

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

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Above: The Robars are grateful to all of the visiting WWOOFers who contribute, connect, learn and share while supporting their farming operations. "This is why it's called Kiss the Cow Farm."

FEATURED FARM: KISS THE COW FARM

BARNARD, VT

Owned and operated by Randy and Lisa Robar

Kiss the Cow farm balances an impressive line of products and services with a very small herd!

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

Kiss the Cow Farm in Barnard, Vermont is owned and operated by Randy and Lisa Robar, educators by background and now twenty-year veteran farmers of an organic, grass-fed dairy. While the scale of their herd is comparatively small—averaging 12 milking cows at a time—they have a robust and diverse

line of products and services including A2A2 milk, ice cream, and organic eggs—plus a farm store and a whole-diet CSA. "This farm certainly isn't what it was 20 years ago," Randy says, "it evolves!"

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Hope for the Future: Strategies for Success

26th Annual NODPA Field Day

Berks County Agricultural Center

1238 County Welfare Road, Leesport, PA 19533

September 24 & 25, 2026

Let's face it, 2025 was a very difficult farming year for Northeast dairy producers when excessive spring rain and extreme drought made it a challenging time to produce high quality, abundant feed, to keep

cows in tip-top shape, and remain financially afloat. It has given farmers pause, re-assessing current strategies and considering tweaking them for greater stability and success in the

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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Message from NODPA Co-President

Tips for a more profitable summer: some sundry considerations.

Hope you're having a happy spring time and that you had a good winter. It's time to think about what you're going to do different in the 2026 grazing season.

How you start your season has a lot to do with your success through the season. A couple pointers:

- Do not start grazing too early and keep cattle moving.
- Provide shade where needed and when needed. Call Daniel King at 610-806-0291 for a reasonably priced shade.
- Provide fly control. Arbico Organics 800-827-2847 has supplied our fly parasites for many years. Getting on farms, I realize we have less flies than most I get on. The other thing about fly control is that you need to keep your cow lot clean and not have areas with the right conditions for flies to reproduce. There are other methods of fly control, but this is the cheapest and the cleanest that I know of.

A word about fence controllers, and how they can cause problems in milking parlors and barns: Most milking parlors and barns have

enough metal and concrete to attract stray voltage, let alone voltage you create on your own farm. Always be aware of keeping the fence charger out of the barn/diesel shanty and away from the buildings that house livestock. Please be aware that stray voltage will inhibit milk production and water consumption. Also, grounding is very important. You need a minimum of three 8-foot ground rods driven 8 feet apart for any fence charger up to 4 Joules and add another rod for every two joule increase beyond that.

And I can't finish this article without encouraging you to consider a 100% grass fed Market. Most dairy farmers that are doing 100% Grassfed would not go back to feeding grain even if they could. Also, breed to A2 bulls to prepare for a market that might be coming.

Hope you have an amazing summer with enough pasture to feed your cows and enough hay for a winter supply of feed, and enough problems to keep you humble and reaching out.

Roman Stoltzfoos, NODPA CO-President

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“...relief from swelling... recover quickly.”

— Jonathan Miedema



DUTCHLANE DAIRY, SHERBURNE, NEW YORK
Jonathan and Lisa Miedema
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ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Dairy News: May, 2026*By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director*

The grass may be green, but our boomerang weather is making it difficult for those looking for grass that can be grazed. New England, Eastern New York, and parts of Pennsylvania remain in a moderate drought and are now classified by the U.S. Drought Monitor as experiencing long-term effects, typically lasting more than six months and impacting hydrology and ecology. Although higher-than-normal temperatures covered almost the entire region, rainfall was mostly limited to northern areas—from western Pennsylvania and New York up through northern Vermont and New Hampshire into Maine—where many locations received at least 150% of their usual precipitation for the time of year. Ongoing drought conditions across the United States bring concerns for grazing and the availability of high-quality organic hay.

Good news for those that signed up for Dairy Margin Coverage for 2026. On March 30, 2026, the USDA released February'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. As a result, dairy operations that elected Tier 1 margin coverage will be issued a payment at levels \$9.50 (\$1.04 payment/cwt.), \$9.00 (\$0.54/cwt.), and \$8.50 (\$0.04/cwt.).

Milk Buyers

In the last issue, I reported that there were credible rumors that CROPP is purchasing 4-7 tankers of organic milk a day from Texas. Request for comments from CROPP were unanswered by press time but we received an email from Cheree Tauschek, Executive Vice President for Membership a few days later, apologizing for the delay in replying: "CROPP Cooperative does purchase a small percentage of external milk as a short-term strategic lever to fill any of our unmet customer and consumer demand. This strategy also allows us to continue to support our existing membership and procure new members for the Cooperative through conversion of conventional farms and new farm start-ups." She went on to say "I am thrilled that we recently filled the New England Field position as well. Darlene Brann joined us earlier this year and is actively onboarding and is out meeting our members."

On April 16, 2026, CROPP/Organic Valley rolled out formulated ultra-filtered milk that features even more protein than traditional formats, Protein Plus milk with aseptic packaging. They point out that the products offer pasture-raised organic milk with 50% more protein and 50% less sugar than regular milk, with the Protein

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**COMMITTED TO
ORGANIC DAIRIES**



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Plus varieties containing 13 grams of protein and 6 grams of sugar per serving. To make Protein Plus, they use an ultra-filtering process which modifies water, lactose and “a small amount of natural minerals” to concentrate the protein that naturally exists in milk. The company also highlighted the line’s packaging, which utilizes Tetra Pak’s Tetra Brik Aseptic 1420 Edge (48 oz) with the supplier’s LightWing 30 cap, which stays tethered to the carton. The packaging is both recyclable and made mainly of renewable plant-based materials.

Lactalis has become the world’s leading dairy company, and there’s promising news of their expansion to support organic dairy in the Northeast. Beginning in the last week of April 2026, they will start sourcing milk from the Mohawk Valley in New York. This marks a new region for sourcing milk by Stonyfield/Lactalis, involving direct supply from both English and Plain Communities farms. There are also reports of producers’ transitioning to organic dairy, including one potential large operation in northern Maine.

On February 23, 2026, Horizon Organic announced the launch of No Added Sugar 1% Low-fat Chocolate Milk Boxes to provide consumers with a no added sugar, single serve milk box option. Made from organic milk, organic cocoa, and organic plant-based sweeteners, the new milk boxes are also lactose free, deliver 8g of protein per serving and are shelf stable.

It is reported that all milk buyers are offering incentives and financial support to help transitioning producers and existing organic dairies expand. Organic dairying is not for everyone and it is always a rapid learning curve. For example, one farm in New York is transitioning without prior experience in pasture management and is trying to cultivate 800 acres of organic corn. Back in 2015-16, mistakes were made when organic milk was short and Pay Price high, and there were many transitions to organic that were not realistic based on producers’ experience and location. If transitions are to succeed, producers need a stable Pay Price for at least 5 years, continuing support from their buyers, certifiers and service providers. To ensure success, transitioning farms need assistance in establishing a realistic Organic System Plan and production practices that follow all organic regulations. Extra help is needed in establishing efficient record keeping for organic certification and standard financial records. As the Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) enters its final year, its services are especially crucial for organic dairy. Good, productive pasture is essential (not just an exercise yard for the Summer), as one expert organic livestock advisor said “Don’t include pasture for your cows unless you would cut it for hay.”

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ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Myths and Benefits of Silvopasture for the Organic Dairy*By Joshua Greene, Director of Education, Trees for Graziers*

Silvopasture, the thoughtful integration of trees, livestock, and forages, has found a ready audience in the world of organic dairy. As dairy folk across the Northeast and mid-Atlantic encounter the idea of silvopasture for the first time, many objections are raised and for good reasons. At first thought, the idea of planting trees in pastures seems like a crazy idea. Here are some of the typical first responses we hear:

“My grandfather spent half his life clearing this land! He’d roll over in his grave if he knew we were planting trees on the farm.”

“When I was a kid, we went around with a tractor and a chain for weeks pulling out all the stumps and now you’re telling me to think about planting trees?!”

“You want me to plant trees in my pastures? What if I need to make hay?”

And always this one ...

“What about grass production? Won’t my pastures produce less forage if I plant trees in them?”

These objections to silvopasture, and many more, bring up important questions. Dozens of important planning considerations need to be mulled over and carefully thought through while developing a silvopasture plan and before moving forward with a silvopasture planting. However, for the farmers adopting this practice, silvopasture promises a path forward to answer some of the nagging limitations of their grazing systems. Some of these graziers have hit a wall with their grazing or have discovered some limitations in their grazing system that silvopasture offers a way around. First, let’s consider some of the myths about silvopasture, and second, let’s focus on some of the benefits of silvopasture that farmers who are planting trees in their pastures hope to realize.

5 Myths about Silvopasture

Myth 1: *Silvopasture will reduce the production of forages.*

Everyone can see the difference between the forage production in a mature woodlot (0%) and an open pasture (100%). But is there a continuum between the two, in which as you add more trees you get less forage production? Not exactly. As one paper puts it, “forage growth does not have a simple relationship to light environment.” (<https://agrifile.org/spfcic/files/2013/02/feldhake.pdf>) When it comes to cool-season perennial grasses, the species making up the majority of northeastern pastures, much of the available sunlight is not utilized. Unlike warm-season annuals such as corn, sorghum, and other C-4 pathway grasses, cool-season species peak in production in spring when temperatures are much cooler and the amount of daylight is significantly less than during mid-summer. Multiple studies on this subject at Virginia Tech show no significant reduction in annual forage production in silvopasture. These studies are full of other insights, but an intriguing part of the research related to forage production reveals itself upon closer examination. According to the data, the spring flush produced slightly less forage under silvopasture than the completely open pasture, but the summer slump produced slightly more in the silvopasture—essentially flattening out the seasonal production of forages. Isn’t this what all graziers are looking for in their pastures—a smaller spring flush and less of a summer slump? Silvopastures can even out the forage production through the grazing season.

Caption: Silvopastures with taller, open canopies provide dappled shade under which livestock and forages thrive. Photo credit: Gabe Pent



ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Myth 2: *My success rate will be low, and the cows will destroy the trees.*

Tree protection has come a long way in the last few years. The days of getting stabbed by barbed wire, installing clumsy tree cages, building large, expensive wooden fences around trees, and fencing out tree rows are out. Bring on tree shelters with fiberglass stakes, polywire, and a dash of aluminum wire, and the job of protecting trees in pastures becomes a much easier, cheaper, and successful process.

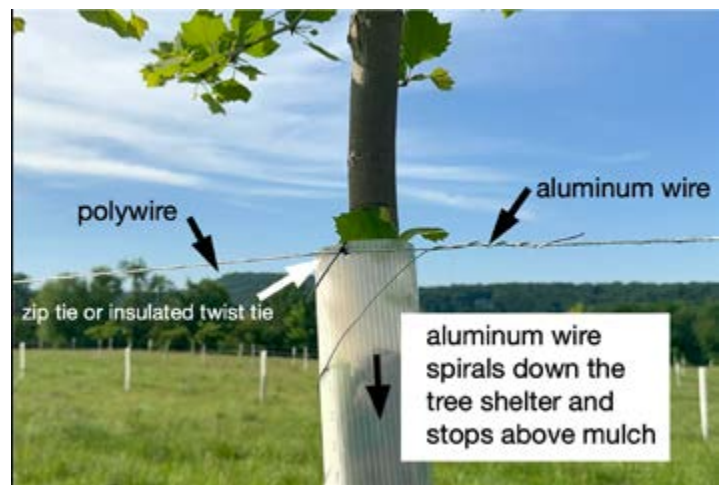


Caption: A short tree wrap at the base of the trees deters mice, voles, and other rodents from nibbling the bark and girdling them. Photo credit: Joshua Greene

Since rotational graziers already have fence chargers and are spooling out polywire on pigtail posts, the opportunity to protect individual trees with electric spark presents itself. If a farmer is looking for more internal fences on the farm to increase the number of paddocks, adding a tree row could be a strategy to break up a large pasture that requires multiple reels of polywire and several armloads of posts. On the contrary, if the paddock configuration needs to be as nimble as possible, protecting the

trees with what is called the “overpass” system is an option. With the overpass system, polywire can be strung along the top of 6-foot tree shelters and stretched tight to the perimeter fence. Then cattle can graze 360 degrees around the trees while each tree is protected by a few wraps of polywire (or better, 17-gauge aluminum wire). Cattle first encountering a hot wire on tree shelters rarely develop a habit of rubbing on them.

Besides innovative tree protection systems, using larger tree stock is another major factor in getting high success rates. Rather than planting 25-cent conservation-grade seedlings, purchasing 3 or 4-foot seedlings for just a few dollars more will give the trees a



Caption: The overpass tree protection system includes polywire attached to the top of a 6-foot tree shelter with an insulated twist tie and aluminum wire (or polywire) wrapped around the shelter and terminated just above pasture height. Photo credit: Joshua Greene

good head start and significantly reduce mortality. Farms planting larger trees and using tested tree protection systems are routinely getting more than a 90% success rate in their plantings.

(P.S. Don't forget the vole guards! Small rodents are the real tree killers in pastures. Cattle are more interested in the clover than the trees.)

Myth 3: *The trees will compete with my pasture for moisture.*

Perhaps the all-too-common scene of a beautiful pasture with one lonely tree surrounded on all sides by bare compacted dirt gives rise to this myth. But this common scenario is usually a function of intense animal impact rather than trees soaking up moisture. Since livestock are looking for some respite from the summer heat and crowd around the available shade, the concentrated nutrients and animal impact end up killing the forages and often the tree as well. Rather than being a case against silvopasture, this lone tree could be a case for having a few dozen such trees throughout the

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

pasture, giving the grazer the option to rotate through paddocks with handfuls of trees in each. Anecdotally, in high summer, the best pasture can be found under the trees where there's some protection from the intense summer heat and the morning dew has a couple of hours to soak in rather than getting cooked off. Forages, and not just cattle, perform better under dappled shade. In the Northeast, rainfall is less a limiting factor for pasture growth than the intense summer heat which triggers dormancy in cool-season grasses. We can often see this interaction in our yards where many of us have created mini-silvopastures with a few shade trees and lush lawns.

In the publication *Defining Silvopastures: Integrating Tree Production With Forage-Livestock Systems for Economic, Environmental, and Aesthetic Outcomes*, the authors put it this way:

Tree-forage interactions are often assumed to reduce soil moisture and nutrients for at least one of the plant types. However, the nature of these interactions depends on multiple factors, including tree species, planting density, spatial arrangement, aspect (the direction the slope faces), soil type and depth, tree and forage rooting depths, and tree and forage water and nutrient-use efficiencies.

Source:

<https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/CSES/CSES-146/CSES-146.html>


Authors: John Fike, Adam Downing, and John Munsell

Myth 4: *It'll take 15 years to get any meaningful shade.*

Planting a mix of fast-growing and slow-growing trees has been the chosen tree pattern for many dairy silvopastures. Early successional species such as tulip poplar, black locust, and basswood can be mixed in with some longer-lived, slower growers like oaks and hickories. The right tree planting pattern can reduce the wait for shade as many of these fast-growing trees want to shoot straight and tall, producing shade in a couple of years. Adding in some hybrid willows to wet areas and hybrid poplars to some less soggy soils can shave even more time off of the wait for shade. Dairy farms that are only concerned about creating shade would do well to plant entire pastures with early successional species, but with a mix of at least three species for diversity.

Myth 5: *My neighbors will think I'm crazy if I plant trees in my pastures.*

Actually this is one myth that we can't debunk. People planting silvopasture have no more control over their neighbors' opinions than the next person. If your farm has been known for doing some unconventional things, a pasture with trees planted in it might just confirm your neighbors' suspicions about you. !!




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5 Benefits of Silvopasture

Benefit 1: *Silvopasture in strategic pastures can help to achieve dry-matter intake requirements during the grazing season.*

Trying to hit that 30% dry matter intake target is the focus of many organic dairies. Just because there is available forage in a pasture doesn't mean the cattle are comfortable grazing in it. More than likely, the herd is looking for shade by 9 o'clock on a July morning. If the cows have a lane way back to the barn and the gate is open, they will tend to wander back on sunny mornings as soon as the temperature begins to rise. Under dappled shade, however, the cows can comfortably graze longer into the morning. For some dairies, grazing another hour or two each morning can tip the balance and help hit dry-matter intake requirements through the hottest months. For all-grass & forage dairies, the need for pasture intake only increases, as does the need to provide shade for cattle on pasture.

Benefit 2: *Silvopasture can reduce heat stress on cattle.*

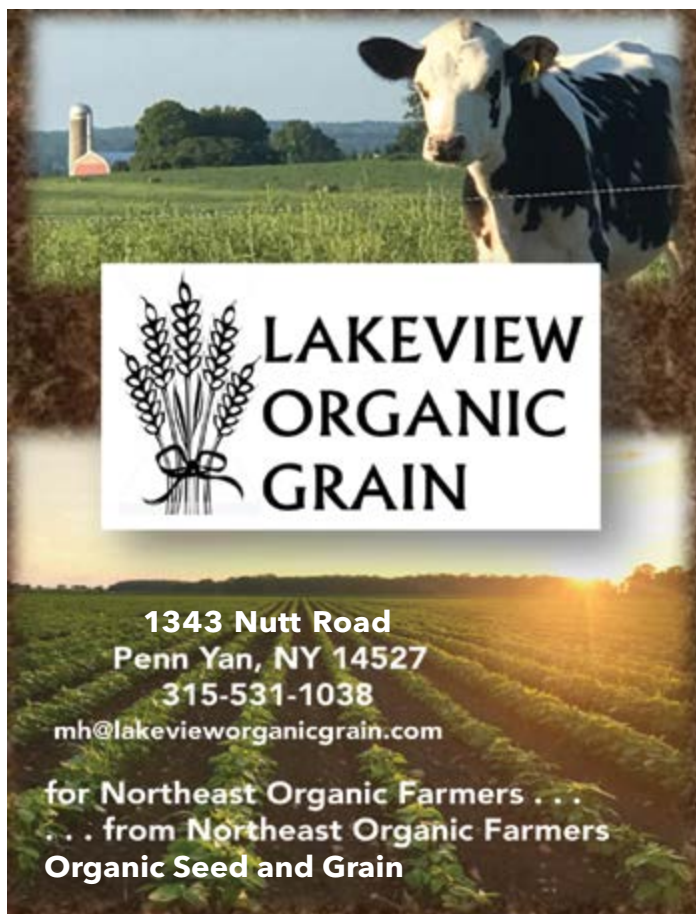
Most dairy folk have seen the impact of heat stress on the dairy herd in the bulk tank. While all classes of ruminants have a reduction in performance in hot weather, it is the dairies who get a twice-daily report from the cows and are much more attuned to the effects of heat stress on cow comfort. Not surprisingly, silvopasture for the

purpose of improving animal comfort is the number one benefit farmers are seeking from silvopasture.

While the shade mobiles can work to take the edge off of the heat stress, the extra labor required to drag them around seems like one task too many for busy dairy operations. Many farms have unused shade structures parked in a hedgerow.

Benefit 3: *Silvopasture can improve nutrient distribution across the farm.*

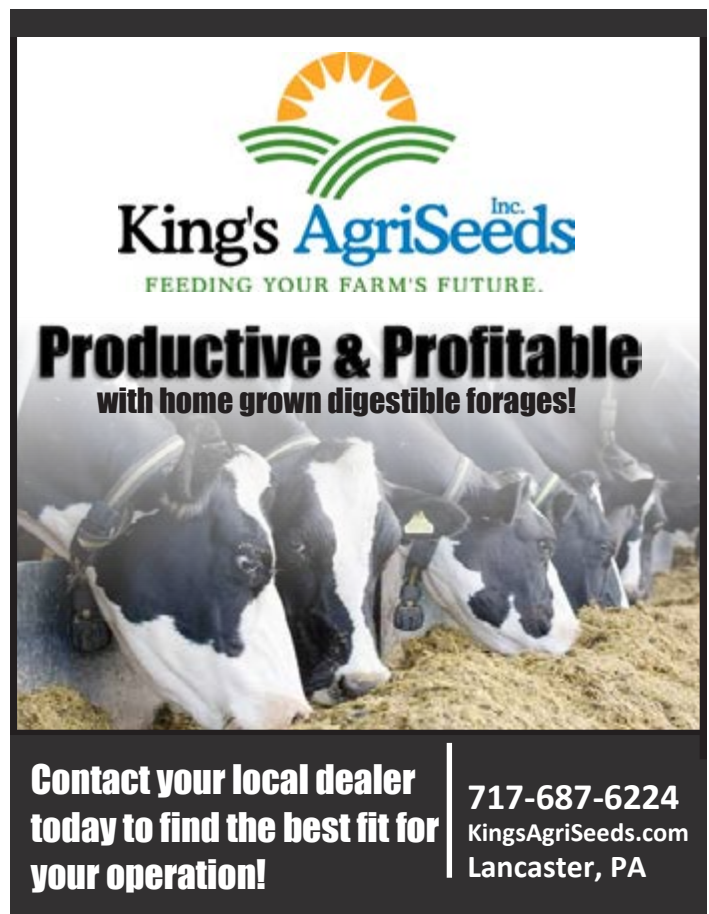
Cattle love trees ... that cool shade, branches overhead to distract pesky flies, and the greener richer forages underneath. Silvopasture creates that perfect microclimate that moderates the temperature for both cattle and forages. The barn certainly works to provide shade for the herd, but providing shade in the barn comes with associated costs. If the dairy herd can be kept comfortable out on pasture during hot spells, many of the tasks around the barn can be kept to a minimum, reducing fuel and labor costs to clean out and stack manure, apply fresh bedding, etc. But besides just reducing labor, the cattle are applying nutrients back to the pastures where they need to be. Silvopasture on hilltops, ridges, or unproductive pastures can be a part of a long-term strategy to drag nutrients upslope where they are needed most, bringing nutrients from the bottomlands up to the naturally poorer, thinner soils on the hills.



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Caption: A cool-season pasture with 40-feet between-row and 20-feet in-row spacing will soon offer shade for livestock. The polywire connecting the tree rows can be seen in the foreground. Photo credit: Joshua Greene

A further nutrient distribution benefit of silvopasture is the different zone that tree roots occupy compared to forage root systems. Consider the following from Fike, Downing, and Munsell:

Trees can also improve nutrient cycling in pastures by accessing nutrients deep in the soil and moving them to the surface via roots exudates and leaf drop. Trees can also increase the system's nutrient-use efficiency by capturing nutrients such as nitrogen that are readily leached below the forage rooting zone, and this, in turn, supports more rapid tree growth.

Source:

<https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/CSES/CSES-146/CSES-146.html>

Benefit 4: *Silvopasture can improve soil health by more evenly distributing animal impact.*

Farm that have one or two pastures with shade find that they bring the cows to these areas quite frequently. The number of weeks during the grazing season with intense heat seems to outnumber the pastures with shade. This situation leads to more impact on those areas and a lack of adequate rest periods needed for the pastures to fully recover. The long-term effect of strategic silvopastures on the dairy farm is an ability to manage animal impact and animal

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Caption: The dairy herd at Springwood Organic Dairy in Kinzers, PA grazes around the trees in a planted silvopasture.

Photo credit: Joshua Greene



Caption: Organic dairy heifers rest on both sides of a tree row protected by the overpass system at Greene Kitchen Farm in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania.
Photo credit: Joshua Greene

comfort at the same time, leading to improved soil health across the farm.

Distributed, dappled shade gives graziers another tool in the ‘grazier’s toolbox’ (term by Sarah Flack) with the ability to pasture cattle comfortably during heat waves.

Benefit 5: *Silvopasture offers a range of benefits that farmers value beyond the needs of the dairy herd.*

Improved wildlife habitat, firewood, fence posts, fruit for the homestead or poultry flock, and a beautiful view are a few of the additional benefits that lead farmers to adopt silvopasture. For

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

those already looking for ways to add shade to the dairy pasture, these additional benefits can add diversity and interest to the farm and also lead to opportunities for stacking enterprises on the farm.

Perhaps some of the benefits of silvopasture could address the needs of your grazing system. If so, reach out and we'll work together to develop a plan to take your grazing to new heights. ♦



Joshua Greene, Director of Education at Trees for Graziers, can be reached by email at: joshua@treesforgraziers.com. To learn more, join Joshua at the 26th Annual NODPA Field Days where he'll be presenting 'Challenges and Benefits of Adding Trees to Pastures'.

Reference and links to more information on silvopasture:

Working Trees Info: Mitigating Heat Stress in Cattle

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/nac/assets/documents/workingtrees/infosheets/HeatStressCattleInfoSheetMay2013.pdf>

The Grazier's Guide to Trees

by Austin Unruh,

<https://treesforgraziers.com/product/the-graziers-guide-to-trees/>
link to purchase.

Trees For Graziers silvopasture profiles:

<https://treesforgraziers.com>

Drager Farms:

<https://treesforgraziers.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/2026-Trees-For-Graziers-Silvopasture-Farm-Case-Study-Drager-Farms.pdf>

Willow Run Farmstead:

<https://treesforgraziers.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/2026-Trees-For-Graziers-Silvopasture-Farm-Case-Study-Willow-Run-Farmstead.pdf>

Springwood Organic Dairy:

<https://treesforgraziers.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/2026-Trees-For-Graziers-Silvopasture-Profile-Springwood-Organic-Dairy-copy.pdf>

Selected Virginia Tech papers and publications on silvopasture:

- Defining Silvopastures: Integrating Tree Production With Forage-Livestock Systems for Economic, Environmental, and Aesthetic Outcomes
https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/content/dam/pubs_ext_vt_edu/CSES/CSES-146/CSES-146-PDF.pdf
- Photosynthetically Active Radiation relationship to forage yield in Central Appalachian Silvopastures
<https://agrilife.org/spfcic/files/2013/02/feldhake.pdf>
- Silvopastures: SVAREC Update, Kentland Results and SPAREC Studies
<https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/657e1832-6308-4898-b784-e530730d600a/content>
- Trees in silvopasture are not created equal
https://ext.vt.edu/content/dam/ext_vt_edu/topics/agriculture/silvopasture/files/trees-in-silvopasture.pdf
- Forage Production and Nutritive Value in a Temperate Appalachian Silvopasture
<https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/a7079756-9868-4d69-9340-d7d0dd05d601/content>



TREES FOR GRAZIERS

Organic Materials Certification Statement

Trees for Graziers (TFG) attests that to the best of their knowledge all materials used in their plantings on certified organic farms are allowable under the National Organic Program (NOP).

Any bare root tree seedlings planted that are not grown in a nursery under certified organic conditions will only be planted because they are *not commercially available* in the *quantity, quality and appropriate form* necessary for silvopasture contexts. Silvopastures, and other agroforestry systems, require specific varieties and tree sizes that are not currently available for sale from organic nurseries.

All bare root seedlings have been planted and root-dipped with an organically certified AM fungal treatment. Currently, TFG uses Tainio Biologicals Mycogenesis (ttt-5154).

All planted potted stock will have used an organically certified potting mix.

All applied wood chip mulch is virgin wood free of any commercial material waste with a signed letter from the supplier.

Any other products applied on organically certified farms not mentioned above in this statement have followed NOP standards.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Penn State Extension Launches Organic and Regenerative Dairy Farm Assessment Program for PA Dairy Farmers

By Kasey Hower, Berks County Dairy Educator, Penn State Extension

A new initiative from Penn State Extension is giving dairy producers an opportunity to take a closer look at how grazing, feeding, and nutrient management practices affect both profitability and environmental performance.

The Organic and Regenerative Dairy Farm Assessment Program will work directly with participating farms in Pennsylvania throughout the 2026 grazing season. The effort aims to evaluate current management practices and provide producers with data-driven recommendations to improve forage yield and quality, increase nutrient use efficiency, and make better use of homegrown feeds.



Photo: Laura ter Horst/Unsplash.com

As part of the program, Extension investigators will visit participating farms four times between April and October. During each visit, pastures will be evaluated for pre- and post-grazing heights and forage mass, while all farm-fed forages, including pasture, will be sampled for nutrient analysis. Cattle will also be assessed for body condition and estimated weights, and bulk tank milk samples will be analyzed for components and fatty acid profiles.

Researchers will also collect manure and urine samples to evaluate nitrogen excretion and measure soil nutrient levels at the beginning and end of the grazing season. These measurements

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will help determine how grazing and feeding practices influence nutrient balance on the farm.

At the conclusion of the season, a comprehensive report will summarize the findings, compare results across participating farms, and include recommendations for potential improvements. **Program organizers, Dr. Martins and Dr. Lawhead, will be presenting at the 26th Annual NODPA Field Days and will share their preliminary research results.**


Program organizers say the goal is simple: provide practical tools and insights that help organic and regenerative dairy farms strengthen forage systems, retain nutrients more effectively, and ultimately improve farm profitability. ♦

Kasey Hower, Berks County Dairy Educator, Penn State Extension, can be reached by email: kzm175@psu.edu. Program organizers can be reached by phone or email: Dr. Leoni Martins, Assistant Clinical Professor of Precision Dairy Nutrition at Penn State University Park at 814-863-1690 or leonimartins@psu.edu and Dr. Jim Lawhead, Extension Associate in Dairy Science at Penn State University Park at 717-275-5388 or jbl5606@psu.edu





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Ask the Vet

Elizabeth Martens, DVM

The Case For Monthly Bulk Tank Cultures



The bulk tank milk culture is a powerful tool to make sure your herd doesn't become infected with any of the really bad mastitis bugs and allows you to do something about it before it affects SCC and mastitis case numbers. The main things we look for on a bulk tank culture are: Mycoplasma, Prototheca and Staph aureus. These are the big 3 contagious, non-treatable bacteria that can become a big problem if ignored. They can pop up suddenly even in 100% closed herds. Prototheca and Mycoplasma are considered newly emerging issues on dairy farms in the Northeast, while Staph aureus is a relatively well known ongoing cause of contagious mastitis.

A bulk tank culture will also tell you about the prevalence of more common mastitis causing bacteria, like environmental staphs and streps and coliforms such as E. coli and Kelbsiella. It can help you narrow down potential sources for mastitis infection in your cows, though I won't go into that in depth in this article.

Staph aureus forms tiny abscesses throughout the udder that cause ongoing inflammation and elevated SCC, but the actually bacteria is shed intermittently. This means that a negative culture doesn't necessarily mean the cow or farm is free of the bacteria, but routine repeated negative culture can give you fairly high confidence of true negative status.

Prototheca mastitis in cattle is the only known example of an algae causing infection in a mammal. Pretty cool, right? Given the way it can slowly spread through a dairy herd and not get detected until a large portion of the cattle are infected, most farmers don't think so. Algae normally live in dirty water – very frequently seen in lakes and ponds, and if you were to look under a microscope you would find it in dirty water puddles in many dairy barns as well. Once a cow on a farm is infected, she can pass the infection to other cows even without the ideal warm, wet conditions. Dairies in the southeastern



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US have been dealing with Prototheca for a while but in the past couple years we've started finding it in New York and Vermont.

Mycoplasma was first discovered on California dairy farms about 60 years ago and is now recognized worldwide as one of the most difficult bacteria to deal with on dairy farms. It causes chronic disease (pneumonia, ear infections, arthritis and mastitis) and also plays a role in calfhood pneumonia. Antibiotics are highly ineffective against this bacteria. If you are feeding non-pasteurized milk to calves, it's extra important to make sure none of your cows are shedding mycoplasma in their milk.

The approach we take if a tank culture comes back positive for any of these is similar: don't panic, do a repeat tank sample a month later, and identify a reasonable sized group of cows to sample that will give us the best chances of finding some of the culprit cows. Or in some states, such as NY, Quality Milk Production Service can do a whole herd survey and sample all cows during one milking.

We need to come up with a plan that meets the farm's goals and will actually work for the long term. Some farms sample all fresh or mastitis cows for all bacteria or only looking for specific bacteria based on their bulk tank culture results. You can cut down cost if, for example, you are only interested in checking cows for staph aureus. Some farms sample only repeat mastitis cows or chronic high SCC. A cow with mastitis that clears up completely after treatment probably doesn't have any of these 3 bacteria. Any new cows entering your herd should be cultured, and if you can ask the source farm for a bulk tank culture too, even better.

The key is to always keep up with the monthly bulk tank culture to keep tabs on the size of the problem (or lack thereof). It's ok to tolerate a few cows carrying these bacteria as long as you know who they are and they aren't spreading rapidly. If you wait until herd SCC is increasing due to a primarily contagious mastitis pathogen, 20% or more of your herd may already be infected. The cost of monthly bulk tank cultures is miniscule compared to the benefits of preventing contagious mastitis from affecting your bottom line. ♦

Dr. Martens is a dairy veterinarian at Valleywide Veterinary Services in Bridport, VT. The practice runs a private milk quality laboratory with proficiency certification from Cornell's Quality Milk Production Service. They culture thousands of milk samples every year and offer consulting on milk quality issues for cow and goat dairies. She can be reached at Valleywide Veterinary Services, 2562 Vermont, VT-22A, Bridport, VT 05734, (802) 758-6888

Do you have a question for Dr. Martens, 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.

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@familyfarmsteadairy.com, 607-397-4044; www.familyfarmsteadairy.com ;

- **Horizon Organic LLC:**

Amber Brown (Producer Relations Manager, Western NY) 607-749-9185, amber.brown@horizon.com ;
Chris Cardner (Producer Relations Manager, Eastern NY) 551-261-6243, chris.cardner@horizon.com ;
David Bigelow (Producer Relations Manager, Western PA & Eastern OH), 814-931-6948, david.bigelow@horizon.com
Allen Klingler (Producer Relations Manager, Eastern PA) 570-428-2089, allen.klingler@horizon.com
Richard Klossner (Producer Relations Manager, MN, WI, MI, OH, IN, KY), 303-319-6899, richard.klossner@horizon.com

- **Maple Hill:** Farm Service Number: 518.516.6090 ext. 1.

Christina Reginelli (Director of Farm Services) 518-275-3627, christina@maplehillcreamery.com
Grace Knott (Field Manager, Northern NY, Central NY and Group Milkhouses) 518-231-0428, grace@maplehillcreamery.com ,
Ashley Pierce (Field Manager, Central and West NY) 518-610-5099, ashley.pierce@maplehillcreamery.com .
Mark Martin (Field Manager, OH Farms) 419-895-1297, mark.martin@maplehillcreamery.com
Roman Stoltzfoos (Field Manager PA) 717-278-1070, roman.stoltzfoos@maplehillcreamery.com .

- **Origin Milk:** David Campaniello; Business Development

& Product Innovation, david@originmilk.com , 718-404-6924 ; Michael Mackay, 419-733-6833, Michael.mackay@originmilk.com

- **Stonyfield/Lactalis USA:**

Jason Johnson, jason.johnson@us.lactalis.com, (802) 356-0908;
Erin Marlowe: erin.marlowe@us.lactalis.com, (603) 496-9499;
Jeremy Russo: jeremy.russo@us.lactalis.com (802) 236-1920

- **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

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

SAVE THE DATE for the 26th Annual NODPA Field Days

Berks County Agricultural Center, Leesport, PA
September 24 & 25, 2026

continued from page 1

face of unpredictable weather conditions and supply chains this farming season. Unlike other annual conferences, the NODPA Field Days moves to different locations—to where the farmers are, instead of a fixed location requiring time and travel away from the farm. This year's 26th Annual NODPA Field Days is returning to Pennsylvania. On September 24th and 25th, we will be at the Berks County Agricultural Center in Leesport, PA, and, as the title suggests, the educational program will focus on strategies for a successful future, with a special awareness of last year's challenges.

Workshops, described in more detail below, include pasture management as a key component of success; the importance of minerals and vitamins in cow and calf health; renewable energy strategies to save money and build self-reliance; and the benefits of adding trees to pastures.

Beginning Thursday morning, we will visit the Nelson Martin family's Country Sunrise Creamery and Farm Store, 48 Mountain View Rd. Myerstown, PA 17067. While this grass-based farm isn't certified organic, it employs organic practices, using no pesticides and herbicides, and has an on-farm processing facility. They produce milk, butter, cheese, yogurt, ice cream and grass-fed beef, all of which are sold in their on-farm store.



Following the farm tour, the meeting convenes at the Berks County Agricultural Center in Leesport, PA, with registration and lunch at noon, and workshops beginning at 1:00pm, with opening remarks and welcomes. Not all questions get asked or answered on a busy farm tour, so Nelson Martin will answer questions about the morning farm tour and, for those that couldn't attend, describe their farming operation.

We are very fortunate to have a line-up of distinguished and highly qualified presenters on both days that are eager to share their expertise.

- **Big Things from Little Packages: The Important Role of Minerals and Vitamins in Cow and Calf Health.**

Presenter: Dr. Robert Van Saun, DVM, Professor of Veterinary Science, Pennsylvania State University
Thursday, 1:30pm



Mineral and vitamin requirements are relatively minor compared to other dietary nutrients. Although required in small amounts, minerals and vitamins can have a large effect on disease prevention and maintaining calf health. Mineral and vitamin nutrition during late pregnancy through breeding is critical to having a successful, disease-free calving with a healthy, vigorous calf. This presentation will discuss the importance of minerals and vitamins relative to immunity and disease prevention. Proper feeding of the late pregnant cow is essential for minimizing disease conditions of mastitis and uterine infections. Additionally, the pregnant cow transfers minerals and vitamins to the developing calf, which will complement colostrum in preventing early calf diseases.

- **Silvopasture: Challenges and Benefits of adding trees to pastures, Joshua Greene, Director of Education at Trees for Graziers**
Thursday, 3:15 pm



While many graziers would like to have access to more shade for their dairy herd, there seems to be dizzying array of questions to be answered and practical problems to be solved in order to plant trees in pastures. Join Joshua Greene, director of education at Trees for Graziers for a look at the plans and techniques many graziers are using for strategic, effective tree establishment in actively-grazed pastures.

In addition to these workshops, a representative from the National Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) program will share new program information and updates on this growing program.

Following Thursday's workshops, we will have time to visit the trade show vendors and enjoy refreshments during social hour. Last year, we were fortunate to spotlight a number of locally produced cheese products, and we are hoping to make it an annual tradition. Social hour is followed by a delicious buffet banquet dinner and brief NODPA Annual Meeting featuring

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

the NODPA Board Co-presidents, Roman Stoltzfoos and Kirk Arnold, and executive director, Ed Maltby.

Then it's on to our keynote presentation, and we are thrilled to have Ted LeBow, Good Roots founder and CEO (formerly Kitchen Table Consulting), return for this very timely presentation:

Stop Farming like You'll Never Leave: Rethinking Profit, Reinvestment, and Retirement

For many farmers, success has meant putting everything back into the operation. While that mindset drives growth, it can also limit long-term financial security. Good Roots CEO Ted LeBow challenges this pattern by making the case that every farm needs an exit strategy, just like any other business. He explores how decisions around cash, profit, and reinvestment shape what's possible later and why it pays to plan early.



In a discussion-driven format, this session brings together farmers at different life stages to reflect on real-world experiences. From younger farmers who have an opportunity to build savings, to those approaching transition and succession, the discussion connects financial planning to the broader goal of resilience. Attendees will leave with a practical framework for balancing today's demands with a future that supports both the farmer and the next generation. There will be plenty of time for questions and discussion before we wrap up for the evening at 8:30.

Friday starts early, with a Continental Breakfast at 6:30 am, followed at 7:00 by the Producer-Only meeting, where producers can safely discuss the pressing issues of the day without fear of reprisal for sharing their questions and concerns about the industry.

At 9:00 am the morning workshops begin and feature the following:

- Renewable Energy: Strategies to address the rising cost of energy on the farm. Klaas Martens, Klaas and Mary-Howell Martens Farm, Penn Yan, NY Friday, 9:00 am

Klaas will discuss emerging opportunities to increase efficiency and energy independence while decreasing costs on your family farm, and he will describe the current energy projects on his farm.



- From Pasture to Profit: How Grazing Management Drives Intake, Milk Yield, and Efficiency

Presenters: Leoni F. Martins, Assistant Clinical Professor of Precision Dairy Nutrition, Department of Animal Science, The Pennsylvania State University and



James Lawhead, DVM, Extension Associate, Dairy Science, The Pennsylvania State University Friday 10:15 am



This workshop frames pasture management as a key component of precision nutrition. We will discuss how grazing decisions influence forage quality, cow behavior, and nutrient supply, and how these translate into milk yield and system-level efficiency.

The morning sessions conclude with a preview of the afternoon's farm tour of Spring Creek Farms, The Stricker Family's Farm,



hosted by Greg and Forrest Stricker, 3880 North Church Street, Wernersville, PA 19565. Forrest Stricker has been one of the pioneers of organic and grass-based dairy in the US, and he and Greg, who's the main farm operator these days, will share the wide variety of innovative practices they use on their 600 acre (combination of owned and rented) grass-based farm. Readers might recall that Spring Creek Farms was the featured farm in the March 2026 NODPA News.

Following lunch and the always fun door prize drawing, featuring the generously donated products from our sponsors and trade show vendors, Field Days ends as everyone heads out to the afternoon farm tour, a short 10 minute drive away.

There is always a lot to share with fellow attendees-both old and new friends; a time to catch up on farm and family news, as well as industry gossip! The NODPA Field Days webpages will be online in the next couple of weeks and information for sponsorship and trade show participation will be going out via emails. If you have questions or would like information now, please contact Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator, at 413-772-0444, or by email, noraowens@comcast.net. More information about Field Days will be available online and in the July NODPA News, including a full schedule, lodging options, directions and more. So for now, mark your calendars and plan attend the 26th Annual NODPA Field Days in Leesport, PA. ♦

FEATURED FARM

KISS THE COW FARM

BARNARD, VERMONT

continued from page 1

The farm business is an LLC jointly owned by the Robars, and like an increasing number of smaller farming operations, they rent the entirety of their farming land through a trust. “We own zero acres!” Randy says. “We steward about 80 acres now, part of a larger property that is a total of 500.”

This larger property, which has historically been a dairy farm, is privately owned by another farmer but the Vermont Land Trust owns the development rights so that it can only ever be used for farming. Since beginning their venture, the Robars have used renewable five-year land leases built on solid relationships with their neighbors—though they are now pursuing a 99-year lease as a good business practice.

Kiss the Cow Farm is 100% grass-fed, and so the Robars don’t till any of their leased acreage for corn or grain. Of their 80 total acres they raise and bale hay on about 35 acres and also bring hay in from some remote fields to supplement. They keep about 35 more acres as permanent pasture, which for their small herd is enough for the first two cycles of rotational grazing. “Come late May we usually take a first cut off the front hay fields,” Randy says, “and by that time the cows have completed their second circuit through

back pastures. If that back pasture isn’t ready for another cycle yet, then we’ll turn them in to graze the front hay fields.”

“We have some ‘less than ideal’ back pastures here, and we have a lot of rock ledge,” Randy says of the grass-growing capacity of the land. “Some pastures didn’t grow a lot when we first came here. The farm was managed traditionally. The previous farmers, like most folks back then, milked their 40 cows and then pushed them out back door—so they would all just disappear into 140 acres. When you do that, they eat all the good stuff and leave everything else. So each year there would be more goldenrod and less grass. When we first showed up, we bush-hogged everything. We were whacking down goldenrod taller than me at 6 feet! And now, while I wouldn’t say it’s lush—there’s still too much rock—it does grow decent grass.”

Dividing the pasture into paddocks for intensive rotational grazing is key to maintaining and improving this pasture quality, Randy says. “Getting them on fresh pasture is important for the cows,” he says, “Getting them off each section is just as important.” The Robars use 3-strand high-tensile electric fencing for the farm’s perimeter, and they also have some single-strand interior permanent fencing along the old stones walls and keeping with the farm’s hilly topography. “We have nothing flat,” Randy says, “So we can’t do any squares or rectangles.” They subdivide pastures with braided wire, including when they seasonally turn the herd into the hay fields. “Most of our paddocks are sized for 24 hours—we move

the herd to fresh grass every day, after milking,” Randy says. “Conditions are dynamic—grass grows quicker in certain paddocks, at different times of year, so our paddock system has to be adaptive.”

The Robars have a total of 24 cows in their herd at any given time, and milk about a dozen on average. When asked how they manage the milking herd, such as sorting and separating the dries, heifers and calves, Randy laughs. “We started with one cow in the garage!” he says. “And we’ve grown slowly since then. There was no value in trying to separate the herd back then, and even now we generally keep them together.”



Cinnamon, one of the Robars’ Normande cows, and her calf enjoying the pasture.

FEATURED FARM



The full herd of cows and heifers eagerly await a fresh hay refill in the Robars' traditional New England tie-stall barn.

“We have a traditional old New England tie-stall dairy barn,” Randy says, though the herd is only in the barn for milking. The calves are kept in pens in the barn until they’re about 3 months old, then they are weaned. Those pens include a run-out space so that after about a month they can go outside. “We sell a lot of our bulls as calves through Facebook Marketplace,” Randy says. “We raise one or two a year for veal, but it’s kind a pain... these little calves suck a lot of milk that might be more profitable as ice cream.”

The heifers run with the herd, staying outside year-round—something made possible by the farm’s layout. “The farm buildings block the west wind,” Randy shares, “so the herd is fine outside all winter unless there’s a major snowstorm coming, or if the wind is coming from the wrong direction. Then we bring them in until the weather clears.” The Robars find that not only does this setup require significantly less labor, the cows tend to be much healthier.

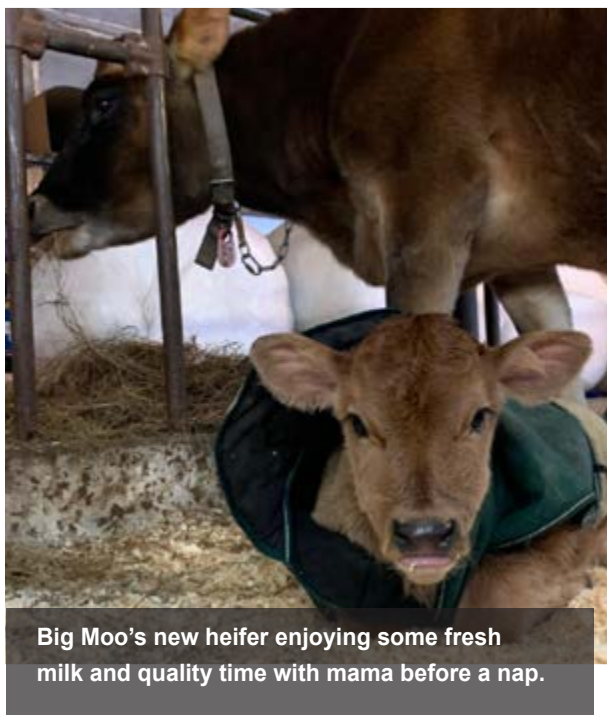
When asked about their milking system, again Randy just laughs. “Neither of us have a farming background, but the deal right from the beginning was, ‘yes we can get a cow... but I’m not milking it

by hand!’ So we started with a little portable milker.” The barn had surge milkers when the Robars took it over, but Randy says that system didn’t work for them. “We worked with a DeLaval bucket for about 12 years or so, which you can do when you only have a handful of cows. But you can’t do it with more than a handful, which we have now, and you can’t keep it up when you start getting older!” Three years ago the Robars knew they needed to upgrade from the manual buckets and launched a successful GoFundMe campaign to install a modern pipeline system.

This experience was a great example of how their scale and their farming values fit their community. “When we got to a point with our back and knee problems that we knew we needed to change, that GoFundMe campaign raised \$17,000 dollars all from local folks who knew us and wanted to keep us going,” Randy shares. “That’s a lot of money for a community-sourced fundraiser. We want to take care of our community, and if we do that well, our community will take care of us.”

Scale is a factor in most of their decisions, even playing a role in their herd genetics. The majority of their herd are Jerseys, which

FEATURED FARM



Big Moo's new heifer enjoying some fresh milk and quality time with mama before a nap.

Randy credits to three important reasons. Like most farmers with jersey herds, he cites the heavy cream content of the milk as the most important reason—after all, the farm's most successful product is ice cream. There is also a logistical consideration. "Jerseys are small, they fit in this old barn," Randy says. "If we tried to put a modern Holstein in here to milk, she would hang out into the alley!" Finally—but just as importantly—Randy says, "Jerseys are cute! Life is too short to have ugly cows." After all, if you're going to be called Kiss the Cow Farm, you had better have kissable cows.

The Robars also include Normande cows in their herd, a decision they credit to a pasture walk some years ago at Franklin Farm, another small organic farm with a mixed herd. "They're gorgeous," Randy says of the breed, "They come from northern France, very close to the Isles of Jersey and Guernsey, so they're all basically first cousins. They give a lot of cream, like the Jerseys, but they're sturdier, harder than Jerseys. Our Normandies never get sick." About two thirds of their herd is Jersey and the remaining third are Normande.

The Robars first built up their herd by buying in cows as their sales demands dictated, but the herd is now closed. "We use Genex," Randy says, "Because their success rate is a whole lot higher than mine! It's worth the cost—it's honestly still cheaper than if I managed it. Plus they get the cows bred back sooner."

While fresh cows are milked twice a day, the Robars soon settle them into once-a-day milking. "We could get more milk if we did



The farm store offers over 350 products from other small Vermont farms and food producers.

it twice a day," Randy admits, "but it's not worth it to us, both from labor and from quality of life perspectives. And because we're on grass only, once-a-day milking also keeps more condition on the cows through the winter."

The Robars are also happy with the quantity and quality of milk produced in this system. "We think in terms of gallons because that's what our customers are used to," Randy says, "And so we average about 2.5 gallons per cow, per day." Somatic cell count averages 200, and the fat ratio varies between 5% and 6%. "We don't use DHIA," Randy shares, "We just use a spreadsheet because that works better for our scale."

The herd does have A2A2 genetics, and Randy says that trait pairs well with being both organic and grass-fed. "The milk is overall

FEATURED FARM

The Robars keep the herd together and younger members benefit from experiential education—calves learn to eat hay from watching their mothers, and heifers learn that the milking process isn't scary!



much easier to digest,” Randy says, “Plus all three components have significant value. Only one other farm in Vermont does all three!”

The Robars do sell wholesale to a handful of local retailers—mostly their milk and ice cream, and occasionally eggs. But a significant part of running the farm includes managing the more complicated sales channels, including their farm store. “Of course we sell our products there,” Randy shares, “but we also offer over 350 other products from other small Vermont farms and small food producers. They get more sales and more marketing, our customers have greater choice, and we even make a few pennies on the sales—it’s a win-win!”

In addition to the farm store, they also manage a year-round CSA with products available every week of the year. Learn more about this “whole diet” CSA on the farm’s website: <https://www.kissthecowfarm.com/about-our-csa.html>

Herd Health and Nutrition

A key component of the Robars’ herd health management comes down to trusting their cows to manage their own health. “For example, we do have kelp and loose salt with selenium available—all free choice,” Randy says. “I’ve tried feeding mineral supplements

before, but they just turn to cement because the cows give them a lick or two but don’t want it.”

The Robars don’t have a detailed preventative health regime for their animals. “I’m not saying we shouldn’t,” Randy says, “we just don’t—we haven’t needed to have one. We don’t have any hoof issues because they’re out grazing. We have very rare incidences of mastitis—only one case I’d call ‘clinical’ in the last two years. Occasionally we’ll see milk fever, but we don’t have any other health issues.” For those rare health issues, the Robars are the first line of defense but rely on a local vet for anything that calcium, Dynamint or herbal supplements can’t fix.

Cow health starts with calf health, and the Robars trust to the proven natural order when it comes to starting them off strong. “Calves are given hay within the first week,” Randy says. “They may not eat it, but they watch mama across the aisle eat it, and they learn. After a couple of weeks they start to nibble. We feed milk for 12 weeks, then wean them off—and once they’re weaned, they go outside and join the main herd.”

Randy says that this weaning system is a great example of how they learned from others when they first started. “We had no

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background in farming—zero. We went to all sorts of workshops, we read everything we could find. And when we started to get the NODPA newsletter, we wrote down everything that everyone else was doing! We'd see that one farm did 10 weeks of milk before weaning and another did 14 weeks—so we averaged those examples and that's how we came up with our baseline.”

Their herd health philosophy remains simple. Randy shares, “If you take care of animals and give them what they need, which is simple—decent food, sunshine, exercise, clean water—then they'll generally take care of themselves. By default, they will be well. So we let them do their cow thing, and then we don't have to worry.”

Organic Certification and Sourcing “Extra” Milk

The Robars certify through Vermont Organic Farmers, the USDA-accredited organic certification program owned by NOFA-VT. “Our experience with the certification process has been pretty good,” Randy shares. “It's all online, and most of the entry fields are pre-filled with information from the previous year, so that helps. Some of it is certainly annoying—and I do think it's way too expensive. But the process itself has gone pretty well.”

Committing to a manageable scale of farming comes with plenty of challenges, and one unexpected one can be what happens when

you are too successful. Demand for Kiss the Cow ice cream has risen so drastically that the Robars couldn't keep up by processing just the milk they produce themselves. “To meet that demand ourselves we would have to double the herd,” Randy says, “and still people would want more.” But the Robars don't have the land to scale up like that, plus they would need to double every other aspect of their operations—something they simply don't want to do. So this year they started purchasing milk from local small, organic farms in order to supplement their own supply.

“This is very difficult to do,” Randy shares, “because whether you're organic or conventional, if you're attached to a processor then somewhere in your contracts it will say that you cannot sub-sell your milk. And if you get caught selling to someone else, you get kicked off the milk truck and there are no other trucks!” Fortunately the Robars were able to find other local farms with complimentary needs. For example, one local farm had previously shipped milk to Organic Valley but had downsized and so needed someone willing to purchase much smaller quantities. “They're the perfect size for us to partner with,” Randy says, “so we just go fetch their milk with canisters.”

Small Herd, Tons of Products and Services

While the scale of their dairy herd may be small, their product line is not. Kiss the Cow regularly produces and distributes raw

milk, pasteurized milk, ice cream, and organic eggs—with a broad range of other seasonal, trial, and community-sourced products. Their model continues to evolve as they identify opportunities and weigh them against their capacity and customer demand. Randy shares, “We have managed a small vegetable garden to supply farm store and CSA, but we realized last year it was too small to be successful, and so this year we switched to flowers instead. We'll do U-pick flowers, bouquets for sale in the store and through the CSA. We also plan to wholesale a lot—we have accounts lined up with wedding

Getting ready to fill half gallon jugs with pasteurized milk. Visiting WWOOFers support the Robars' dairy, creamery, and farm work.



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planners and similar buyers.” And these plans continue to evolve—they are in the process of expanding the farm store to offer more products, including putting in a seasonal scoop shop for their ice cream.

Their offerings also extend beyond products and into experiences. “Folks coming to the farm store are looking for more than food, they’re looking for connection with the farm and with the animals. We’re educators by backgrounds, and we love engaging. If an adult brings their child to the farm store and they’re interested in the farm, of course we offer to see the cows—to meet them. Let me tell you, all visitors get excited to meet a baby cow! It’s an experience you can share with them, and it’s such a heartfelt experience. People will share some version of, ‘I remember when I was a kid, I would go to my grandparents’ farm,’ and now they can give that experience to their kids.”

“We also plan to have a weekly series in summer for kids,” Randy says, “focused on educational events about things like bees and pollinators, and of course at the end we all come and get an ice cream. We hope to offer a similar space and time for dementia patients, so that they can come and wander the garden, sit on benches, take in all the colors and the flowers. To just be peaceful.”

Imagination and ambition can’t get far without education, and Randy credits a diverse range of resources for their growth and success. “NOFA Vermont has been huge,” he says, “That has been a huge help in getting us going. We immediately took to organic, and they were helpful through their educational programs, helping us to visit other farms, attending workshops, attending winter conferences, and the networking was huge.”

That networking and continued opportunities to visit other farmers are the types of support that he’d like to see more of to help more new and aspiring farmers. “We reference a lot of books and online stuff,” he shares, “but there’s just no substitute for seeing someone else do this – especially at your level or a bit above. Those are the ‘ah ha’ moments, where you can see something in action and realize, ‘that’s so simple, that’s brilliant, that could fix our problem.’”

And scale remains an important part of finding those networking, shadowing, and mentoring opportunities. “When

we started out, so much of the available information was by homesteaders,” he shares, “and we started at that scale—but homesteading is all about the one cow and getting every single drop out.” Providing for just one family’s needs was the wrong scale for the Robars as much as the big dairy operations were wrong for them. What is most needed, he shares, is “some sort of loose mentorship, somebody like you, who is at the scale of where you want to go. Someone who you can call with questions and share advice.”

Creative Solutions for On-Farm Labor

Given the quantity and diversity of products and services coming from this small farm, it may surprise some that the Robars have no employees. “We do have help, obviously,” Randy says, “it’s impossible for two people to do all this. So we use interns and WWOOFers!” Referring to the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms, an organization that matches organic farm hosts with individuals who want to learn about organic farming



A visiting WWOOFer welcomes newborn calf Orion alongside the proud mother, Aurora.

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through hands-on experience. “It works for us,” Randy says, “We’re both educators by background and it’s great to have these young people come in who are interested in farming, food, and sustainability. We get to teach them our version of that. It’s meaningful to them, and that’s how we get our teaching fix.”

The program is set up so that no money is exchanged between hosts and participants; instead host farms offer accommodation and meals in exchange for the voluntary labor of visiting learners. “WWOOF works for us,” Randy says, “But it’s not going to work for everyone. Our visiting WWOOFers live with us, upstairs in our house where they have their own rooms. Everyone forages on their own for breakfast, lunch is typically leftovers, and then for supper we all take turns making a big meal and we all sit in the kitchen family-style and share it.”

WWOOFing is not just temporary farm labor, nor is it expected that participants are necessarily training to become full-time farmers. Randy shares that they build real and meaningful long-term relationships with most of the participants, many of whom will drop by to visit even years after their original stay. “We do have a couple stories where these folks have gone into some kind of farming,” Randy shares, “like one woman who stayed with us is now making butter and yogurt, that was her dream—and another one lives in suburbia but raises chickens. But generally most don’t go into full-time farming, and that’s okay too. They get an appreciation that most people don’t have—about how hard this is, and where food comes from. And there’s real value in that.”

Guiding the Next Generation of New Farmers

“We’re not doing this for the money,” Randy says, “that’s clear to anyone doing this scale of farming. But we’re doing it to feed our community, and they appreciate it, we hear that appreciation all the time. ‘We’re so glad you’re here,’ folks tell us, ‘Your milk is the best, that’s all my kid will drink,’ and that keeps us going.” The Robars also find reward in stewarding the land and using it to engage the next generation of farmers. “We don’t have kids of our own, we have these WWOOFer farm kids and local kids that visit—and that’s pretty cool. Our goal is, when we’re done and someone else takes over, for this land to be in better shape than how we found it.”

While it’s hard to boil all of their experiences and learnings down to one piece of advice for beginning farmers, Randy wants to be sure that anyone getting into farming for the first time goes into it aware of the challenges and with a clear idea of what their goals are. “Some days I think somebody should have talked us out of this!” he says. “I enjoy what we’re doing, but there are many days where this is the dumbest thing you

could do—it’s an uphill battle everywhere, and there’s no profit in farming.” Certainly no financial profit, he clarifies, and not like other career paths open to most people. The physical, mental and emotional investment can sometimes be overwhelming. “We’re doing the full circle thing,” he says, “We are the processor, there’s no truck that can take this milk away so that I can focus on the cows and the land. Because we process it, we have to process it! My wife is in charge of the creamery and that’s way more than a fulltime job for us, even with only 12 milking cows. Then there’s the marketing, sales, delivery, the CSA and delivery accounts... We deal with people—at the store, in the scoop shop, at a service counter—and then there’s all the farming!”

He doesn’t mean to scare anyone away from farming or any of its components, just to be sure that new or growing farmers approach these decisions with eyes wide open. “We’ve read a ton of articles that say, ‘process your own milk and you can keep that money! You don’t have to give it to a middleman!’ And that sounds great, but the reality is that it’s not that great because it is so much work. And they’re entirely different skills.” These decisions require an objective assessment of scale – both at your current capacity and at your aspirational capacity.

“So much of the available information just doesn’t apply at our level,” Randy shares. “It’s for those bigger farms where every penny is counted and they’re trying to be as efficient as possible. And that’s important for them, but I’m not interested in this farm feeling like factory work.” He remembers a speaker at a workshop from years past with a line that really stuck with him: “I’m not milking or farming for maximum milk; I’m farming for optimal milk,” Randy recalls. “And that optimal approach means not trying to squeeze every drop from the cow. Instead it’s asking, ‘what’s the best I can do for this cow that also meets my needs?’ I’m not interested in getting rid of any cow just because I could get another that can make more milk. I just want to make good milk, with cows that have a good quality of life, while I can also have a somewhat good quality of life.

This is what Kiss the Cow hopes for beginner and small farmers: May you find and live your optimal scale of farming. Value community, natural health and beauty... and take the time to kiss your cows. ◆

Learn more about the Robars and their farm on the Kiss the Cow website: <https://www.kissthecowfarm.com/about-the-farm.html> And enjoy some of the most wholesome content on social media on their Instagram account: <https://www.instagram.com/kissthecowfarmandcreamery/>

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

ORGANIC DAIRY NEWS: MAY, 2026

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Class 1 payments for organic fluid milk

In May, 2025 Aurora Organic Dairy, Horizon Organic Dairy, and Cooperative Regions of Organic Producer Pools (CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley), collectively called the Coalition for Organic Dairy Exemption (CODE), separately petitioned the USDA with a 15A petition seeking to exempt organic milk from the Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO) regulations. Over the last year, CODE has worked with USDA to resolve the situation that organic dairy companies pay into the FMMO producer settlement fund but receive no benefit.

In April 2026, the USDA Judicial Officer dismissed the three handlers' claims regarding the constitutionality of organic and the FMMO but has reached no decision on the administrative claims that remain pending. On April 28th 2026, the three companies each filed a 15(B) Petition in the District Court of the states where they had their headquarters, Wisconsin and Colorado, to address the constitutional claims. These addressed the exemption of organic dairy from the FMMO requirement to pay into the Pool for fluid milk sales. At the same time, seven farmer owners of CROPP filed a 'Takings Claim' in the US Court of Federal Claims in Washington, DC. This filing is seeking compensation from the Treasury Department for the last five years of payments, approximately \$50 million, that CROPP has made into the Pool. "Federal law already recognizes organic as different. USDA's own organic standards treat our milk as a distinct product with distinct requirements," said the CODE members. "We are not asking to tear down the FMMOs. We are asking that FMMOs reflect a distinction that the law already makes – and that consumers already understand."

Proposals for changes to the FMMO were submitted in 2015 to the USDA but USDA refused to advance them. Organic-specific proposals were submitted in written and verbal testimony at the 2023 national FMMO hearing that USDA refused to consider. The objections raised in a post-FMMO hearing briefing in 2024 were not considered and the organic specific claims went unaddressed in the final rule published by the USDA FMMO. As you can tell from the above timeline, this process will not proceed quickly, and any decisions made will probably be challenged. For your conventional neighbors, taking organic out of the FMMO will have very little effect. In 2025, conventional fluid milk sales were estimated at 39,676 million pounds and organic fluid milk sales at 2,983 million pounds, just 7.52% of conventional sales. Don't expect any changes quickly or any bonus checks soon, except if you are a lawyer!

Meloxicam

On March 23, 2026, the USDA published a Proposed Rule to add the synthetic drug Meloxicam to the National List. Meloxicam is a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug used primarily to treat pain and inflammation. Organic livestock processors and brands petitioned for use of meloxicam to add more tools to improve pain management. This proposal follows a recommendation from the National Organic

Standards Board (NOSB). The drug will only be allowed for use under or on the lawful written order of a licensed veterinarian. The withdrawal period must be at least two times that required by the FDA, under the conditions established by FDA for extralabel use, established under the Animal Medicinal Drug Use Clarification Act of 1994 (AMDUCA). Drugs without FDA approval for livestock are widely used under AMDUCA and carefully monitored by experienced veterinarians and skilled producers. To comment on the Proposed Rule (AMS-NOP-22-0029 and/or RIN 0581-AE25) by May 22, 2026 go to either: www.regulations.gov or by mail to Jared Clark, Assistant Director, Standards Division, National Organic Program, USDA-AMS-NOP, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Room 2642-South, Stop 0268, Washington, DC 20250-0268.

NODPA strongly urges as many organic livestock producers as possible to send comments that support the NOSB recommendation and that the USDA should proceed to a Final Rule as soon as possible with immediate implementation. We know that the experienced and dedicated veterinarians used by organic livestock producers are familiar with the requirement of AMDUCA and will work closely with organic farmers to ensure a high level of Animal Welfare and product safety

USDA

There have been widespread staffing losses across USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In 2025, more than 1,300 counties lost staff, and 144 counties lost all NRCS personnel. As USDA reorganization continues, the loss of staff who serve as the primary point of contact for farmers, will affect the implementation of all programs.

We have no news on whether and how much of the National Organic Program (NOP) will stay in DC, where their key staff have built their lives, or be moved to some other hub. The president's budget gave no increase to NOP, despite it being level funded for the last 4 years, so we can hope that Congress will be more realistic about what it costs to manage an international program with annual domestic dollar sales of \$76.6 billion in 2025 and an annual dollar growth rate of 6.8%. With imports of organic products exceeding domestic production, the administration must tackle declining organic output and acreage in the US. The National Organic Program needs sufficient resources to ensure consistent regulation enforcement. Without stable markets, organic farmland in the US will not grow.

We are still waiting for the appointment of 5 members of the NOSB who should have started in January 2026. The NOSB will hold its meeting on May 12-14 in Omaha, NE, with only 2/3 (10) of their members, who will have to read and absorb written and verbal comments within just one week of their meeting due to the late posting of the agenda and documents by the USDA. This devalues the written and verbal comments that are so necessary in making decisions at the NOSB level. Much appreciation to these 10 volunteers.

Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP) may be paid out in July 2026 and maybe for both 2025 and 2026, despite money for the program being appropriated in 2025. You'll notice the repetition of maybe! ♦

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices May 2026

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Total sales of organic packaged fluid milk for January 2026 show a decline of 5.4% over 2025 sales, as conventional fluid milk sales shows a decline of 2.3% over January 2025. The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Market Information Branch published estimated national organic fluid milk product sales for January and February 2026, compiled with data from the Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO). Total US sales of packaged organic fluid milk products were estimated at 261 million pounds in January 2026, with organic Whole Milk sales at 146 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduced Milk at 114 million pounds. In February 2026, total sales of organic packaged milk were 242 million pounds, with sales of organic packaged Whole Milk at 140 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduced Milk at 101 million pounds.

In January 2026, the data shows a decrease in sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged fluid products of 2.4% over January 2025, and the February 2026 data shows an increase in sales of 9.2% over February 2025. There was a 9.0% decrease in Organic Fat Reduced Milk in January 2026 over January 2025, and a 9.6 % decrease in February 2026 over February 2025.

The average national retail price for organic milk, as recorded by the FMMO in February 2026, decreased to \$5.28 per half gallon

for Whole Milk and Organic Reduced Fat 2% milk compared to \$5.43 in January 2026 but an increase of \$0.44 over February 2025. The average national retail price for March 2026 was \$5.24 per half gallon compared to \$4.97 in March 2025, an increase of \$0.27 year-over-year. The year-to-date, January to March 2026, average retail price for organic half gallon is \$5.43. There was the usual range in prices for different locations, with a low of \$4.43 in Kansas and a high of \$6.68 in Pittsburgh, PA. In Syracuse, NY it was \$4.52; \$5.01 in Boston, MA; \$5.48 in Hartford, CT. Of the 30 cities reporting data, 13 had retail prices under \$5 and five had retail prices over \$6, with 12 in the \$5 per half gallon range.

Organic milk and cream are still very short in the Northeast and nationally, with spot prices reported in the \$60/cwt range for fluid milk. Market manipulation in the Midwest is starting to increase with reports of 7-8 loads per day coming from Texas. Buyers are starting to pay premiums to assist transition in the Northeast and Midwest, which is becoming attractive for herds under 250 cows that have the land to transition to pasture. Buyers are increasingly dropping producers further away from plants in the Midwest, heightened by the recent increases in diesel. Fuel surcharges are everywhere, or additional ones for those companies that never stopped charging since the previous shortage in 2022. The demand for conventional milk is testing the limits of processing facilities in

the West, while Sartori is proactively seeking additional sources of organic milk to meet growing needs.

Pay Price is ranging from an annualized average of \$35/cwt to \$45/cwt for grain and pasture fed organic dairies, with Grass Fed organic certified dairies Pay Price ranging from \$38/cwt up to \$50+/cwt. Grass Fed A2A2 regenerative organic certification herds are in the \$50 to \$60 range.

Federal Milk Marketing Order 1 (Order) reported that, in February 2026, fluid Organic Milk packaged and utilized within the Order totaled 37.57 million pounds; higher than the February 2025 total of 29.46 million pounds. In February 2026, sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged in the Order were 21.25 million pounds, 4.89 million pounds higher than February 2025. In February 2026, sales of Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged and utilized in the Order were 16.32 million pounds, 3.22 million pounds higher than

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Estimated Fluid Milk Products Sales Reports

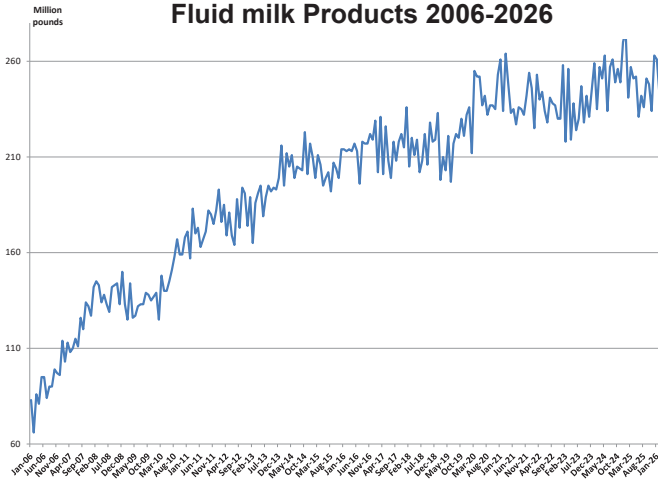
Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	January 2026	2026 Year to date	January 2025	Year to date -2025
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	146	146	-2.4%	-2.4%
Flavored Whole milk	1	1	16.1%	16.1%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	85	85	-3.1%	-3.1%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	15	15	-24.9%	-24.9%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	9	9	-15.7%	-15.7%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	5	5	-28.2%	-28.2%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	0	-65.4%	-65.4%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	114	114	-9.0%	-9.0%
Total Organic Milk Products	261	261	-5.4%	-5.4%

Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	February 2026	2026 Year to date	February 2025	Year to date -2025
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	140	286	-9.2%	3.0%
Flavored Whole milk	1	2	72.2%	38.1%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	75	160	-6.5%	-4.7%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	14	29	-15.2%	-20.4%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	10	19	-7.1%	-11.6%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	3	7	-45.4%	-35.8%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	0	-100.0%	-82.6%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	101	215	-9.6%	-9.3%
Total Organic Milk Products	242	503	-0.4%	-2.7%

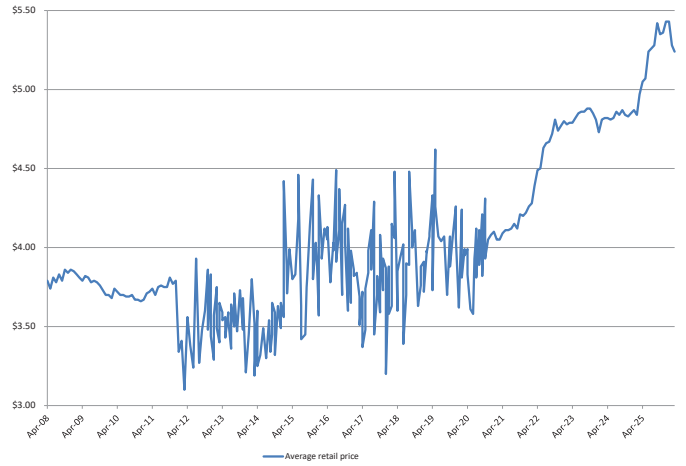
Data may not add due to rounding to the nearest million pounds

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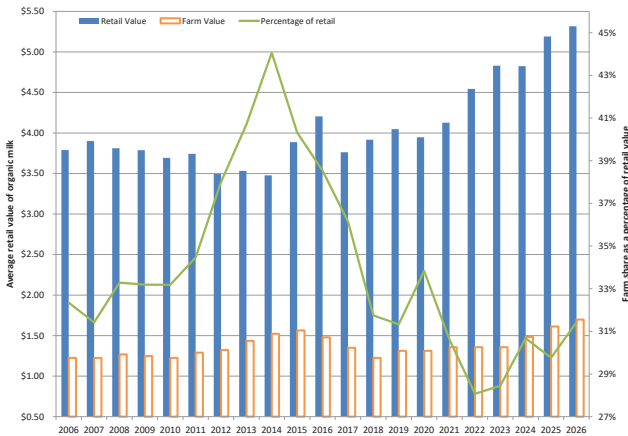
Estimated Total U.S. Sales of Organic Fluid milk Products 2006-2026



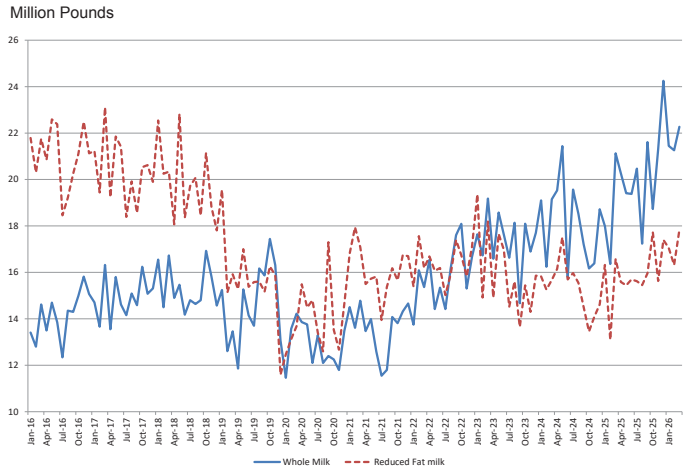
Average Organic Retail price for 1/2 gallons as reported by USDA AMS 2008-2026



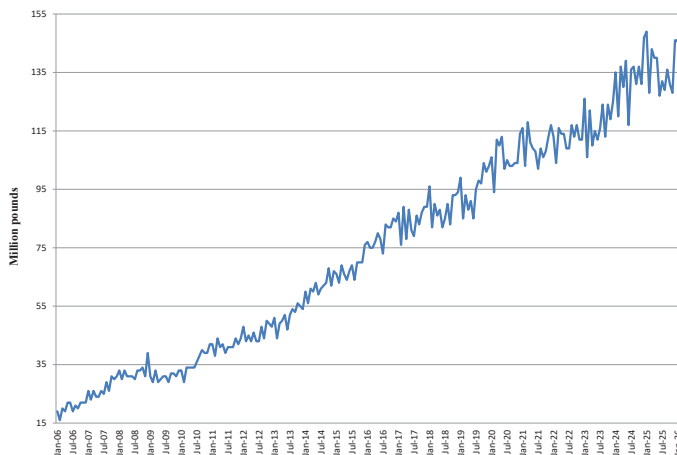
Average retail price, average farm share and percentage for half gallon of organic milk



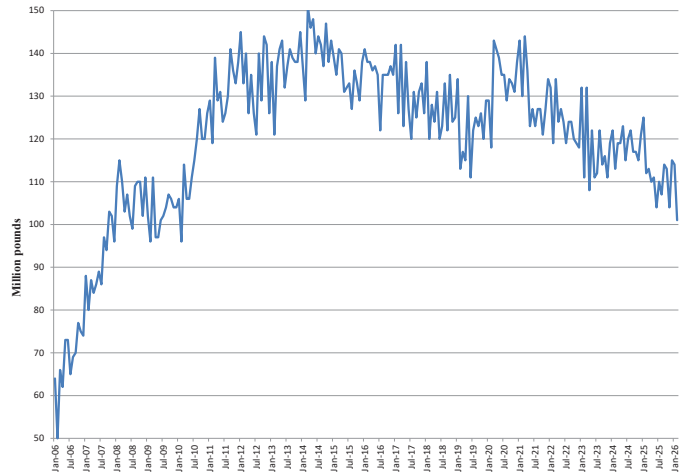
Utilization of Organic Fluid milk in FMMO 1 2016-2026 (not including fluid packaged milk processed out of order)



Organic Whole Milk Retail Sales 2006-2026



Organic Reduced-Fat retail sales 2006-2026



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices

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February 2025. Total Class 1 milk (both conventional and organic) packaged outside the Order, but sold within the Order, increased by 15.14 million pounds in February 2026 over February 2025 to 143.75 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 March 2026, sales of fluid Organic Milk packaged and utilized within the Order totaled 40.10 million pounds, higher than the previous year of 37.70 million pounds, an increase of 2.40 million pounds or 6.37%. In March 2026, sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged in the Order were 22.67 million pounds, 1.54 million pounds higher than March 2025. In March 2026, sales of Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged and utilized in the Order were 17.83 million pounds, 1.13 million pounds higher than in March 2025. Packaged organic and conventional milk coming into the Order in March 2026 increased by 21.82 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 February 2026, of the 242 million pounds packaged and sold as Class 1 organic milk in the US, 49.91 million pounds were from Order 32 (Central), of which 44.97 million pounds were utilized in other Orders. FMMO order 1 (Northeast) packaged 37.27 million pounds of organic milk in February 2026. FMMO 51 (California), packaged 36.69 million pounds, of which 489,520 pounds were sold in other Orders (just over 1% of the total packaged product). Order 33 (Midwest) packages less than Order 1, 32 and 51, with 21.92 million pounds in February 2026. 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 242 million pounds of organic packaged milk recorded nationally by FMMO

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	37.57	29.46	31.50	31.65	33.65	31.56	26.69
March	40.10	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

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	49.91	44.97	47.93	42.49	51.88	46.12	49.11	43.63
March	48.25	43.13	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

and aggregated by the AMS Dairy Program Market Information Branch, approximately 96.21 million pounds are not accounted for in the individual FMMO's. We have no independent record of how much organic milk is produced that is used in products other than Class 1.

The USDA AMS Market News Vermont Report has published data since November 2023. The weighted average Pay Price was \$38.39/cwt for 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, for 2025, was 46.65 lbs./cow. The weighted average Pay Price for January 2026 was \$41.48/cwt. with a daily production of 56.48lbs. The milk buyers in Vermont are CROPP Cooperative, US Lactalis direct

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Auction News

Premier Livestock and Auctions, N13438 State Hwy 73, Withee, WI 54498 published the following information from two auction:

3/18/2026: Most Holstein Bull Calves – 1000-1575; Holstein Heifer Calves (Single Birth) 600-1000; Lighter and Off Quality Calves – 400 and Down. 300 head of Organic Dairy Cattle were sold including 4 herds, with the top herds averaging \$5000-6350/head! Top Quality Holstein Dairy Cows –\$4750-6800; Good Quality Holstein Dairy Cows – \$3500-4725; Lower Quality Holstein Dairy Cows – \$3475 and down. Top Quality Holstein Springing Heifers – \$5000-6800; Common Springing Heifers – \$4975 and down; Holstein Short Bred Heifers – \$3500-5250; Holstein Open Heifers – 300#-500# – \$1500-2600; Holstein Open Heifers – 500#-700# – \$1800-2600; Holstein Open Heifers – 700#-850# – \$2000-2900.

On 4-22-2026, there were 365 head of organic dairy cattle sold in a strong market. Top Quality Holstein Dairy Cows – \$5000-7500; Good Quality Holstein Dairy Cows – \$2500-4975; Lower Quality Holstein Dairy Cows – \$2475 and down; Top Quality Holstein Springing Heifers – \$4500-7500; Common Springing Heifers – \$4975 and down.

At Hoskins Livestock Auction, New Berlin, NY in March and April 2026, the average price range for organic cattle was: Certified Organic Market Cows- High Yielding Cows: \$134-182 per cwt. - Low Yielding Cows: \$144 and down per cwt. Milking age organic cows varied from a high of \$3,800 each to a low of \$2,125 with organic bred heifers at \$2,675 and open heifers at \$1,875.

APHIS Updates Guidance on movement of cattle.

USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has issued updated guidance related to the April 2024 Federal Order that required testing of lactating dairy cattle before they move across State lines. Effective immediately, April 2026, lactating dairy cattle moving interstate from States with Unaffected State Status under the National Milk Testing Strategy are no longer required to be tested for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 prior to movement. To maintain Unaffected State Status requires ongoing testing and surveillance activities to confirm the absence of HPAI in the State’s dairy herds. Of the 46 states enrolled in the National Milk Testing Strategy (NMTS), 42 are classified as unaffected.

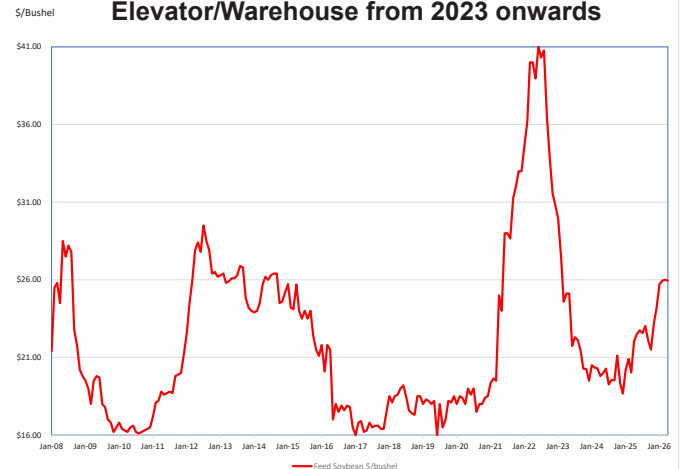
Organic Feed

Data from USDA for the Northeast has organic feed corn delivered to the elevator averaging \$13.31 per bushel in March and \$13.75 in April 2026. Organic feed soybean delivered to the elevator averaged \$25/bu. in March and \$25.94/bu. in April 2026. Organic feed wheat averaged \$11.00/bushel in March and April 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. ♦

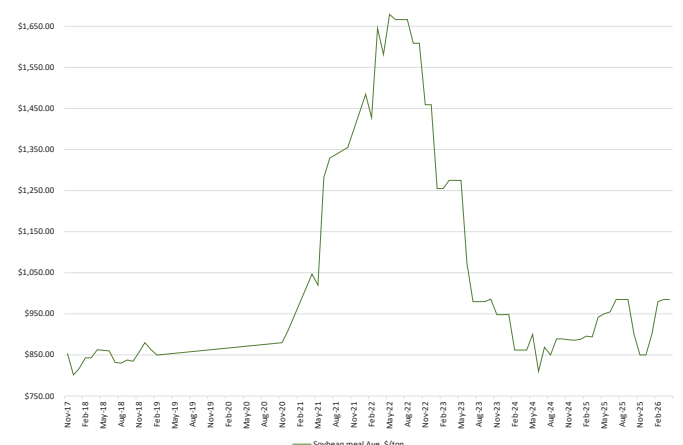
Organic Corn Price \$/bushel 2008-2026 supplied by USDA AMS FOB the Farm and FOB Elevator/Warehouse from 2023 onwards



Organic Feed Soybean \$/bushel 2008-2026 - USDA Market News Data - FOB Farm and FOB Elevator/Warehouse from 2023 onwards



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



Calendar

May 27 @ 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Pocket-Sized Pasture Management
192 Bog Road, Albion, ME 04910

If you're grazing livestock on pocket-sized pastures, join us to learn strategies for managing pasture health on homesteads with limited acreage.

This workshop will take place at a small homestead, where pastures are managed on a tight rotational grazing plan. MOFGA's Livestock & Dairy Specialist, Jacki Martinez Perkins, will discuss the strategies for managing small pastures when it comes to particular livestock, whether you have a horse, poultry, or a flock of sheep. Participants will have a tour of the small pastures at this homestead, and discuss general organic small-scale pasture management strategies for homesteaders. There will be plenty of time for questions. REGISTER HERE: https://www.tickettailor.com/events/testorg8/2102541?_gl=1*65xx5x*_ga*NzE1MTkzMzluMTc3NzgxNjg4OQ.*_ga_RCDZ2CQWSD*czE3Nzc4MTY4ODgkbzEkZzEkdDE3Nzc4MTY5OTakajYwJGwwJGgw&trackingConsent=1

Wednesday, May 27, 2026
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Next-Level Crop & Nutrient Management with Track Tracker Pro's Tracking & Automation

Speakers: DJ Jirinec, Founder and Managing Member of JP Soft LLC, Jacob Jirinec, Software Engineer at Track Tracker Pro, Matt Langford, Director of Business Development at Track Tracker Pro

Track Tracker is a real-time geolocation and operational tracking platform purpose-built for dairy, manure, and ag operations where timing, visibility, and accountability matter. It delivers live GPS tracking, geofencing, and event-based reporting to give managers a clear, accurate picture of what's happening across farms, fields, routes, and bunks—without relying on guesswork or manual logs. This presentation will highlight practical use cases in dairy and manure management, including bunk management, chopper and truck tracking, load verification, and time-on-task visibility. Guest speakers will discuss how Track Tracker improves feed delivery accuracy, reduces missed or duplicated work, and provides reliable data on equipment movement, task duration, and key operational events.

To learn more and register, click here. <https://uvm-edu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZArc--oqT0iGtNlOH0yM08JQRcAYiwco2j3#/registration>

June 11 @ 5:00 pm - 7:00 pm
Livestock Handling and Animal Health
Misty Brook Farm, 156 Bog Road, Albion ME, 04910

Knowing proper handling and first-aid techniques can save lots of money and grief when raising livestock on your farm. Jacki Martinez Perkins, a long-time homesteader and MOFGA's Dairy

and Livestock Specialist, will demonstrate livestock handling with an interactive Q&A at Misty Brook Farm. In addition to covering livestock handling and health we will discuss programs to support livestock farmers and implement more organic practices. Please wear footwear that can be bleached for biosecurity purposes.

Free. Registration Required. https://www.tickettailor.com/events/testorg8/2174129?trackingConsent=1&_gl=1*4rbg9s*_ga*NzE1MTkzMzluMTc3NzgxNjg4OQ.*_ga_RCDZ2CQWSD*czE3Nzc4MTY4ODgkbzEkZzEkdDE3Nzc4MTY5OTakajYwJGwwJGgw

Wednesday, June 24, 2026

Webinar, 11:30 a.m. - 12:30 pm

Precision Agriculture Technology in Dairy Production

Precision agriculture technologies and field-based practices support more sustainable dairy and cropping systems. Presenters will explore how emerging tools are reshaping on-farm decision-making by improving cropping efficiency while also protecting water quality. Topics will include variable-rate fertility strategies, innovative weed management approaches (such as robotic weeders and aerial herbicide applications), and advances in planter technology. Speakers: Jeffrey Sanders, UVM Extension Agronomy Specialist, Daniel Bliss, UVM Extension Precision Agriculture Specialist

Register here: <https://uvm-edu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZArc--oqT0iGtNlOH0yM08JQRcAYiwco2j3#/registration>

Free webinars, but you must register to receive the confirming email with the webinar link.

To request a disability-related accommodation to participate in this program, please contact Susan Brouillette at 802-656-7611 or Susan.Brouillette@uvm.edu by 3 weeks before the webinar you wish to attend.

Thursday, July 23, 2026

10:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. I Rain or shine
2026 Annual Crops and Soils Field Day
Borderview Farm
487 Line Road, Alburgh VT 05440

We are excited to announce the 19th Annual Crops and Soils Field Day! All are welcome! This event is a culmination of the year's research, outreach, and community engagement efforts. Attend workshops and sessions led by industry experts, network with community members, and learn about the latest local agricultural innovations. Questions? Please contact Susan Brouillette at 802-656-7610 or Susan.Brouillette@uvm.edu. If you require an accommodation related to a disability, please contact UVM Student Accessibility Services at access@uvm.edu or (802) 656-7753. Cost: Free for farmers. Other guests are \$30 per person. Lunch is included. Stay tuned for registration information.

Classified Ads

ANIMALS - FOR SALE/WANTED

FOR SALE: 50 organic cows for sale due to health issues. Mostly grass ration and no grain for one month now. Jerseys and cross breeds. Winter housed on a sawdust pack and milked in a parlor. Contact Doug Murphy, dsm1@sbcglobal.net, 216-401-1052.

Location: Sherman NY

FOR SALE: 1 Holstein Springer due April 16. \$3,500. Contact Craig Russell, crussell9904@gmail.com, 805-440-1709.

Location: Brookfield, VT

FOR SALE: Certified organic 100% grass fed dairy herd. Holsteins, all AI sired and AI bred to polled and sexed semen. 32 cows and bred heifers and 10 youngstock. All good solid cows, no issues, gentle herd currently on Organic Valley grass truck, testing 4.7 fat and 3.9 protein. Younger herd, owner is retiring. \$110,000 for entire herd. Contact: Eric Paris, ericatparis@gmail.com, 802-274-6402.

Location: Lyndonville, Vermont

COWS WANTED: We're looking for a few Jerseys or Jersey crosses. Heifers calving this spring or milkers. We're in Maine, so ideally they're in Northern New England. Contact Andy Smith, The Milkhouse, at tsuga.smith@gmail.com

Location: Monmouth, ME

FOR SALE: Norwegian Red Bull Semen, A2A2 and PP semen, conventional or sexed. Shipping and/or delivery available. Call for more information: Marinus Tilleman, Janemar Farm, 607-222-7024.

Location: Windsor, NY



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EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Help Wanted on a family-owned organic dairy farm. Canoe Creek Dairy, Northeast Iowa. A 100% grass fed farm in the beautiful driftless region of Northeast Iowa. We are looking for someone to join our team who is flexible, efficiency-minded, enjoys working with others, a good communicator, and also capable of working on their own with training. Experience operating and maintaining machinery is preferred but we will train the right candidate. The job description is flexible depending on ability, experience and interest. The position could range from part-time seasonal to full-time year round depending on the candidate.

Duties may include: Milking daily and clean up, feeding calves, pitching out pens, feeding hay, etc., moving animals daily. Machinery operation, including skid loaders, tractors, 4-wheelers and manual transmission vehicles, machinery maintenance and repair. Flexibility and adaptability are necessary attributes of a qualified candidate. Possible housing, some food and/or meals provided. Pay based on experience, attitude and ability.

For more information and to apply, contact Parker Beard, estherandparkerb@gmail.com, 563-419-3780.

Location: Decorah, Iowa

HELP WANTED: Assistant Dairy Herd Manager. Larson Farm and Creamery is looking for an assistant dairy herd manager to help with all aspects of dairy production, including cow care, milking, calf care, barn cleaning, feeding and some field work. The position opens in May. We are looking for a 'summer intern, but the position may become a full time permanent position to the right person. Some dairy experience required. Compensation to be determined, depending on experience.

Larson Farm and Creamery is a 30-cow certified organic, 100% grass-fed A2A2 Jersey herd with an on-farm creamery, marketing raw milk and pasteurized dairy products. Much attention is paid to rotational 'tall grazing', working to establish highly diverse perennial forage stands, using satellite-assisted biomass measurement tools. We seek a person passionate about dairy cows and innovative sustainable food production. Contact Richard Larson, dba Larson Farm and Creamery, Richardrobertlarson@gmail.com, 802-884-5288.

Location: Wells VT

Classified Ads

DGA Apprenticeship Program at Wolfe's Neck Center, Freeport, ME

The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) is a two-year, full-time, on-farm training program designed for early-career farmers interested in regenerative, pasture-based systems. Apprentices work alongside experienced staff, gaining hands-on experience in all aspects of seasonal livestock care, rotational grazing, and dairy operations. The program includes 3,712 hours of mentored, on-farm training and 300 hours of structured coursework, providing a comprehensive pathway toward becoming a skilled dairy grazer and earning Journeyman certification. Starting wage: \$15.50/hour, with incremental raises (\$0.50 every six months). Full Time. After the 12-week probationary period, the apprentice is eligible for benefits including health insurance, dental insurance, paid vacation and sick days, paid holidays, and our retirement savings plan. Link for more information and to apply: <https://wolfesneck.isolvedhire.com/jobs/1744477>

LOCATION: Freeport, ME

HELP WANTED: General Farm Help. This is a full time, year round position. Balfour Farm is a diversified organic dairy farm and creamery located in Pittsfield, Maine and established in 2010. For full job description, email balfourfarm@gmail.com. More general information about the farm is available on our Facebook, Instagram and Youtube pages. Experience with farm equipment: tractors, skid steers, trailers, chain saws, trimmers, mowers, hay implements; will train the right candidate. Balfour Farm is a registered Mentor Farm with the Dairy Grazing Alliance. For more information or to forward a letter of interest and resume, email balfourfarm@gmail.com.

Location: Pittsfield, ME

EQUIPMENT

EQUIPMENT FOR SALE: New Idea grain/hay Elevator and Gehl Forage Blower- needs a little work. Contact Jeff @ 607-566-8477 or Mitchellorganics@hotmail.com.

Location: Avoca, NY

EQUIPMENT FOR SALE: Aerway aerator, 12 feet wide, 12-point hitch, used on our pastures. \$1,800. Contact Rob Moore, 607-699-7968

Location: Nichols NY

EQUIPMENT FOR SALE: 20ft x 80ft Harvestore. Well maintained, Alliance unloader, high torque jack shaft kit, internal breather bags, American flag insignia, multiple length unloading arms, spare motor, used in for HMSC in 2025. For more information, contact Steve Gould, 585-813-8567, Stephen.Gould@hargofarms.com.

Location: Pavilion, NY

HAY/FEED

FOR SALE: Approximately 100 large round bales of old second cutting alfalfa and 20 large square bales of grass hay. Asking \$120/ton or about \$50 per bale if they weigh at least 800#. Contact Klaas Marten at kandmhfarmkandmhfarm@lakevieworganicgrain.com.

Location: Penn Yan, NY

FOR SALE: NOFA-NY Certified Organic Bed & Breakfast Hay, Bedding Hay. 4 x 4 1/2 Round Bales. Contact Jeff @ 607-566-8477 or Mitchellorganics@hotmail.com.

Location: Avoca, NY

FOR SALE: Sorghum Sudan seed--non-organic, hybrid, not GMO, Prussic Acid-friendly. For more information: Marinus Tilleman, Janemar Farm, 607-222-7024.

Location: Windsor, NY



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