus Trust (OPT) that is required by Maple Hill.

OPT Program Director, Lauren Tonti, explained their process for applying for a variance on grazing requirements. OPT collaborates with certifiers who utilize the NOP program requirements as a foundation when considering the more rigorous standards set by OPT. A certifier may request a variance for their producer clients in discussion with OPT, deciding on suitable criteria together. Producers can also apply directly to OPT, where each variance is evaluated individually. The large Pay Price gap between Grass-Fed add-on and NOP certification means failing to meet grazing and forage requirements could result in loss of OPT certification, which may determine a producer's ability to continue farming, especially given the conditions in 2025 and early 2026.

OPT's Program Manual outlines how producers can appeal any decisions. Contact Lauren Tonti, at ltonti@organicplustrust.com or (202) 969-8534 ext. 700. OPT does have a Steering Committee and an Advisory Committee as an appeal process. ◆

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— Chuck Worden

See Chuck's Video

See us at Central Plains Dairy Expo Mar. 17-19 Sioux Falls

Wormont Dairy

WORMONT DAIRY, CASSVILLE, NEW YORK
Chuck and Vanessa Worden (above), 250 Reg.Holsteins, few Jerseys
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"At calving, the fresh heifer's udder swells and tightens with edema. We want her relaxed, so her udder stays in shape and the sphincter muscle works to close teats properly to keep pathogens out. Udder Comfort™ does the job to relax the udder and improve the start," says Chuck Worden, Wormont Dairy, Cassville, N.Y., milking 250 cows.

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Creating a Grazing Plan: How to Meet the Challenges and Opportunities of a Changing Climate

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writes about ***The Importance of a Planned Grazing Season as the Climate Changes***, and the University of Vermont Extension team of Heather Darby, Sara Ziegler, and Elizabeth Seyler have contributed two articles: ***In the Wake of Drought: Pasture Assessment and Recovery Planning*** and ***Renovating Drought-Damaged Pastures***. The educational program at the NODPA Field Days will, in part, focus on tools and strategies to prepare your farm to meet the unpredictable changing weather patterns. (See the ***NODPA Field Days Save the Date*** article on page 18 for more details). ◆

The Importance of a Planned Grazing Season as the Climate Changes

By Klaas Martens, Klaas and Mary-Howell Martens Farm, Penn Yan, NY.

With variable weather patterns across the country, it is essential to adapt grazing management practices to accommodate such fluctuations. Last year exemplified this challenge, beginning with excessive rainfall and ending with severe drought in many parts of the northeast. These conditions illustrated the adverse effects of both extremes: initially, saturated pastures resulted in hoof damage, root disruption, and soil compaction; subsequently, dry soils hindered grass recovery and regrowth. Ideally, surplus water stored in the plants root system and excess forage could have been preserved for later use. While it is possible to retain some resources, doing so requires strategic planning and may necessitate modifications to current pasture management approaches. Pasture can be both the cheapest and the highest quality feed that dairy cows get. We need to think of pasture as our highest value and high profit crop. To take advantage of its full potential, we must manage it like a high value crop.

The challenge is that we need to use our cows to manage the pastures instead of letting the pastures manage the cows. The big question is how do we do this?

Grazing high

Many grazing specialists emphasize the importance of 'grazing high', but this concept should be more than a catch phrase—it needs to be translated into practical strategies for farmers aiming to manage pastures more profitably. Understanding what 'grazing high' truly means and applying it effectively is essential. Most of us have attended pasture walks where we have heard, 'As it grows above, so it grows below,' meaning that the root system mirrors the height of the top growth. This explains why pastures grazed down to the ground barely grows during hot, dry summers, making it tough to produce milk on such feed. When pasture growth stalls in midsummer, we quickly deplete our winter feed supplies—a scenario we've all witnessed and experienced. Each extra bite cows take beyond the optimal grazing height can reduce pasture availability later in the season.

When pastures are maintained at a healthy height, their deeper roots help soil retain more water early on and release it as needed later. Effective grazing management is required to harvest pastures in ways that deliver both quality and yield. There is no instant fix or magic solution for turning poor pastures into high-yielding ones; rather, successful results come from many small factors working together for profitable outcomes.

It is important to anticipate any overgrazing and take corrective action before the pastures are damaged. To manage pasture harvest with cows, their daily intake should be monitored and supplemented with extra grazing land or other forages before overgrazing. If pastures are overgrazed, that is in effect using winter forage by default, resulting in lower pasture yields and increased feed needs. Providing stored feed before overgrazing occurs is more economical but requires proactive planning rather than reacting to poor pasture conditions.

Use resources that are free first

I like to say do the things that are free first. Those are mostly good grazing management. Then do the things that are cheap to do next. Save the more expensive inputs for when you have extra money to invest and avoid the expensive products that the salesman promises will blow the lid off your tank unless you have some money that is burning your pockets and you really want to get rid of it.

A soil test and some targeted fertilizer applications can be a worthwhile investment in many cases. I wouldn't buy fertilizer expecting huge yield increases right away. Minerals in feed are expensive and growing grass that is rich in the minerals that cattle need will save money on expensive supplements. The minerals that come in a bag are not as well assimilated by animals and can be an expensive source of fertilizer.

Each country in New York has a Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Consulting with your county SWCD about improved soil conservation practices can pay back some real dividends. There are

often cost sharing funds available to help construct projects that will improve water quality and protect the soil. Diversion ditches, ponds, grazing plans, manure storages, windbreaks, artificial drainage, cover crops, and fencing are all projects that conservation districts can help plan and will provide substantial funding for. Keeping soil and water on the farm can really pay back in improved yields and cleaner water.

Options for extending the grazing season with a planned grazing program

There are many options both for extending the grazing season and for protecting and optimizing permanent pasture. Having some extra grazing crops available along with well managed permanent pastures, makes it much easier and economical to manage pastures profitably. Planning ahead to have additional grazing when you know the pastures will have reduced production can really pay off both in the forage from these extra paddocks and from allowing you to manage the harvest of the main pastures better.

When planning to produce extra forage for the middle and later parts of the growing season, it makes sense to produce a little more than the cows are expected to need. For example, after the oats and peas are gone, that land can be planted to a mixture that could include sudan grass, cow peas, soybeans, millet, etc or other hot dry weather loving species for supplemental late summer grazing, or a cool weather mix with brassicas like forage rape, triticale, oats, turnips, Austrian winter peas, triticale, etc. There are many choices to pick from. Local experience and your preferences should determine which species to use in a mix.

The fertility needs of the different forage and cover crops need to be considered in your choices for a grazing program. Some species can do well with low soil fertility, for example, buckwheat, Japanese millet, sorghum, oats, rye, cow peas, and Austrian winter peas can tolerate lower soil fertility. Forage rape, turnips, kale, ryegrass, triticale, and pearl millet demand higher fertility to do well.

Ideas for a seasonal, planned grazing program:

- Starting in the winter: Corn fodder, either yours or your neighbor's, that has been harvested for grain can be grazed whenever the ground is dry or frozen. Dry cows and heifers pick up dropped ears and eat the husks, cobs, and leaves of the corn. Such grazing needs to be planned ahead to make sure fences are in place. It is good for animal health and reduces the amount of manure that needs to be spread as well as the amount of bedding that is needed by spreading it while the livestock is grazing.

- Early spring: last years' small grains that were under seeded with clover, Italian ryegrass, oats, or triticale can make excellent early spring grazing before pastures are far enough along to graze them safely. Also, hayfields that are scheduled to be plowed, can be grazed early before pastures become ready.

- Late spring: the problem in late spring/early summer is often having enough animals to harvest pastures as fast as they need to be. With effective use of cover crops and hayfields, it is easier to match stocking density to pasture production.

- Mid to late summer: Spring seeded oats/field peas and other cover crop mixtures can fill in as cool season grasses slow down, and grazing intensity needs to be reduced with rising temperatures and drier weather. Having more oats and pea forage than the cows need is not a problem if the surplus can be chopped or wrapped. Just 10 acres of a heavy crop of oats and peas that are ready in July can make a dramatic difference in a dry summer especially if that land gets replanted to a cool weather mix to use latter in the year.

- Late summer/early fall: Sorghum, Sudan grass, millets, cow peas, soybeans, forage brassicas, buckwheat, etc., all produce well during hot dry weather when cool season grasses are at their slowest. These crops can continue to be grazed well into the fall.

- Late fall: Triticale, oats, peas, forage rape, turnips, ryegrass, kale, etc. are all very frost tolerant and can be grazed into the winter. Marrowstem kale can be grazed even in relatively deep snow although it is rich and cattle need to have some higher fiber forages with that ration.

Calculating the cost of forages

In calculating the cost of forage, farmers often disregard the cost of harvesting and storing feed. One reason pasture is more economical than stored feeds is because the cost of harvesting and storage are avoided. Even the lush red clover cover crops that we cut and chop ahead of plowing them to plant corn are expensive compared with grazing them. Our estimated cost per ton of feeding chopped and stored medium red clover cover crops is about $150 per ton of dry matter compared with under $75/ per ton of dry matter from grazed cover crops and pastures. When we grow alfalfa for use as haylage the cost goes to over $200 per ton of dry matter. Cutting, chopping, hauling, and storing haylage is expensive. Cows do it for free. With that in mind, we need to maximize other production of our permanent pastures before turning to chopped or baled feed.

In round numbers, a typical dairy cow eats about 6 tons of dry matter as forage and 2 tons of energy and protein concentrates per year. The combination of forage and concentrate will vary with each operation. In balancing a ration, removing a pound of grain doesn't necessarily increase forage intake by an equal amount. There is only so much room in a cow's digestive tract and the speed with which feed passes through it makes a big difference in total intake. Higher quality and more digestible forages result in higher total dry matter intake and more milk with less supplemental feed.

If we think of our pastures as a high value crop, then we need to measure the yield and calculate the cost of production. Soil tests are essential and will be a deciding factor in applying fertilizer to a crop that is profitable. How many farmers know how much forage their pastures produce? How can we measure it? While we can't easily measure pasture yield exactly to the pound, we can get a close estimate. Since a cow eats an average of about six tons of forage dry matter per year, that comes to a half a ton per month. Cows eat more when they are giving a lot of milk and a little less when they are dry but the total is consistent. The size of the cows can also move this figure up or down a little as does the quality of the forage. An all grass-fed herd will eat about 7 tons of total dry matter per year if it is all from forage. Another way to figure this is the percent of body weight that is the cow's average intake. A 1,400 pound cow that consumes 2.5% of her body weight per day as forage, eats 35 pounds of dry matter per day. If the moisture content of that feed is 13% then she eats about 40 pounds of feed per day. That balanced ration could be met with 32.5 pounds of forage plus 7.5 pounds of grain. 32.5 pounds of forage multiplied by an average month of 30.41 days equals 988 pound per month. Really close to our half a ton 'round number.' A reasonably close estimate of our pasture's estimated yield can be determined by subtracting how much we feed in the barn from an estimated daily total intake based on body weight, stage of lactation, and forage quality. On well managed, exceptionally rich soil (which few of us have), yields as high as 4 tons of dry matter per acre are possible in the northeast, although most pastures fall short of that. A 4 ton per acre forage crop at the current price of good hay $250-300/ton equals over $1,000 per acre! The operating cost of growing this crop is generally only the land plus the cost of maintaining fences plus something for management.

Unfortunately, few farmers get the full potential profits from their pastures.

Klaas is a third-generation farmer in New York. Klaas grew up on a dairy farm and had a dairy until dissolving a partnership with his brothers. Mary-Howell and Klaas later bought the small organic dairy farm that is currently being leased to Aric Loomis. Klaas still manages the pastures where the young stock and dry cows are grazed. This year, about one acre of the pasture has low density elevated solar panels that were constructed to provide shade for relief from the sun during the hot weather. The solar panels will serve as 'solar trees'. University research shows that cows that graze under elevated solar panels have lower body temperatures in the hottest part of the day and will graze for longer periods during the day. We will record temperatures, yields, and grazing behavior and share the information with farmers. ◆

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In the Wake of Drought: Pasture Assessment and Recovery Planning

By Sara Ziegler, Research Specialist, University of Vermont Extension, Heather Darby, Professor of Agronomy, University of Vermont Extension, and Elizabeth Seyler, Outreach Specialist, University of Vermont Extension

If you're a farmer in the Northeast, you're probably sick of historic weather events that dominate your daily life, year after year. Unfortunately, last year there was no exception: Devastating drought conditions swept the region (Image 1). Though we'd like to think these conditions will settle out into something normal sooner or later, their aftermath can impact us for a long time.

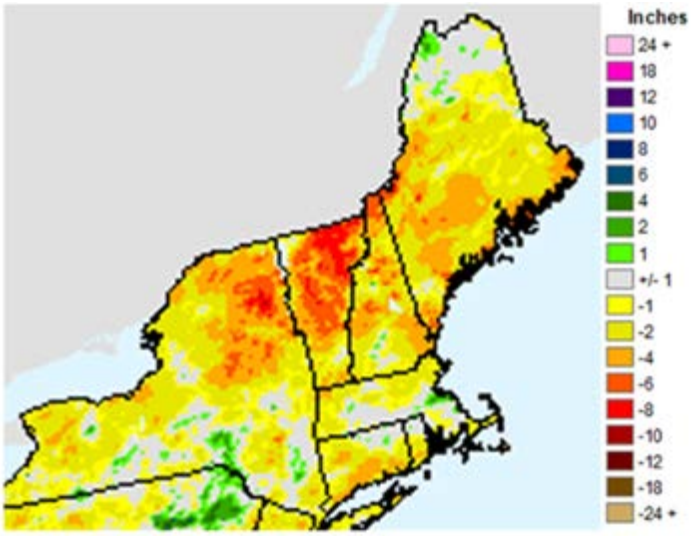

Image 1. Drought monitor for New England during the summer of 2025.

In the winter, we often reflect on the past and plan for the future. In the wake of stressful weather, this process is even more critical. What happened last season can give us valuable insight into areas on the farm that are particularly vulnerable or that we already know will need extra attention this spring.

The way our pastures handle drought conditions depends on many factors, one of which is how we managed them in the weeks and months leading to the drought. Stands that were already stressed from over-grazing before the drought likely sustained severe damage and will recover slowly compared to those stands that were in good condition. Review your grazing records and think back to June and July when weather conditions were more ideal; pastures you took advantage of a bit too much at that time should be at the top of your list to monitor this spring.

We should also think about how we managed our pastures when moisture started to return in the fall. With more mild temperatures and a bit of rainfall, pasture plants were able to emerge from dormancy and begin growing again. However, they likely had to mobilize significant energy reserves to do so. If pastures were grazed at this time, we may have caused damage without realizing it (or without choice). Depending on the time of grazing, the plants may not have had sufficient time build their energy reserves before entering fall dormancy. These pastures should also be monitored and may require extra management.

Image 2. Damage commonly seen around heavy use areas such as water areas.

Other areas to monitor include fields with pre-existing weed pressure or fertility concerns. Stands that are weakened from drought and fertility stress will be less vigorous and thus less able to keep opportunistic weeds from further encroaching. Providing plants with the nutrients they need to grow will help to further reduce stress on the recovering stand. Check your soil tests and if possible, apply recommended nutrients in the early spring just as the plants begin to green-up.

Finally, high-impact areas such as around water tubs and bale feeding sites were even more likely to be damaged than normal during last year's drought (Image 2). These spots are good candidates for some targeted early season frost seeding to get growth going immediately on those bare areas.

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Image 3. Wait until plants are actively growing in the spring to assess stand damage.

To get a clearer picture of which stands are likely to fully recover without any seeding, it is usually best to wait until the snow melts and plants start to green up (Image 3). There are several ways to visually assess your pastures. In general, you want to judge how much of the soil is covered by living desirable species. Do so by walking across your fields in a W or S pattern, much like taking a soil sample, stopping occasionally to see what is at the tip of your boot, noting how many times you find desirable species versus weeds or bare soil. You may want to also dig up plants and inspect their roots to make sure they are healthy. The interior of healthy roots is generally white or light colored; discoloration can be a sign of injury.

There are several variations of this method, but whatever you do, it is important to get a good look at the whole field and try to be unbiased about where you stop to assess the stand. There is an excellent illustrated guide through the University of Oklahoma that evaluates drought or stand injury with a piece of cattle panel serving as grid to measure frequency of damage (*https://extension.*

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okstate.edu/fact-sheets/print-publications/pss/assessing-drought-damage-in-perennial-grass-pastures-pss-2593.pdf) .

With this method, you lay the 5 x 5 grid and count the number of squares with at least one desirable species present. This is done at 4 locations throughout the field. You add up the total squares with desirable species, with a maximum score of 100 and a minimum of 0. To best capture variability throughout the field this process should be completed numerous times. Recommended cutoffs vary but, generally, a stand is considered moderately damaged if the frequency of desirable species is between 40 and 70 and severely damaged if frequency is less than 40.

In most cases, stands can make a recovery, but time and patience are required. In addition, possible modifications to management may be needed including fertilizing, deferred grazing, and introduction of new seed.

Patience and time aren't always readily available, especially if feed reserves are low so consider what fields to prioritize and what strategies you will be able to implement to help stands rebound. Really, we are focused on helping the roots to recover and build biomass so they can access moisture and nutrients to assist the aboveground portion to flourish! The energy reserves of the plant are in the roots and crown of plants and are the resources the plant must draw from to regrow after grazing, mowing, or dormancy periods. So low energy reserves from last season mean slow spring growth.

It is critical that drought damaged pastures are not grazed too early to allow time for adequate root growth and re-establishment. As much as possible we should try to avoid early grazing in the areas that were most stressed last year. Give those areas as much time to replenish energy reserves as possible before you stress them again. Go back to your grazing plan and see where you might be able to give yourself a bit more wiggle room. Think about mixing up your rotation, starting somewhere else on the farm, and going in a different order to give these areas more rest. Explore opportunities to add additional acreage into your rotation to allow severely damaged fields more time to rest. Are there any nearby hayfields you may be able to graze? If you're planning how to distribute your

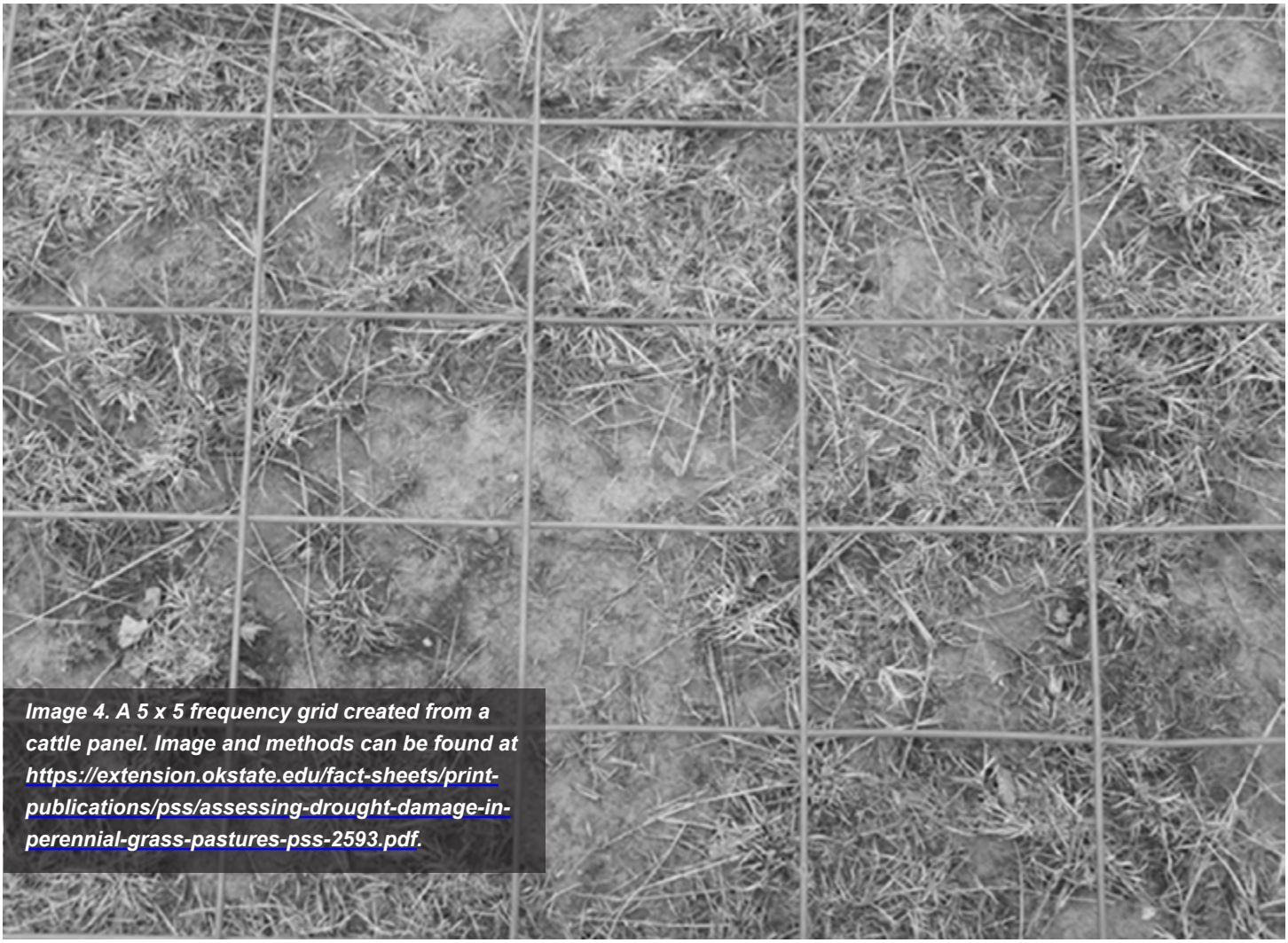

Image 4. A 5 x 5 frequency grid created from a cattle panel. Image and methods can be found at https://extension.okstate.edu/fact-sheets/print-publications/pss/assessing-drought-damage-in-perennial-grass-pastures-pss-2593.pdf.

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manure and fertilizer resources, consider addressing areas you identified as low fertility last year to further support their recovery.

Once grazing, pay close attention to pasture growth rates. Adjust your rotation accordingly, increasing recovery periods as necessary to minimize further damage and allow pastures to fully recover from last year's drought stress. Be careful to leave ample residual behind so they don't draw extensively from root reserves and are able to bounce back more quickly. These same principles apply to fields managed for hay. Remember not to go back into a pasture until the plants have recovered. Refresh your knowledge of how to look at grass tillers and count the number of fully grown leaves. Do not graze anything before the grass tillers have at least three fully grown and expanded leaves. Be observant and take note of areas that continue to struggle.

Generally introducing new seed is recommended if the stand has <50% coverage. For seeding to be successful there needs to be good seed-to-soil contact, adequate and consistent moisture, and reduced competition from the existing stand. The first two can be accomplished through careful timing and selection of equipment, such as a no-till drill to improve seed placement in the soil. The third, however, often takes some additional preparation or consideration. Stands that were heavily impacted by the drought, have bare soil, and reduced plants stands will likely be well suited for frost seeding. These stands will likely be less competitive in the spring so it would take well to frost seeding or early interseeding.

Managing these severely damaged stands similar to a "new seeding" will help the stand as a whole! As with newly seeded pastures, provide extra time to recover as there are not only recovering plants in the field but also new seedlings that need to establish sufficiently before getting trampled and grazed. Graze these areas higher as to not allow livestock to damage new seedlings. If you seed in late summer or fall, make sure you allow for at least 6-8 weeks of growth before stands go dormant for winter. With some reflection, planning, assessment, and adaptive management, we can avoid inflicting additional damage on our pastures this year, allowing them to recover and remain strong and productive.

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Renovating Drought-Damaged Pastures

By Sara Ziegler, Research Specialist, University of Vermont Extension, Heather Darby, Professor of Agronomy, University of Vermont Extension, and Elizabeth Seyler, Outreach Specialist, University of Vermont Extension

Last year's drought created one of the toughest seasons in Vermont's recent history. The breadth and severity of damage will continue to impact us as we struggle to fill forage inventories and grapple with the economic repercussions. The best we can do now is prepare for the coming season focused on recovery. In another article, we shared strategies for identifying pastures that require additional seeding to recover their production potential and management strategies to avoid further damage. In this article, we focus on the specifics of how to successfully seed damaged areas. First, as with any seeding, several factors greatly influence success: seed-to-soil contact, moisture, and depth. For interseeding, we must also consider existing residue and competition with living vegetation. In pastures that were severely damaged, there may be significant open soil, little residue, and little competition with existing vegetation. In other pastures, there may be more competition. Understanding this variation and adjusting our methods and/or expectations accordingly is critical. Frequently farmers say that renovating stands doesn't work, that you have to fully reseed or do nothing. They aren't entirely wrong; if you just throw seeds on the ground results can be slow to materialize as germination rates can be low. But we can do better than that if we carefully assess the situation and select seeding methods, timings, and species likely to serve our goals. The first opportunity to get seed into these pastures will be early this spring. Frost seeding is generally done when most or all the snow has melted and the ground freezes at night but thaws a bit during the day. This fluctuation helps the seed settle into good contact with the soil, which is critical for successful germination. If seeds are spread while too much snow is on the ground, it can move off the field during rapid melting. In addition, frost seeding is typically less effective on sandy soil because shrinking and swelling is less prevalent. Frost seeding is also less effective on pasture with a thick thatch layer or other debris covering the soil, making it less likely that seeds will make good soil contact. Because this strategy's success is so contingent on hitting these conditions just right, you have to be ready to go when the time comes. Gather your equipment, seed, and a plan so you can hit the ground running. Frost seeding can be done with a variety of equipment. If just a few areas were particularly damaged, such as around water tubs or on sandy hilltops, you may opt to use something low tech like a hand spinner. If you have more acreage to cover, spinner type seeders can be mounted on tractors or ATVs. If you choose to use them, make sure you know the width of the spread pattern and the seed output so you can adequately cover your fields and achieve your target seeding rate.

Frost seeding works best with species that germinate and grow rapidly. These include legume species, such as red and white clovers, and some grass species, such as perennial ryegrass and orchardgrass. Slow growing species such as birdsfoot trefoil, bromegrass, and timothy do not frost seed as well. As with any seeding, consider the soil type, fertility, and climate as these influence establishment and persistence of the forages. For example, perennial ryegrass has variable winter hardiness across the Northeast. If you are expecting it to survive over the long-term, make sure it is adapted to your area, and select varieties that have better winter hardiness.

Frost seeding keeps expenses and risks low, but don't expect a lush new seeding; frost seeding is a slower process. Seeding rates will vary depending on species, on whether you are seeding it alone or in a mixture, and on how damaged the field is. Generally, seeding rates for frost seeding are around 2 to 8 pounds per acre, while fully reseeding a field typically requires 15 to 20 pounds of seed per acre. Use these guidelines and the rates in Table 1 to determine your seeding rates. Choose the higher end of the ranges for more damaged pastures. If you are using a spinner type seeder for a mixture of grass and legume seed, be aware that grass seed is lighter and won't spread the same way as the heavier legume seed. It may be worth spinning them on separately to achieve the right rate, mix, and distribution.

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If you miss the window of opportunity for frost seeding, there may still be other opportunities throughout the season. However, managing moisture and the existing vegetation can become more challenging. Once our pastures are growing, it is best to seed after a grazing event, which helps expose the soil and helps to limits competition between germinating and growing plants. Although we don't want to further damage existing plants by grazing them too low, we need to limit how much they'll compete with new seedlings. Therefore, it is best to graze a bit lower than normal but then make sure you don't regraze the pasture until the plants have fully recovered. This practice will allow existing plants to replenish their energy reserves while giving new plants time to establish. In addition, the next time the pasture is grazed, make sure the animals do not graze too low—to protect the new seedlings.

After the window for frost seeding closes, it is often advantageous to use a no-till drill rather than broadcast seed. Forage seed should be planted shallow (1/8 to 1/2 inch deep), so having adequate and consistent soil moisture is critical for quick germination and seedling growth. A no-till drill can provide precise control over seeding depth and thus a higher success rate; however it is absolutely critical not to plant too deep. Moisture is key needing enough so the drill easily slices through the sod and closes the furrow but not too much which can cause compaction or poor seed furrow management.

Just as in frost seeding, it is critical to have everything ready so you can go when conditions are right. Make sure you calibrate the drill seeding rate and depth for the species or mixture you are planting. Table 2 includes seeding rates for a wide range of forages that are common in the northeast.

During the growing season, farmers have used their livestock as a means to incorporate seed into the soil. The hoof action in the right conditions can push seed into the ground, creating adequate seed to soil contact for growth. This option generally leads to variable results and is highly dependent on soil moisture. In wet conditions, animals can bury the seed too deep and also cause compaction leading to poor germination and growth. Frost seeding and interseeding are strategies that can help rebuild our pastures after drought damage. However, for best success we must keep seed-to-soil contact, moisture, seed depth, and residue management in mind as we choose when and where to use these strategies. Although we often want the lowest-cost option, be realistic about the outcome you seek and the likelihood of achieving that outcome with frost seeding or interseeding. Remember, the areas that will benefit the most from these strategies will be those that just need a little bit of filling in. Areas with extensive damage may require full reseeding.

Table 1. Species and seeding rate for frost seeding.

Frost Seeding	Seeding rate (lbs. per acre)	
Species	Seeding Alone	In a Mixture
Alfalfa	5-8	3-4
Alsike Clover	2-4	1-2
Birdsfoot Trefoil	4-6	2-3
Ladino Clover	2-3	1-2
Meadow Fescue	6-8	3-4
Orchardgrass	3-4	1-2
Perennial/Italian Ryegrass	8-10	2-3
Red Clover	4-8	3-4
Reed Canary Grass	Not Recommended	
Smooth Bromegrass	Not Recommended	
Tall Fescue	6-8	3-4
Timothy	Not Recommended	

Table 2. Species and seeding rate for in-season planting.

No-till Seeding	Seeding rate (lbs. per acre)*	
Species	Seeding Alone	In a Mixture
Alfalfa	12-15	8-10
Alsike Clover	Not Recommended	2-5
Birdsfoot Trefoil	8-10	2-6
Kentucky Bluegrass	12-14	4-6
Meadow Fescue	12-14	6-12
Orchardgrass	10-12	3-5
Red Clover	10-12	2-6
Reed Canary Grass	6-8	5-6
Smooth Bromegrass	15-18	6-8
Tall Fescue	12-14	6-12
Timothy	8-10	2-8

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Ask the Vet

Dayna Locitzer, DVM

How do I treat hoof rot organically?

In my last article I wrote about good practice when it comes to hoof health and preventing the common issues. This article will tackle treating those lesions when your prevention efforts were not successful. Approaching hoof health is multi-pronged with treatment as only a small, but important part. Treatment can be difficult due to the time and management needed to be successful as well as the expense of bringing in a hoof trimmer. It can also be costly if antibiotics are needed, as that will make the cow lose her organic status. When you are treating a hoof issue, it is important to know what you are treating to help guide your approach. This article will go through the common hoof lesions you might encounter and how to treat and prevent them.

One of the more common lesions seen on farm are sole and toe ulcers. These ulcers, when left untreated, can turn into abscesses. This is when you or the hoof trimmer digs out a dark spot on the hoof and finds redness (ulcer) or puss and necrotic tissue (abscess). These are mainly caused by a diminished fat pad between the toe bone and the hoof wall due to poor body condition. The best treatment for these lesions is to dig them out as best you can to relieve the pressure and allow the abscess to drain. It is also valuable to put a block on the other toe. This will give the affected toe a break and time to heal. Consider soaking her foot in epsom salts, if you are able. And, if there is swelling past the pastern, be more aggressive with her treatment and you might want to consider antibiotics.

White line disease is similar in care to sole ulcers and abscess because they create similar lesions. White line disease is when the hoof wall separates from the sole due to conditions like harsh wear, wet surfaces, or stones. This can lead to fissures, abscesses, and ulcers. Because the lesions are the same, treatment is also the same. It is best to dig out the affected area, put a block on the opposite toe,

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and if you are able, soak. Monitor closely to make sure infection does not spread.

Hoof rot is another common lesion. This is defined by infection between the two toes. Hoof rot develops from wet conditions and stony walkways. Wetness will soften the skin between the toes and stones will cause abrasions, making the area susceptible to infection. You can diagnose it by smelling or seeing the infected area between the toes. With hoof rot, both sides of the foot will be evenly swollen. This is a good way to differentiate between hoof rot and a toe issue. Hoof rot can be treated by using a poultice applied between the toes to draw out the infection or spraying the area regularly with a copper sulfate solution. A poultice I like to use is a simple betadine and sugar mixture. Mix a small amount of betadine with sugar until it is a paste consistency and apply that to the lesion. This will need to be re-wrapped approximately every 48 hours. I especially recommend this when there are signs of infection tracking up the leg. In between wraps you can soak her foot in epsom salts if she will allow it. The wrapping should continue until the lesion isn't producing purulent discharge anymore and the swelling has gone down. Hoof rot can be very aggressive and can progress into the joints and up the leg quickly. It is important to monitor these cows closely because they might need antibiotics to clear up the infection.

Strawberry heel, also known as hoof wart or digital dermatitis, is an infectious cause of lameness in cattle. It is caused by the bacteria Treponema spp. which are found in manure. Manure filled alleyways are a common predisposing factor. Some farms potentially have more virulent strains of it and some farms have more favorable conditions to infections, this is why strawberry heel is not on every farm. These lesions cause lameness in cattle and can be very painful. To treat an active case, clean the hoof and apply a zinc or copper sulfate paste to the lesion and wrap it. Remove the wrap in 24 hours. The most critical aspect of managing strawberry heel is prevention. If this is common on your farm, make sure you have a regular and effective hoof bath in addition to keeping your alley's clean and having a good relationship with a hoof trimmer. This disease can be complicated so work with your veterinarian on making protocols for prevention.

For all hoof lesions, supportive care should be provided for the cow. This means she should have even ground to walk on and not be asked to travel too far. She can get immune boosting care like a multi-mineral or garlic tincture to help fight infection. She should also get pain medication in the form of flunixin meglumine. There is a transdermal formulation (Transdermal Banamine) that is specifically labeled for hoof rot. Take note that this will require a 96 hour withhold for milk and 16 day withhold for meat for certified organic livestock Additionally she should be monitored closely and treated aggressively so the lesion doesn't get worse and require antibiotics or even worse, a toe amputation.

There are lots of effective options for treating hoof lesions organically. It is important to know what you are dealing with and why it happened. This helps you choose the right treatment and manage your cows and farm to prevent it in the future. Good hoof health will help your farm succeed! ◆

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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SAVE THE DATE for the 26th Annual NODPA Field Days

26th Annual NODPA Field Days
Berks County Agricultural Center, Leesport, PA
September 24 & 25, 2026

Mark your calendars for the 26th Annual NODPA Field Days. With a lot happening in the Organic Dairy industry, the NODPA Board is working to create a cutting edge education program that focuses on strategies to prepare your farm for the impacts of unpredictable climate changes, such as those we experienced in 2025. Pasture management, silvopasture, renewable energy, soil health to grow the best forage, and animal nutrition are the themes that have been identified. These themes will all be considered in the context of sound economics to ensure that the farm is profitable and economically sound for the next generation. More details on workshop titles and presenters will be featured in the May NODPA News and online.

We have two excellent dairy farms to visit in the Berks County area. The Thursday morning tour will be at Nelson Martin family's Country Sunrise Creamery and Farm Store, near Meyerstown, PA. The Martin's have an on-farm creamery where they produce yogurt, cheese and sell their raw milk. The farm is grass based and, while not certified organic, is herbicide and pesticide free. The Friday afternoon tour will be at Spring Creek Farms, Wernersville, PA, owned and operated by the Stricker family, long time stewards of the land and early organic pioneers. It is a grass-based certified organic dairy farm, first certified organic in 1999. In addition, they have over 400 pasture raised poultry.

Look for more information in the May NODPA News or visit the NODPA website, www.nodpa.com. If you have questions about the NODPA Field Days or are interested in sponsorship opportunities, please contact Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator, at 413-772-0444 or noraowens@comcast.net.

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New World Screwworm: What Organic Farmers need to know and what their treatment options are

By Lia Sieler, Executive Director, Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance, Chico, CA.

New World Screwworm (NWS, Cochliomyia hominivorax) is recognized as a highly destructive pest. NWS fly larvae, also known as maggots, invade the tissue of living animals, resulting in severe and often fatal injuries. This species can infest warm-blooded hosts, including livestock, pets, wildlife, humans, and even birds.

The term "screwworm" is derived from the larvae's characteristic feeding behavior, where they burrow into wounds in a manner like a screw penetrating wood. Maggots inflict significant harm by tearing at host tissue with their sharp mouth hooks; consequently, the wound may enlarge and deepen as additional larvae hatch and feed on viable tissue. The impact of NWS infestations can be substantial, frequently leading to life-threatening conditions for affected animals. Adult screwworm flies are comparable in size to common houseflies or slightly larger and are distinguished by orange eyes, metallic blue or green bodies, and three dark stripes along their backs.

In August 2025, the USDA introduced a five-part strategy for New World Screwworm.

1. Innovating Our Way to Eradication
2. Protect the United States Border – Construction of a Domestic Sterile Screwworm Production Facility
3. Wildlife Migration Prevention
4. Stop the Post from Spreading in Mexico and Ensure We are Full Partners in Eradication
5. United States Food Safety is of Utmost Importance.

As a follow up, the sterile fly facility in Edinburg, Texas was recently finished. This facility expands USDA's ability to disperse sterile flies along the border and into the United States, if necessary. Sterile insect technique, combined with surveillance and movement restrictions, is an effective method to control and eradicate NWS. Female NWS flies mate only once, so mating with a sterile male prevents reproduction. Sterile flies are released by air or ground, with aerial dispersal preferred for covering large areas. The USDA produces sterile flies at the COPEG facility in Panama and is funding Mexico's Metapa facility renovation to double capacity. Production is expected to start in summer 2026. Additionally, USDA is building a new facility in Texas with a target of 300 million sterile flies per week, aiming for a total output of 500 million sterile flies weekly across international facilities.

What can we, as Producers, do?

So, what can we, as producers, do to prepare for the possibility of New World Screwworm on our farms? We reached out to the National Organic Program who suggested we look to the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) for direction. However, there are no specific answers on their website for organic producers. So, we moved on to reaching out to individual certifiers. Where Food Comes From Organic as well as California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) were both responsive to our questions and provided resources to further understand NWS. California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) also responded and directed us to their website where you can find general information about NWS and an infographic on NWS disposal and cleaning for livestock and horses (New World Screwworm Disposal & Cleaning for Livestock & Horses). However, the biggest help came from discussing with Texas A & M's Agrilife Entomologist, Dr. Sonja L. Swiger and their Research & Extension Organic Program Specialist, Bob Whitney. Upon further discussion, we concluded that it may be a wise choice to add PyGanic Specialty as an approved substance for our farms. PyGanic Specialty is OMRI approved, labeled for animal contact and has been used for years for adult fly control. At this point, we do not know if it would be effective on larvae, but it may work. A wound treatment option is still needed but, as of now, we do not know what the best option would be. It is important to note that although it is not listed as a treatment option on the USDA website, PyGanic is in the same class as the majority of those listed (Pesticides for Control of New World Screwworm).

Some steps farmers can take to prevent infestation:

- Watch for signs of NWS in livestock.
- Handle livestock carefully and inspect pens and equipment for sharp objects that can cause wounds.
- Treat the umbilical cords of newborn animals and all wounds immediately with an approved insecticide.
- Protect livestock from other wound-causing parasites such as ticks.
- DO NOT bring in animals from Mexico or Central America.

If you think you have found a screwworm, report it immediately to your State animal health official and APHIS office. This will allow APHIS and partner agencies to respond quickly and remove the screwworms before a population becomes established. ◆

Lia Sieler, Executive Director, Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance, Chico, CA can be reached at Lia.wodpa@outlook.com and www.wodpa.com .

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H.R.7050 –A Bill to protect the future of Homeopathy for everyone

By Susan Beal, DVM

This is a historical time for homeopathy. After nearly ten years of work led by Paola Brown, President, and the crew at Americans for Homeopathy Choice Action (AHCA), the non-partisan bill (H.R.7050 - Homeopathic Drug Product Safety, Quality, and Transparency Act (https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/7050)) was introduced in to the House on January 14, 2026. U.S. Rep. Pete Sessions (R-TX) introduced the bill that will at long last clarify the role of homeopathic medicine in American health care. Paola Brown explains, "The bill is the best solution for long-term protection of access to the full range of homeopathic medicines and for addressing the unique nature of homeopathic medicines and the specific conditions and requirements related to their manufacture, labeling, promotion, distribution, and use."

What is needed now to move the process forward?

It is critical for all legislators to hear from their constituents that the threat is real and that products they need and rely on are being (and have been) removed from the marketplace. Elected officials and their aides like to hear personal stories – and they pay attention to them and to individuals that make all the words on the page real.

They need to know that the removal of homeopathic medicines from the marketplace will affect animal welfare and remove vital tools for herd health from organic dairy farmers' toolbox. Ensuring access to homeopathic medicines will assist in compliance with the organic certification regulations.

Here's what you can do:

Contact your elected House representative and ask them to co-sponsor this bill: H.R.7050 - Homeopathic Drug Product Safety, Quality, and Transparency Act.

Go to https://homeopathychoice.org/ for more information, updates and take advantage of their talking points and automated access to legislators. AHCA and their team leaders in your state, can also help you. They provide training about how to communicate with your elected representatives. Membership (https://homeopathychoice.org/free-membership/) in the AHCA is open to all and is available at no charge. Becoming a member will ensure that news of the progress of the bill and reactions to it lands on your desk and it will also show larger support to the homeopathic community.

Background information

The process of moving a grassroots-initiated bill forward is long and needs determination and attention to detail. This bill has taken many years to build agreements within the homeopathic community as to content and goals. The AHCA has developed relationships with politicians and their aides, developing one or more champions to guide it though the legislative process. This bipartisan legislation, which includes Rep. Jonathan Jackson (D-IL) and Rep. Mike Kennedy, MD (R-UT) as original co-sponsors, is supported by more than 40+ leading national and state homeopathy organizations, holistic health non-profits, manufacturers, retailers, and advocacy groups. **The time to act is now!**

Homeopathy is a holistic system of medicine, meaning it focuses on treating the person or animal's entire lifestyle, not just one individual symptom. The concept of homeopathy is "treating like with like." Homeopathy aims to use the body's own self-healing mechanisms to treat disease. Homeopathy is widely used to treat organic livestock.

Betsy Lehrfeld is the general counsel for the AHCA. Her summary of the top goals of this legislation are:

1. The creation of a new section in the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (FDC) to specifically and uniquely cover the manufacture of homeopathic medicines. It will ensure that the manufacture of homeopathic medicines will be protected in legislation, not at the discretion of the Federal Drug Administration (FDA), or their guidance document. The precedent for the creation of a new section of the FDC Act is a new section for biologicals, and dietary supplements. The current proposed bill is being modeled after the new section of the FDC Act that covers dietary supplements.
2. The expansion of the market and increase the legitimacy of homeopathy. Homeopathic products, will be defined by their inclusion in the Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the United States (HPUS), and certified by the National Homeopathic Certification Board (https://certifiedhomeopathic.org/) (NHCB). NHCB are developing American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards for the production of homeopathic medicines acceptable to the regulatory authorities.
3. The bill preserves the FDA authority over safe manufacturing, but requires the use of good manufacturing processes that are unique to, and relevant for, homeopathic medicines. This would include the exclusion of the FDA pre-marketing approval for homeopathic medicines. Homeopathic medicines will not be considered as new drugs that require the same validations as new pharmaceutical drugs.
4. The bill simplifies the labelling process by canceling the need for indications on the label of a homeopathic remedy-medicine unless the product is being manufactured for retail sale.

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5. The bill clarifies that no further proof of effectiveness of the homeopathic remedy-medicine is required. Currently, according to the FDA guidance document, homeopathic medicines are fraudulent because there are no double-blinded, placebo-controlled studies on record at the FDA.

6. The bill would establish the Homeopathic Drug Product Advisory Committee, a Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) committee to advise the FDA on homeopathy. Currently the FDA have no staff homeopath or homeopaths acting as advisors. The ten members of the Homeopathic Advisory Council will include homeopathic manufacturers both large and small, an MD or DO and ND homeopaths with greater than three years of consecutive homeopathic practice; a homeopathic veterinarian; consumer group representatives; a representative from the HPUS, and the commissioner of food and drugs.

Why the bill is needed: Some history

Until recently, homeopathy and the use of homeopathic medicines have been grandfathered into the health system and has been built on a "working gentlemen's agreements" about their use based both on historical legislation and on personal relationships between members of the homeopathic community and the FDA.

When the FDC Act was introduced in 1938, one of the sponsors was Royal Copeland, an MD homeopath. He was responsible for writing the Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia (https://www.hpus.com/document/homeopathic-pharmacopoeia-of-the-united-states/) into the federal legislation that created the Act. The Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia of the US has been in continual publication since 1897 and was based upon a history of publications that focused on standards for the production of homeopathic medicines.

The support for inclusion of homeopathic medicines in the FDC Act was continued by the exceptional work of the Borneman family over the years. John Sr was a homeopathic pharmacist for Boericke and Tafel in the early years then left to start his own homeopathic pharmacy in eastern Pennsylvania in 1910. He was also the pharmacist for, and instructor at, the Hahnemann Medical College in Philadelphia. His son, John Jr, took over the pharmacy in the mid-1950s, and his son, John the 3rd, known as Jack, also a pharmacist, ran Borneman pharmacy until it was sold to Boiron in the mid-1980s. Jack was the president of the Homeopathic Pharmacopoeia Convention of the US (HPCUS) https://www.hpus.com/document/publication-history/. This was the organization that served as the interface between the homeopathic pharmaceutical industry and the FDA. Jack regularly and clearly reminded the folks at the FDA about the inclusion of the HPUS in the FDC Act.

Newly created FDA Guidance documents for industry and staff re: Homeopathic Drug Products

Fast forward to December of 2022 when the FDA released a Homeopathic Drug Products guidance document (https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/homeopathic-drug-products-guidance-fda-staff-and-industry) for FDA staff and industry. Guidance documents, while not law, have historically been (and are) used to dictate policy rather than having the rules appropriately developed through legislative process. Even though every page of this guidance document has the header "Contains Nonbinding Recommendations", the document clearly states the homeopathic medicines are unapproved drugs. It also outlines the clear steps the FDA intends to take regarding the enforcement and regulatory priorities of this "guidance" and the categories of homeopathic drug products on which it intends to initially focus. Their priority list includes: Products with reports of injury that, after evaluation, raise potential safety concerns; products that contain or purport to contain, ingredients associated with potentially significant safety concerns; products for routes of administration other than oral or topical; products intended to be used for the prevention or treatment of serious and/ or life-threatening diseases or conditions; products for vulnerable populations; products with significant quality issues.

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The guidance documents in action:

While some of these priorities make sense (quality issues, for one), the others raise concerns for and within the homeopathy community. For example, the "products with potential safety concerns" could be (and is currently being) interpreted to include any homeopathic medicine made with ingredients that might be, in material doses, toxic. There is also confusion between the H words: homeopathic, herbal, holistic. There are some products on the market that are inaccurately labeled or described as homeopathic even when they really do not contain potentized substances, or they contain potentized substances that are not described in the HPUS, or when the maker describes their action as homeopathic.

The FDA guidance document has been used to remove injectable homeopathic medicines (such as Viscum album) from the market. It's also been used to remove common eye drops containing potentized ingredients. The next targeted medicines are likely to be those made with poisonous ingredients. Enforcement of that section of the guidance will remove common and useful homeopathic medicines such as Aconite, Belladonna, Nux vomica, Arsenicum album, Mercurius, Lachesis, Phosphorus, and many others from the market. These restrictions are also being applied to products correctly manufactured in other countries that have previously been available in the US. It is also concerning that many of the stores that once retailed homeopathic medicines have taken the guidance to heart and have removed all remedy-medicines from their shelves or have decreased their offerings to only the common mass market medicines (such as Arnica).

The FDA guidance has also affected the homeopathic pharmacies. April Eya, from Hahnemann Laboratories (https://hahnemannlabs.com/) says that the requirements of this guidance involve every homeopathic medicine from the mass market remedy-medicines (such as Arnica and Hypericum) to the common medicines (such as Nux vomica, Arsenicum album, Staphysagria, Pulsatilla, Phosphorus,….) to the multiple and often more obscure medicines (often called small remedies) of the HPUS. She emphasizes that this is particularly important for makers of other than the mass market remedy-medicines.

Every lot of homeopathic medicine produced currently requires the same extensive FDA record keeping as pharmaceutical drugs, beginning at the validation of the parent material, through to the final products, including all ingredients and steps, stability testing, certificates of authenticity, and other documentation. This significant burden has been demanded in the face of already having a clear and concise document that describes the preparation of the homeopathic medicines in the HPUS. While these requirements are burdensome to all manufacturers of homeopathic medicines, they heavily penalize the producers of mass market medicine such as Arnica, and the makers of less common remedies (Wyethia, or Vanilla, or Skatolum, for example). There are relatively few companies that sell single and smaller remedies that are critical to homeopaths, the individuals in their care, and the larger community. The community needs the full scope of medicines in the HPUS available to them. There has been an increase in the number of inspections of homeopathic pharmacies and manufactures and a continually increasing rigor of these inspections as well since the guidance document was published. ◆

A leader in the homeopathic community, in addition to her limited private homeopathic practice, Susan provides educational programs, consulting, and coaching for pet-owners, farmers and ranchers, businesses, and consumer groups. After being in Jefferson County, Pennsylvania for many years, Susan now lives in Elmira, Ontario, Canada working with unique clients in broad geographies to forge creative solutions in regenerative agriculture and health care. She can be reached at Laughing Oak North, alchemy@penn.com.

Organic Milk Buyers

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

- **Byrne Dairy:**
  Leslie Ball, Director of Dairy Programs,
  cell phone (315)382-2782, lball@byrne1933.com
  Greg Capozzi, Farm QC Inspector,
  cell phone (315) 632-2981, gcapozzi@Byrne1933.com .
- **CROPP Cooperative - Organic Valley brand:**
  Farmer Hotline at 888-809-9297 or
  farmerhotline@organicvalley.coop or
  Abbie Teeter Abigail.teeter@organicvalley.coop
  representative for western NY;
  Ethan Garrison ethan.garrison@organicvalley.coop
  rep for south central and eastern NY.
- **Family Farmstead Dairy, NY:**
  Thomas McGrath, tom@familyfarmsteaddairy.com,
  607-397-4044; www.familyfarmmsteaddairy.com ;
- **Horizon Organic LLC**: no reply to our inquiry but try
  Carriel Schmitt, Producer Relations Manager, NY:
  carriel.schmitt@horizon.com and Jacquelyn Oliver,
  Quality Control, jacquelyn.oliver@horizon.com
- **Maple Hill:** Farm Service Number: 518.516.6090 ext. 1.
  Their team contact information is
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  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
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  roman.stoltzfoos@maplehillcreamery.com .
- **Origin Milk:** David Campaniello; Business Development
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  (802) 356-0908;
  Erin Marlowe: erin.marlowe@us.lactalis.com,
  (603) 496-9499;
  Jeremy Russo: jeremy.russo@us.lactalis.com
  (802) 236-1920
- **UNC (Upstate Niagara):**
  Mike Davis: General Manager, Membership Division and
  Bulk Sales; Office: (585) 815-6820 ext. 6441,
  Cell: (585) 409-1544 and mdavis@uncdairy.com

Classified Ads

ANIMALS

Dairy Cattle Auction with Organic Cattle Spotlight!
Wednesday March 18, 2026 at 11:00am, CST

- **Complete Herd Dispersal #1: 75 High Quality Holstein CERTIFIED ORGANIC Dairy Cattle**
  complete retirement herd dispersal. Pinecrest Dairy, Gary & Laurie Schmidtknect, Mondovi, WI.
- **Herd Dispersal #2: 62 Certified Organic Holstein and Red Holstein Dairy Cows and Heifers**
  complete herd dispersal. Also selling is all of the high quality heifers from baby calves through springers also headlock adapted. Narrow Way Farms ~ Gleason, WI (HPAI H5N1/ Bird Flu Tested)
- **Quality Consignments: 10 Certified Organic Springing Dry Cows**.

Premier Livestock and Auctions, N13438 State Hwy 73 Withee, WI 54498, P.O. BOX 306 Owen, WI 54460. FRONT OFFICE: 715-229-2500, KEN STAUFFER: 715-559-8232, ROCKY OLSEN: 715-721-0079.

Location: Withee, WI

COWS FOR SALE: Organic heifers for sale; 9 available; 2 to 10 months of age; jersey and jersey cross. $700 each. Contact Matt Mills, Millsfarmsupply@hotmail.com, 804-221-6473.

Location: Cincinatus NY

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

HIRING FOR SEASONAL FARMHAND POSITION: Seeking experienced individual March-November to assist with fence line repairs, hay production, and relief milking. Located on 300 beautiful acres in southern Maine with hourly compensation and housing options. Contact Elizabeth Tarantino, etarantino@wolfesneck.org for a full job description or visit www.wolfesneck.org for more details.

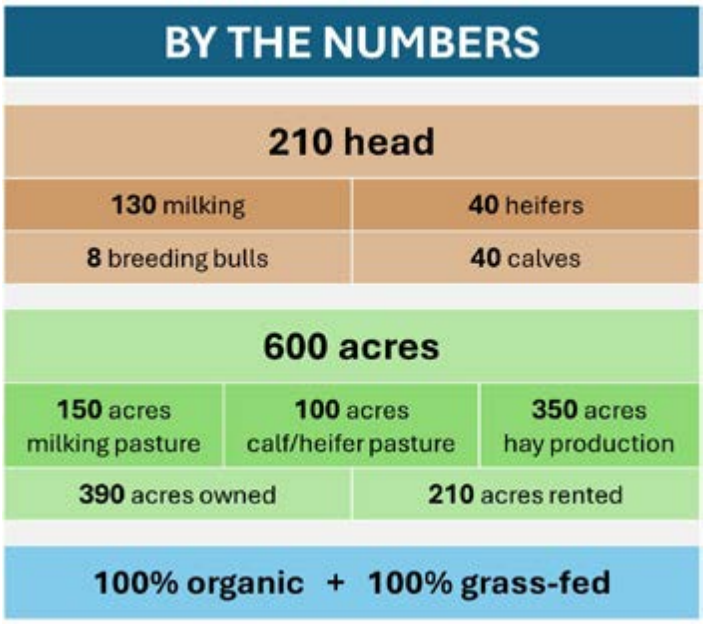
Location: Freeport, Maine

FEATURED FARM

SPRING CREEK FARMS

WERNERSVILLE, PA

continued from page 1



They manage a total of 600 acres, and the Strickers maintain a 100% grass-fed diet for their cows, moving portions of the herd multiple times a day to ensure fresh and nutrient-rich pasture.

Recent years have also seen the addition of an on-farm retail store to improve access to their expanded product line, which now includes state-licensed raw organic milk and butter as well as grass-fed organic beef, poultry and eggs. Over time, some of these changes have been prompted by external factors like grain prices or labor shortages… but through it all, the Strickers' decisions have been guided by strong faith and the conviction that the natural order is often the best course.

Five generations of farming… and farm evolution

Greg first remembers their family farm as his grandfather's—and back then, he says, "the farm was mostly pasture-based production somewhat similar to its current operations." When his dad started taking over the farm in 1978 he followed the industry trend of pushing for increased milk production through practices that were then considered innovative: keeping cows confined within the barn and building siloes for increased feeding of grains, TMR and silage. Like many, they relied on the research and advice of larger producers who in turn relied more and more heavily on herbicides, synthetic fertilizers, and antibiotics to maintain this increased production.

The family's journey toward more natural practices followed their journey to spirituality. Greg recalls, "In 1986 dad followed God and started to change things—he felt that conventional practices were killing things, and he wanted instead to nurture life."

The family began paying more attention to how conventional solutions were being offered and began to feel strongly that the chemical companies were pushing antibiotics, pharmaceuticals, and other drugs that were not making the overall situation better—in fact, they believed it was getting worse. So they started looking for different ways, developing a homegrown biological approach. "It felt like the old [conventional] way was to kill nature wherever it showed up," Greg says, "and we wanted instead to work with it and enhance it."

The family started in earnest down that path in the 90s, learning from other early practitioners, testing, refining and using various natural, organic, and regenerative techniques as their operations evolved and their experience grew. Some practices have held strong for over 30 years—for example, in 1991 they stopped using chemicals on the land and they haven't applied any since.

Other practices they tested and practiced for a time but ultimately decided they didn't fit their operations. For example, in 1992 they started composting all non-liquid manure and bedding, investing in a compost turner and applying the finished compost to fields. They kept this practice for 10 to 15 years before deciding to discontinue it. Part of this decision came from the labor-intensive nature of the practice, but mostly it became less efficient as they increased the herd's time on pasture because the barns in turn produced less compostable manure.

The farm's grazing regime guided its early organic development and has since come to define the value of its many products. They started grazing in 1993 and used the last prohibited organic substance in 1996, starting their three-year transition to organic and achieving that certification in 1999.

They continued feeding grain until 2011 when external factors forced their hand—grain was hard to find that year, extremely expensive, and so they decided to try going without it. "We did lose some production when we first switched off grain, around 6 pounds per cow," Greg reports, "but our provider offered an additional bonus of $2 per 100-weight for all grass-fed milk, so our net loss wasn't that bad." That's when they discovered the benefit of marketing their milk products as 100% Grass Fed—a benefit they have since leaned into with all their farm production.

This reliance on grass also meant an increased focus on pasture management and the nutrients within that grass, but the Strickers don't find themselves needing to make significant annual investments toward that end. Greg shares, "We don't re-seed our pastures for perennials, but sometimes we will drill and add in

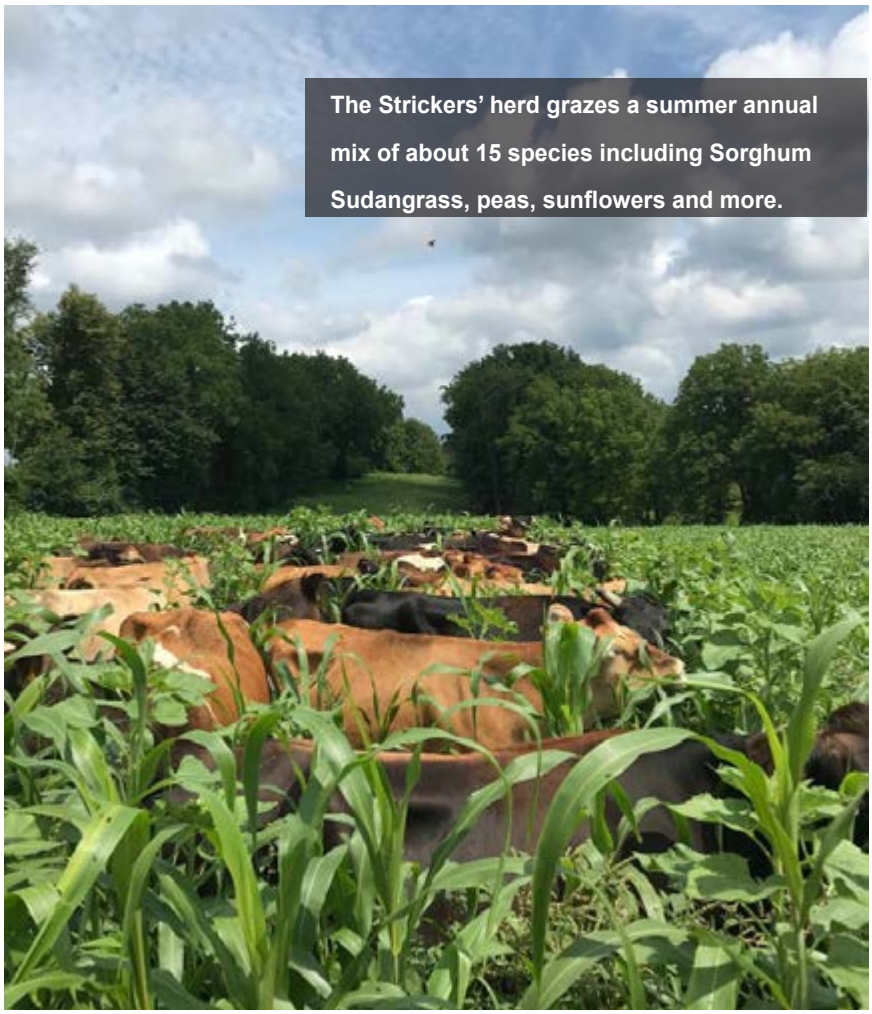
FEATURED FARM

some annuals like winter rye, winter wheat, and triticale to improve forage."

Greg cites the initial transition to organic as a more significant change to their pasture management practices, and recommends that farmers interested in making the jump to organic focus on soil health during that three-year transition in order to break the cycle of chemical dependence. "The ideal is to try and put more back on the land during the transition period than you take out," Greg recommends. "Use more rest periods and try to use crops that re-build nutrients, like forages from the four plant groups—grasses, legumes, tall herbs and short herbs. Our approach, and what we recommend, is to let the land heal naturally by letting what grows up go right back down—mulch it all in and rebuild."

Recognizing that there is often a financial need to harvest and sell something from all productive acreage, even during the organic transition, Greg emphasizes that this restful approach has greater long-term benefits. "You just have to be ready to weather that storm… the land is going through a tough time, coming off those chemical inputs. Work with someone to consult on this phase and invest in applying appropriate natural nutrients and minerals to facilitate that transition. You don't want to waste years of future production trying to slowly improve the soil, do everything you can in those three years to get the soil to its best natural productive health."

Now that the Strickers' farm is well established as organic, they can optimize both herd and pasture health through regular rotation to fresh grass. Their milking herd averages 100 cows throughout the year, with closer to 70 in the spring and 130 in the fall. These cows get moved to fresh grass at least twice a day, but more often four to six times a day. The replacement herd of heifers and dries are moved to fresh grass at least every day and often twice a day. "We also allow these pastures to have longer rest periods," Greg shares, "sometimes seventy days or more if needed to allow seed expression on plants, let things thicken up, or to utilize seed throughout growth."



The Strickers' herd grazes a summer annual mix of about 15 species including Sorghum Sudangrass, peas, sunflowers and more.

The herd enjoys grazing triticale after fresh pasture is opened.

FEATURED FARM

Spring Creek offers raw milk, grass-fed poultry and eggs, grass-fed beef and more at their on-farm market and online retail space.

ON-FARM RETAIL SALES	
900	meat **broilers** per year
40	cows for **beef** per year
600	pounds of **butter** per year
150	gallons **raw milk** per week
11	dozen **eggs** per day

The labor necessary for this frequent herd movement is a consideration for this approach, as are fencing materials. "We use step-in posts and poly-wire reels, we're not using any kind of virtual fence yet or tumble wheels—our pastures just don't make that necessary or efficient," Greg says. "And we don't use fence-lifters or Batt-Latches that can spring open at certain times, we just haven't had success with them. For us, it takes as much time to set those systems up as it does for us to just manually move them. Plus then we can check water, shade, and more actively watch for heat stress." Greg says another summer strategy is to reserve shady pastures and larger areas for those days when the family is doing other work—like haying—and can't be as actively moving fences throughout the day.

The Strickers don't use the herd as part of their hay field fertilization. "We don't graze our hay fields at all," Greg says, "they're just not accessible for that. Instead we'll spread two tons per acre of chicken manure in the fall, which we buy from a nearby organic chicken operation. We also apply gypsum, boron and a compost blend using a commercial spreader outfit that brings their own equipment."

Adding on-farm retail to access additional markets

The next evolution of the farm enterprise came in 2010 when Greg came back to full-time work on the farm. The family noticed the growing demand for raw milk, and so they applied for a permit and license through the state to legally provide it.

They renovated part of the barn into a farm store and began by selling about 20 gallons of raw milk per week to regular customers. The farm store also allowed them to bring in other products, including pasture-raised poultry and eggs as well as turning their best non-milking cows to grassfed beef. Now they are able to sell about 150 gallons of raw milk in a week, which accounts for between 10 and 20% of their total milk production. They also use local organic partners to process butter three or four times each year and sell about 600 pounds annually.

Making the switch to once-a-day milking

The next evolution was again driven by need—this time the loss of some critical on-farm labor in 2018. While sudden labor losses have meant the end of

FEATURED FARM

some farms, the Strickers used it as an opportunity to again test new practices to fit the situation. They had been researching once-a-day milking for a few years, running the numbers of somatic cell count and production comparisons from other farms, but were hesitant to make such a big switch with so many unknowns. Greg recalls: "We didn't pull the trigger [on once-a-day milking] for a long time, but March of 2018 we felt that the time was right—milk price was low, supply costs like electricity were going up, and finally we lost the labor that helped with afternoon milking. We figured we'd try it before the next group of cows freshened."

While some farms convert their cows from twice-a-day milking down to once-a-day after they have passed their peak milk production, the Strickers decided to start the new regime right from first lactation. And they haven't gone back to twice-a-day milking since. Their twice-a-day production averaged 27 to 33 pounds per cow per year, and their once-a-day production now averages 22 to 23 pounds per cow per year. They still run a comparable 4.5% butter fat average and 3.5% protein average.

One unplanned but deeply appreciated benefit to once-a-day milking is in their new farming lifestyle. "We have more time for family, and we have more flexibility for holidays and weekends," Greg shares, "but just as importantly, we can focus more of our time on the big decisions and careful implementation of techniques instead of having to rely so much on outside labor." They still milk every morning at 5am, but now they have the entire rest of the day for activities like hay-making—now able to cut in the morning and bale in the afternoon without needing to break for afternoon milking or risk weather changes by leaving it down overnight. "We find that we can make better quality hay by cutting it in the morning and baling it and wrapping it same day," Greg says, "and a 100% grassfed herd needs that higher quality winter feed compared to a herd getting grain."

He believes the cows have benefited as well, once the herd adjusted to the new routine. "When the udder fills, those extra nutrients go back to the cow rather than us extracting all of them. Our beef value has also increased quite a bit, and we can

Optimizing the annual calving schedule and daily milking schedule has helped to balance farm family life and the ability to focus on the important moments!

now offer higher-value cuts instead of just ground beef, which really helps our retail income."

It did take some careful effort to make this change a healthy one, though.

"Somatic cell count did go up at first, but now it averages lower than when we were milking twice a day."

He says it took a few years to cull out the cows that were not cut out for once-a-day milking—especially those that leaked and so were more vulnerable to mastitis. Like everyone, they also cull for lameness, reproductive issues—and low production. "Sometimes they just don't make enough when milked once a day," Greg says, "they just re-convert too much milk volume back into fat and meat."

Their selective breeding program now intentionally focuses on the traits that make for healthy and productive once-a-day milking. That breeding program follows their overall natural approach to farming. "We breed naturally, calving from March through the end of November at the latest," Greg says. "We intentionally don't have calves dropping in the winter." In addition to worrying about newborns in freezing temperatures, Greg says it's just so much more efficient for them to raise one big group of calves rather than multiple groups of various ages.

HERD GENETICS

Jersey herd with **Holstein** and **Fleckvieh** additions to optimize a combination of milk and beef production—with selective breeding for traits like adaptability to the all-grass diet, suitability for once-a-day-milking, and overall health to maintain organic herd care.

Their breeding program also reflects their diversified product offerings. While the herd is predominantly Jersey crossbred with Holstein for optimized milk fat and volume, they have also introduced Fleckvieh genes to better balance their output of milk and beef—this has also resulted in much higher returns on calf sales for veal. In addition to keeping the best bulls from their own herd, they also source purebred Fleckvieh bulls from other farmers around the state.

The Strickers don't register cows in their herd—aside from his daughter's Jersey show calf, of course. They do regularly test for A2A2 genes, as they have a profitable market for excess colostrum for local A2A2 herds, and that testing shows that a little over half the herd are A2.

This natural approach also extends to their expanded product line—namely their on-farm poultry operations. At their current production rate, they have about 150 laying hens and 200 broilers for meat at a time. Just like the herd, these flocks are entirely pasture-raised, and they cover some of the same ground in their mobile wagons. While the Strickers initially tried to keep the chicken wagons following right behind the herd to help with fly control, the hilly pasture ultimately made this too difficult. The chickens are still raised on cow pastures, they just don't cover the same amount of ground. While the poultry operation is at a significantly smaller scale, it does provide important supplemental income—plus other local farmers are able to sell their products at their farm store.

Shelter, calves and herd health

The farm has moved as far as possible from its past confinement practices, keeping the cows on grass as much as physically possible and healthy. During the winter, the milking herd is put up in barns with bed pack at night only if there is snow on the ground or if it's unusually wet. The replacement herd and dry cows are out-wintered with wind break shelters and winter watering facilities in the fields.

Their calf-rearing practices are adapted to this grassfed, all-natural, low-labor approach. When calves are born, half are matched with a nurse cow so that two calves per cow are sent out to graze away from the milking barn. They maintain this nursing pattern March through June, then in July the heifer calves are selected for either raising into milk production or sold as newborns. The nurse calves are weaned from the nurse cows at the end of October. Any calves kept in July and August are raised on nipple feeders with waste milk from the parlor, one to two gallons per day during the winter until they can be put on spring grass in April, at which point they are completely weaned. They raise about 35 calves per year this way.

Like the rest of the herd, calves also have access to free-choice salt and vitamins during the winter, and when health issues like scouring occur the Strickers rely on familiar remedies like supplements with garlic and aloe vera. They also use brands like Dr. Paul's Calf Start syrup, but Greg maintains that colostrum is the most important to avoid the worst health issues.

The Strickers do not vaccinate the herd. Greg reports that somatic cell count runs at about 200, and they pull out any high-

count cows' milk to feed to calves. They administer a multi-vitamin at dry-off and again at freshening. They also administer a calcium bolus at freshening when they're three years or older. The Strickers find that the worst trouble with milk fever occurs at this age, and especially between March and May, and so they pay special attention to spring health care. They also notice that their older cows tend to struggle with milk fever along with retained placentas and that this seems to be more of an issue in summer and can be linked to uterine problems—something they immediately treat with calcium bolus. "Fortunately these don't add up to anything like an epidemic," Greg reports, "just natural seasonal trends that we can treat with readily available supplements."

This means that they don't tend to rely on their herd veterinarian to treat sickness, but they do rely heavily on that partnership in order to meet the state requirements for raw milk sales. "Every fall we line the whole herd up," Greg says, "and every cow over two years gets blood pulled to test for brucellosis and tuberculosis." Because these tests tend to show a lot of false positives, the vet often has to return and re-check any flagged cows to be sure there is no actual infection.

During those visits, the herd vet will also do ultrasound pregnancy checks, but Greg says that amounts to the vast majority of their reliance on herd vets. "We have a great partnership, but they tend not to know what to recommend for natural remedies that we don't already know. If we have a cow injured or sick with anything we're familiar with, we just cull for meat. If it's anything we can't immediately identify, especially anything fast-moving, that's really the only time we'll call the vet in for sickness—to make sure it's not a threat to the rest of the herd."

Like most organic producers, Greg would love to see more vets familiar with organic solutions and natural remedies for common issues like mastitis, retained placentas, and uterine infections. He's also interested in more research and support for grass-fed herds, such as their susceptibility to occasional low energy, as well as seasonal issues like fall foot problems. Currently they manage hoof health themselves, with a trimming chute and organic salves like J&L Organic Hoof Gel to treat hoof rot and abscesses.

They don't regularly rely on a dairy nutritionist either, though they have learned some best practices from mineral providers. "We do get forage tests and they can help us balance out what we offer in free-choice mineral supplements," Greg shares, "but we've learned their general recommendations over the years."

Greg says he tends to rely more on direct conversations with his peers for many of the specific challenges they face as an all-grass, all-organic dairy and meat producer. "I'm part of a farmer-led regenerative-ag group through WhatsApp. These are farmers doing grass-fed like us, a lot of them also in dairy. That's been a big help—I can post to the group and get feedback from folks with experience with exactly my kinds of problems."

The importance of family support, on-farm labor and partnerships

Of course, some of the best support comes from being a family farm with five generations of experience. Greg and his dad are the main farm managers, but Greg's three children live about five minutes away and often come to help. They also have one additional full-time worker who lives on the property plus about four other part-time employees that help on weekends and before or after their other jobs. This extra labor is mostly in support of their retail operations, but they also clean and help with chores, while the family and full-time worker performs all the milking and manages all crop work. "One of us in the family is always there for milking, and with once-a-day milking we have the time to do all of our own mowing, baling, wrapping, and any crop harvesting," Greg says. "If we pull in any extra help, it's just to haul hay." All told, the farm directly supports three families.

Another critical partner is their organic certifier, PCO. "It's important that a certifier can be responsive to questions and can be helpful with product procurals," Greg says. "PCO has been good about that, we can call or email and get a timely response." Of course there is always room for improvement, and Greg says that one concern is just how overwhelming the process can be—especially with multiple operations. "Trying to put organic emblems on multiple products like dairy, beef, and poultry—that's a lot of handling, that's quite the paper trail just trying to track and share all the information necessary."

At the end of the day, the organic certification process, raw milk permitting, and other process-and-paperwork frustrations are all just the necessary steps to accomplishing what is most important to his family and their farm—working with nature in the way they feel God intended.

"We want to work with God's creation, not against it," Greg shares. "How He designed nature is how we want to manage it. That's what He has called us to do—to manage the health of the land and the health of people. That's why we're always after the highest quality food for our families and our buyers, because our mission is to be good stewards." ◆

Learn more about Spring Creek Farms on their website: www.springcreekstrickerfarms.com and connect with the Strickers via phone at (484) 651-3122.

Join Greg and Forrest Stricker at Spring Creek Farms this September as part of the 26th Annual NODPA Field Days!

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices March 2026

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Year-end total sales of organic packaged fluid milk show a decline of 1.19% over 2024 sales. The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Market Information Branch published estimated national organic fluid milk product sales for November, December and year-end 2025, compiled with data from the Federal Milk Marketing Order. Total US sales of packaged organic fluid milk products were estimated at 234 million pounds in November 2025, with organic Whole Milk sales at 128 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduced Milk at 104 million pounds. In December 2025, total sales of organic packaged milk were 263 million pounds, with sales of organic packaged Whole Milk at 146 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduced Milk at 115 million pounds.

In November 2025, the data shows a decrease in sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged fluid products of 1.9% over November 2024, and the December 2025 data shows a decrease in sales of 1.1% from December 2024. There was a 9.6% decrease in Organic Fat Reduced Milk in November 2025 over November 2024, and a 4.8 % decrease in December 2025 over December 2024.

Year-end total sales of packaged organic milk were 2,983 million pounds for 2025, a drop of 1.9% from 2024, with whole milk sales increasing by 1.9 % to 1,628 million pounds and Fat Reduced Milk sales dropping to 1,339 million pounds, a 6% decrease over 2024. These annual changes follow the trend of the last ten years, with organic Whole Milk increasing and Fat Reduced milk consumption decreasing. The anomaly of the 2024 increase of 7.23% in organic packaged milk sales is highlighted in the chart below and gives context to 2025 data. The loss of farms during the period of stagnated Pay Price and marginal changes in sales volume (except for the COVID years) made it impossible for buyers to respond to increased demand for organic fluid milk without ready access to supply. The inability of organic dairy producers to respond quickly to increased demand is in the nature of organic farming, which sustains the soil and livestock rather than exploits them. It is also required by the certification regulations that safeguard the integrity of the organic seal. This shortage of supply, caused primarily by leading organic milk buyers, is the most plausible explanation of the drop in sales of organic packaged product, but packaged fluid product is only one use of organic milk. We don't know the volume of organic milk that is not Class 1, nor do we know the total volume of organic milk sold in the commercial market. The information is within the USDA system but is not published. Estimates of total milk volume, based on the number of organic cows, are difficult as annual milk volume per cow will vary a great deal between low production Grass Fed and the more intense production of some established herds and organic mega dairies.

The average national retail price for organic milk, as recorded by Federal Milk Marketing Order in December 2025, increased to $5.44 per half gallon for Whole Milk and Organic Reduced Fat 2% milk. The average annual retail price for 2025 was $5.19 per half gallon compared to 4.81 in 2024, an increase of $0.38 year-over-year. This year-over-year increase is equivalent to $8.84 per cwt. In January 2026, there was a national average retail price of $5.43 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 $4.49 in Syracuse, NY; $5.01 in Boston, MA; $5.48 in Hartford, CT and a high of $6.89 in Pittsburgh, PA. Of the 30 cities reporting data, 10 had retail prices under $5 and eight had retail prices over $6, with the rest in the $5 per half gallon range.

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. There is serious competition between milk buyers and some, including Lactalis, are bringing new producers on-line in the Midwest to supply co-packers in the region. They are also hiring more workers for their Brattleboro VT plant.

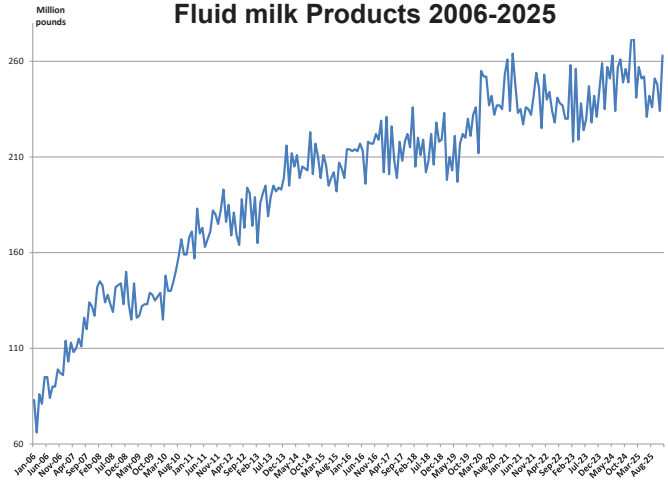
Pay Price is ranging from an annualized average of $35/cwt to $45/cwt for grain and pasture fed organic dairies, with Grass Fed

- continued on page 30

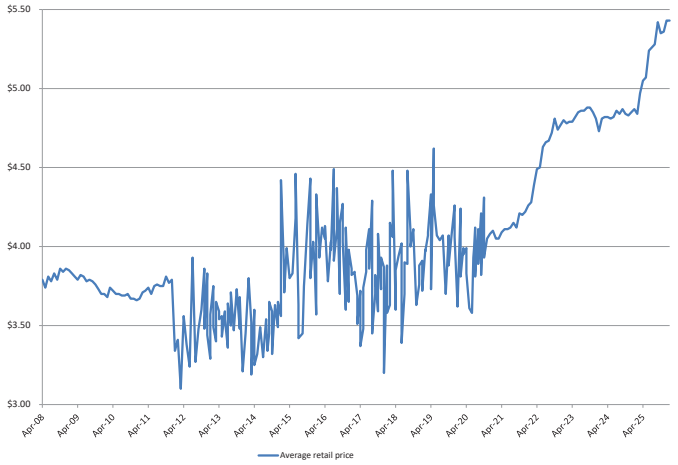
Year	Fluid milk sales (million pounds)	Change year to year	Whole Milk	Fat Reduced products
2006	1,062.00		244	818
2007	1,413.00	33%	321	1,092
2008	1,676.00	18%	389	1,287
2009	1,602.00	-4.60%	371	1,231
2010	1,799.00	11.00%	432	1,367
2011	2,074.00	13.30%	349	1,575
2012	2,157.00	3.80%	499	1,607
2013	2,267.00	4.90%	617	1,650
2014	2,491.00	9.00%	742	1,702
2015	2,438.00	-2.20%	881	1,614
2016	2,573.00	5.20%	951	1,624
2017	2,577.00	0.20%	1,012	1,564
2018	2,594.00	0.70%	1,062	1,523
2019	2,604.00	0.25%	1,139	1,465
2020	2,880.00	10.59%	1,270	1,605
2021	2,901.00	0.73%	1,320	1,562
2022	2,846.00	-1.90%	1,350	1,484
2023	2,836.00	-0.35%	1,412	1,410
2024	3,041.00	7.23%	1,597	1,423
2025	2,982.00	-1.94%	1,629	1,338

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

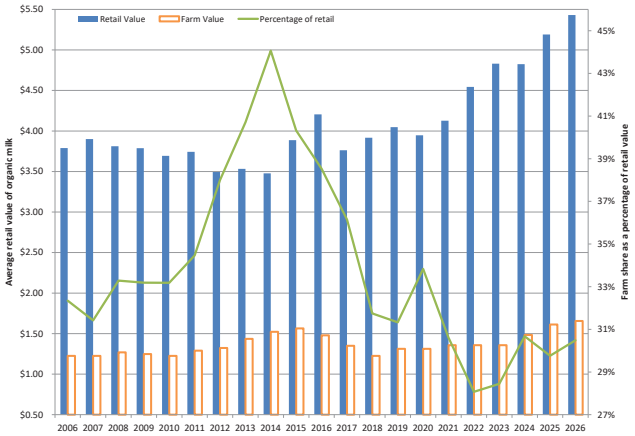
Estimated Total U.S. Sales of Organic Fluid milk Products 2006-2025



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



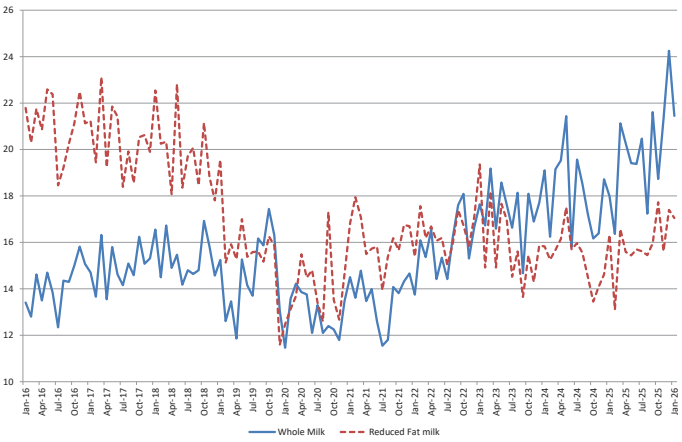
Average retail price, average farm share and percentage for half gallon of organic milk



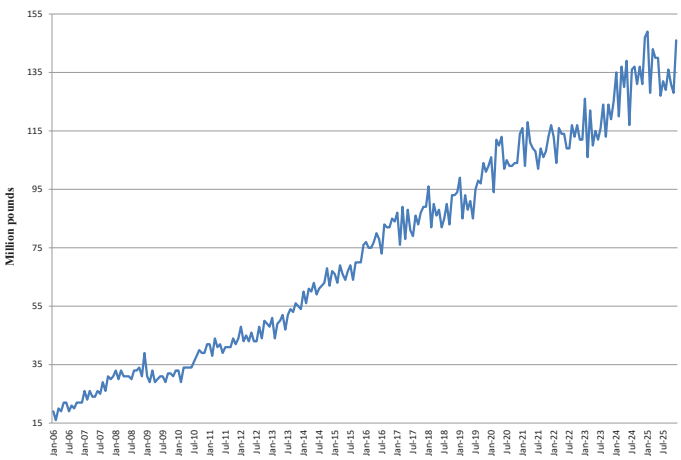
Utilization of Organic Fluid milk in FMMO 1 2016-2025

(not including fluid packaged milk processed out of order)

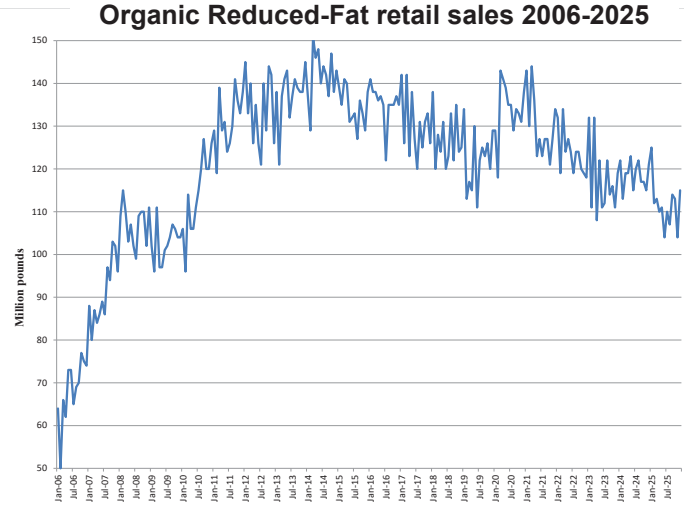
Million Pounds



Organic Whole Milk Retail Sales 2006-2025



Organic Reduced-Fat retail sales 2006-2025



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Pay and Feed Prices

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organic certified dairies Pay Price ranging from $38/cwt up to $50+/cwt. Grass Fed A2A2 regenerative organic certification herds are in the $50 to $60 range. Spot milk, when available, is still in the $60 /cwt. range.

Federal Milk Marketing Order 1 (Order) reported that, in December 2025, fluid Organic Milk packaged and utilized within the Order totaled 41.65 million pounds; higher than the December 2024 total of 29.62 million pounds. In December 2025, sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged in the Order were 24.25 million pounds, 5.53 million pounds higher than December 2024. In December 2025, sales of Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged and utilized in the Order were 17.4 million pounds, 2.78 million pounds higher than December 2024. Total Class 1 milk (both conventional and organic) packaged outside the Order, but sold within the Order, increased by 9.58 million pounds in December 2025 over December 2024.

Estimated Fluid Milk Products Sales Reports

Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	November 2025	2025 Year to date	November 2024	Year to date -2024
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	128	1,483	-1.9%	2.2%
Flavored Whole milk	1	9	-32.1%	-7.5%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	75	879	-7.8%	0.9%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	14	182	-25.4%	-20.0%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	10	110	-3.3%	-8.9%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	4	53	14.3%	-21.6%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	1	5	-40.4%	-26.9%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	104	1,223	-9.6%	-6.1%
Total Organic Milk Products	**234**	**2,720**	**-6.0%**	**-1.8%**

Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	December 2025	2025 Year to date	December 2024	Year to date -2024
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	146	1,628	-1.1%	1.9%
Flavored Whole milk	1	10	13.0%	-5.8%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	85	963	-2.5%	-1.1%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	16	198	-19.7%	-20%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	10	120	-3.6%	-8.5%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	5	58	18.0%	-19.4%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	1	5	-11.4%	-25.3%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	115	1,339	-4.8%	-6.0%
Total Organic Milk Products	**263**	**2,983**	**-2.7%**	**-1.9%**

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

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 2026	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
Jan	38.50	34.31	34.93	37.00	29.14	31.32	23.93
Feb		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
Aug		32.69	34.07	33.75	32.12	27.18	24.70
Sept		37.57	31.72	28.32	35.00	30.26	29.70
Oct		36.46	29.62	33.54	34.83	29.47	25.78
Nov		36.94	30.48	31.19	31.13	31.07	24.47
Dec		41.65	33.34	33.56	33.78	31.36	28.13
Annual		428.66	402.16	399.87	385.90	356.68	322.50

The annual volume of Class 1 organic milk in 2025 in FMMO 1 was 428.66 million pounds, a 6.6% increase over 402.16 million pounds in 2024. Organic milk averages approximately 19% of the fluid milk packaged in the Order. Class 1 milk coming into the Order during 2025 was 1,730.45 million pounds, both conventional and organic, which has increased by 71.61 million pounds over the 2024 total of 1,658.84 million pounds. Stonyfield/ US Lactalis, UNC Dairy (Upstate Niagara) and other plants that process non-Class 1 products are not included in this data.

In January 2026, sales of fluid Organic Milk packaged and utilized within the Order totaled 38.50 million pounds, higher than the previous year of 34.31 million pounds, an increase of 4.19 million pounds or 6.59%. In January 2026, sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged in the Order were 21.45 million pounds, 3.46 million pounds higher than January 2025. In January 2026, sales of Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged and utilized in the Order were 17.05 million pounds, 0.74 million pounds higher than January 2025. Packaged organic and conventional milk coming into the Order in

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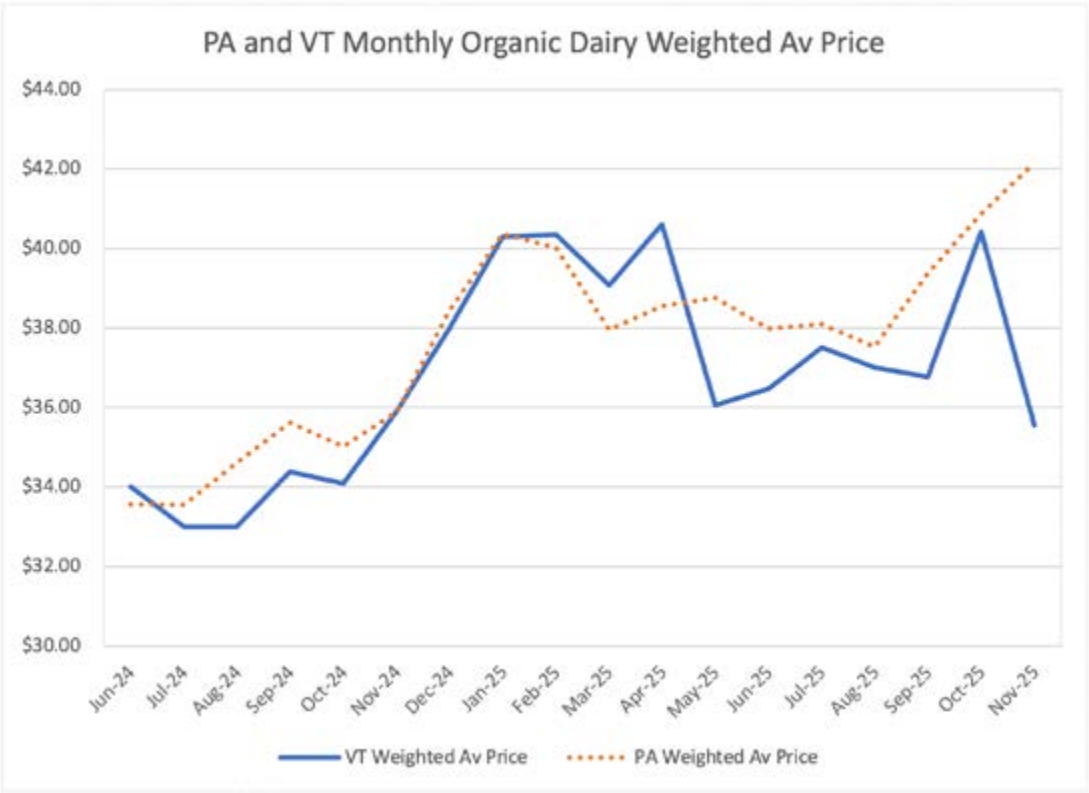
January 2026 increased by 2.4 million pounds over the same period in 2025.

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 December 2025, of the 263 million pounds packaged and sold as Class 1 organic milk in the US, 53.74 million pounds were from Order 32 (Central), of which 47.56 million pounds were utilized in other Orders. Order 51 (California) packaged 42.48 million pounds of organic milk in December 2025, of which 693,018 pounds were sold in other Orders. Order 33 (Mideast) packages less than Order 1, 32 and 51, with 21.34 million pounds in December 2025. Texas in the Southwest F.O. 126, and the Pacific Northwest F.O. 124 do not publish any breakdown of Class 1 organic milk or any other data on organic milk despite the new dairies coming into production. Of the 263 million pounds of organic packaged milk from In-Area sales recorded nationally by FMMO and aggregated by the AMS Dairy Program Market Information Branch, approximately 104 million pounds are not accounted for in the individual FMMO's.

UTILIZATION OF ORGANIC FLUID MILK PRODUCTS AND CREAM BY POOL PLANT (Million pounds) in FMMO 32 (Central)

Month	2026	2026 sold out of order 32	2025	2025 out of Order	2024	2024 out of order	2023	2023 out of order
January	52.72	46.81	55.36	48.77	56.23	49.82	55.21	48.70
February			47.93	42.49	51.88	46.12	49.11	43.63
March			50.05	43.78	53.96	46.29	52.73	45.44
April			47.65	42.20	54.13	48.09	49.18	43.53
May			48.28	42.58	51.32	45.51	48.21	42.78
June			44.98	39.66	52.56	47.04	45.20	39.63
July			50.18	43.93	52.68	47.04	48.45	42.75
August			46.74	41.32	55.63	49.37	48.47	42.85
September			49.37	43.62	50.68	45.27	48.76	43.18
October			51.94	46.26	50.36	44.47	49.73	42.48
November			46.75	41.76	48.04	42.04	49.60	44.12
December			53.76	47.58	53.98	47.21	54.17	48.10
Total			592.99	523.94	631.45	558.25	598.82	527.18

The USDA AMS Market News Vermont Report has published data since November 2023. The weighted average Pay Price is $38.19/cwt for year-to-date November 2025, with a monthly range of $36.06/cwt to a maximum of $40.61/cwt (does not include any deductions for hauling). The average daily production per cow, year-to-date, averages 46.32 lbs./cow. The milk buyers in Vermont are CROPP Cooperative, US Lactalis direct supply, Upstate Niagara (newly named UNC Dairy) 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 November year-to-date range of Pay Price from a low of $37.52/cwt to a high of $42.16/cwt. The average weighted price over the11-month period is $39.28, slightly higher than the Pay Price shown for VT. The average daily production per cow for the 11-month period is 31.63 pounds, 14.69 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

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0401201000, milk and cream, not concentrated nor sweetened, of a fat content, by weight, exceeding 1% but not exceeding 6% certified organic. The data from October 2025 shows organic milk HS-10 exports were 12,050 cwt., an increase of 1,512 cwt. over the same month in 2024, a 14% increase from 2024 to 2025. November 2025 data showed exports of 6,918 cwt., a decrease of 4,489 over November 2024, a 39% decrease. Recently released data for December 2025 indicated organic milk exports were 7,134, up 3.1 percent from the month prior, but down 20.7 percent from December 2024. Exports of organic milk for 2025 were 124,583 cwt, up 45,047 cwt. or 56.6 percent, compared to the period one year ago. 75% 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.

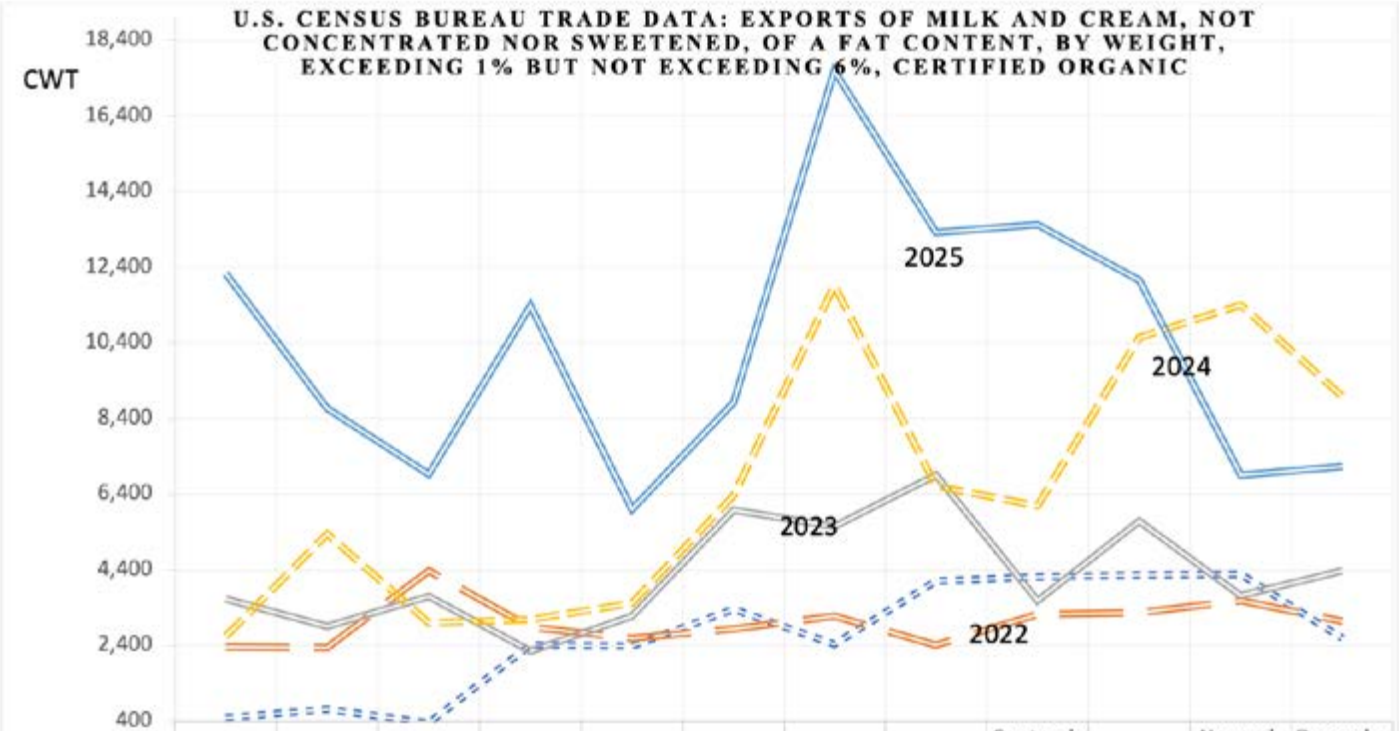
Auction News

A snapshot of a couple of auctions:

Premier Livestock and Auctions, N13438 State Hwy 73, Withee, WI 54498 had the following information from an auction in January 2026: Top Organic Dairy Cows – $3,000-5,200; Lesser Quality Organic Dairy Cows – $2,975 and Down; Top Organic Springing Heifers – $3,500-6,200; Top Organic Shortbred Heifers – $3,000-5,000; Top Organic Open Heifers – 717# – $3,900, 730# – $3,700. There is an auction on March 18th at the Premier Livestock and Auction where there is approximately 140 organic dairy cows and heifers for sale.

At Hoskins Livestock Auction, New Berlin, NY in January 2026, the average price range for organic cattle was: Certified Organic Steers/Bulls: $175-220 per hundredweight (cwt); Certified Organic Market Cows- High Yielding Cows: $145-182 per cwt. - Low Yielding Cows: $144 and down per cwt. Milking age organic cows varied from a high of $2,900 to a low of $1,500 with organic bred heifers at $2,675 and open heifers at $1,575.

USDA AMS report from a Pacific Northwest livestock auction: the overall average for organic cull cows was higher than for conventional cull cows. The average price for organic cows auctioned was $155.08 per hundredweight. The demand for both good organic and conventional calves, cows, and heifers remain



	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
2021	493	708	365	2,421	2,389	3,368	2,443	4,114	4,227	4,260	4,290	2,595
2022	2,358	2,342	4,379	2,896	2,601	2,832	3,192	2,424	3,236	3,275	3,577	3,051
2023	3,639	2,911	3,695	2,249	3,188	5,975	5,562	6,919	3,578	5,691	3,720	4,373
2024	2,643	5,352	2,998	3,093	3,518	6,360	11,930	6,604	6,096	10,538	11,407	8,997
2025	12,229	8,677	6,920	11,391	6,001	8,820	17,588	13,321	13,532	12,050	6,918	7,134

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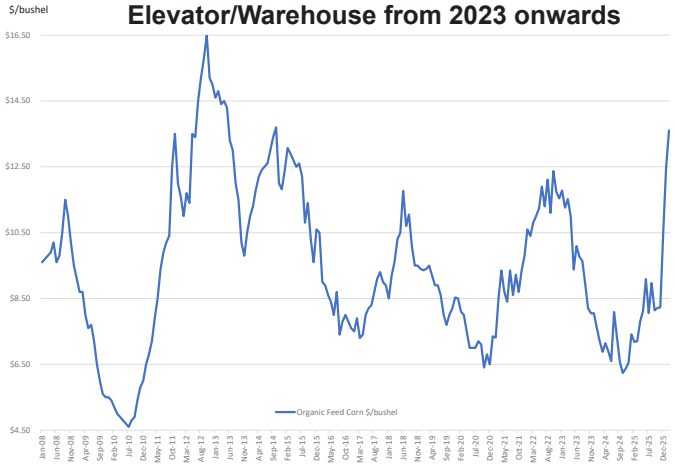
high but buyers are more selective. With the national beef herd still at the lowest level for many years, demand for beef calves is still high, which is good for cash flow but perhaps not so good for organic dairy replacements.

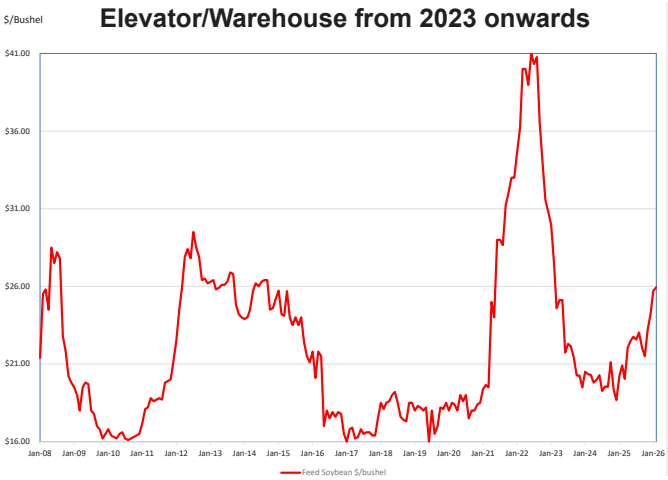
Organic Feed

Data from USDA for the Northeast has organic feed corn delivered to the elevator averaging $13.60 per bushel in February 2026. Organic feed soybean delivered to the elevator averaged $25.94/bu. in February 2026. Organic feed wheat averaged $7.56/bushel in February 2026. Soybean meal is trading at $850-900/ton with consistent demand. I have no accurate information on the price of hay, which depends on availability and expensive trucking. Hay availability in the US is affected by prolonged drought in many areas including Colorado. ◆

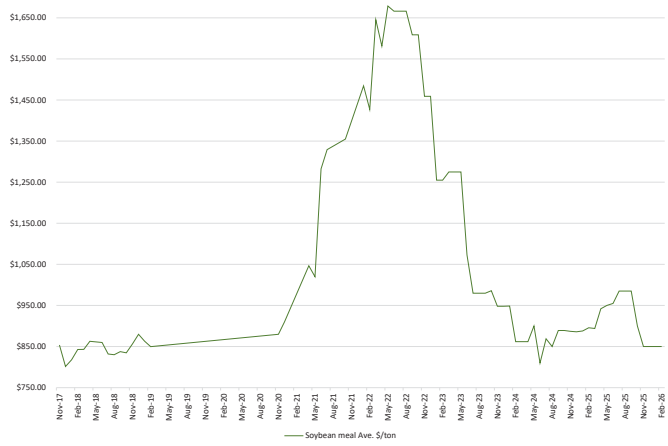
Organic Corn Price $/bushel 2008-2025 supplied by USDA AMS FOB the Farm and FOB Elevator/Warehouse from 2023 onwards



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



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