

NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

July 2026

Volume 26, Issue 4

WWW.NODPA.COM



INSIDE THIS ISSUE: Organic Industry News

SAVE THE DATE for the 26th Annual NODPA Field Days	1
From the NODPA Co-President	2
An Update on Organic Dairy in the West	3
Pay & Feed Prices	28
Organic Milk Buyers List	32



Organic Production

FEATURED FARM: COUNTRY SUNRISE CREAMERY Myerstown, PA	1
Small Things Can Have Big Impacts	6
Ask the Vet	10
You Only Get One Shot: A Conversation About Farm Succession Planning	12
Integrating Grazing Management and Behavioral Responses to Optimize Pasture Utilization	33



Member Info

Classifieds	32
-------------	----



The Nelson Martin Family

FEATURED FARM: COUNTRY SUNRISE CREAMERY

MYERSTOWN, PA

Owned and operated by the Nelson Martin Family

Country Sunrise Creamery near Myerstown PA, Farm Operations Grow and Evolve as Their Farm Family Does

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

Nelson Martin is the only son of dairy farmers with nine children of his own – and that family dynamic has long been the driver of Country Sunrise Creamery's generational evolution and continued growth.

The farm began as a traditional dairy, over time has dabbled in conventional confinement

operations, and more recently has invested in silvopasture and regenerative agriculture practices to arrive at their current system: not-quite-100% grass-fed, not-quite-organic, but perfectly balanced for their family's goals and values. Today the farm sells raw milk from

- continued on page 20

26th Annual NODPA Field Days

Hope for the Future: Strategies for Success

Berks County Agricultural Center

1238 County Welfare Road, Leesport, PA 19533

September 24 & 25, 2026

When NODPA Field Days were last held in Pennsylvania, in Reedsville in 2023, we had a great crowd of farm families attend, so this year, when we return to Berks

County, just northeast of Lancaster County, we look forward to an excellent meeting and a great turnout.

- continued on page 14

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Message from NODPA Co-President

I've been spending a significant portion of my waking hours the past month or two in the cab of one tractor or another. A few of my main observations this year are how much of our crop production comes off our best land. This year 41% of our farm's first cutting tonnage came off only 18% of our harvested acres. A lot of that can be attributed to better drainage. The better drained fields get more added fertility as they are more accessible to spreading chicken litter on in March and early April.

This past fall we added some targeted drainage tile in small grids to the wettest areas (all the spots we planted around in 2025) in about 20% of one 23 acre field I had to plant around the wet spots even in late June. This year, that same field was the first field seeded down and I didn't have to go around a single wet hole. The one downside of the tiles? Lots and lots of rock picking... I just found that we

have a local source to rent a large rock picker with an integrated rock rake. I hope to rent it for a few weeks this year or next and see if that can be the solution to the rocky situation left by tiling in our area. I'm also planning to have some tile installed using a tile plow instead of an excavator and am curious if that is less work to clean up afterwards. The hope with the land improvements is that I can have more acres that can be put into a crop rotation of corn and perennial mixes instead of staying seeded down for long periods of time and the seedings lose the legumes. I've never had much luck with frost seeding to help maintain clover in hayfields. Also, if you are in NY, drainage tile install costs count as a capital improvement and count for the 20% refundable investment tax credit.

Kirk Arnold, NODPA Co-President, Truxton, NY

Phone: 607-842-6631, Email: kickaha21@gmail.com

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

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

Deadline for advertising in the September 2026 issue is August 15, 2026.

Full Page Ad (7.5" W x 9.75" H) \$660
1/2 Page Ad (7.5" W x 4.75" H) \$340
1/4 Page Ad (3.625" W x 4.75" H) \$190
1/8 Page Ad/Business Card: \$100
 (3.625" W x 2.25" H)

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

Classified Ads:

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

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

Please send a check with your ad (made payable to NODPA). 30 Keets Rd., Deerfield, MA 01342 or pay online by credit card at www.nodpa.com

NODPA BOARD MEMBERS AND STATE REPS**PENNSYLVANIA**

Roman Stoltzfoos
 NODPA Co-President
 Spring Wood Organic Farm
 1143 Gap Rd
 Kinzers, PA, 17535
romanstoltzfoos@gmail.com
 Phone: 610-593-2415

NEW YORK

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

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

Stephen Gould
 Board Secretary
 Har-Go Farms
 10965 South St. Rd., Pavilion, NY
 14525
sjghargo56@gmail.com
 Cell: 585-813-8567

Ryan Murray, Board Member
 6000 Cheningo Solon Pond Road
 Truxton, NY 13158
rcmdairy@gmail.com

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

Madelene Poole, State Rep
 MK Dairy LLC
 5932 Waits Road,
 Owego, NY 13827
 Email: mkdairyllc@gmail.com
 Phone: 607-744-9939

Eric Sheffer
 Vice President
 Sheffer's Grassland Dairy
 74 Sheffer Road,
 Hoosick Falls, NY 12090
 518-859-6034
sheffersgrasslanddairy@gmail.com

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

MAINE

Henry Hardy, Board Member
 360 Weeks Mills Road,
 Farmington, Maine 04938
 Phone: 207 491 6789
 Email: Hardyayrshires67@gmail.com

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

AT LARGE NODPA BOARD MEMBERS

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

Lia Sieler
 Western Organic Dairy Producers
 Alliance (WODPA)
 2485 Notre Dame Blvd.,
 Suite 370-162
 Chico, CA 95928
 209-712-9470
Lia.wodpa@outlook.com
www.wodpa.com

Henry Perkins, Past President,
 Box 156 Bog Rd.
 Albion, ME 04910
 Phone: 207-437-9279
bullridge@uninet.net

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

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

NODPA STAFF

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

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

Newsletter Layout, Angie Holcomb
 Hayward, WI 54843

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

An Update on Organic Dairy in the West

By: Lia Sieler, Executive Director,
Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA)

The Western organic dairy sector enters the second half of 2026 from a position of market strength, supported by favorable milk prices and continued consumer demand. However, producers continue to navigate significant operational challenges, including persistent drought conditions, tightening water supplies, escalating feed costs, and input shortages. The emergence of New World Screwworm in the Southwest has added another layer of uncertainty, underscoring the importance of proactive monitoring and coordinated industry response efforts. As these issues continue to evolve, WODPA remains actively engaged with industry partners, regulators, and policymakers to ensure the interests of organic dairy producers are represented. Continued advocacy, collaboration, and access to timely information will be critical to maintaining the resilience and long-term viability of organic dairy operations throughout the Western United States.

Organic dairy producers in the Western United States are currently benefiting from strong milk prices and robust demand. Increased demand nationwide has created a highly



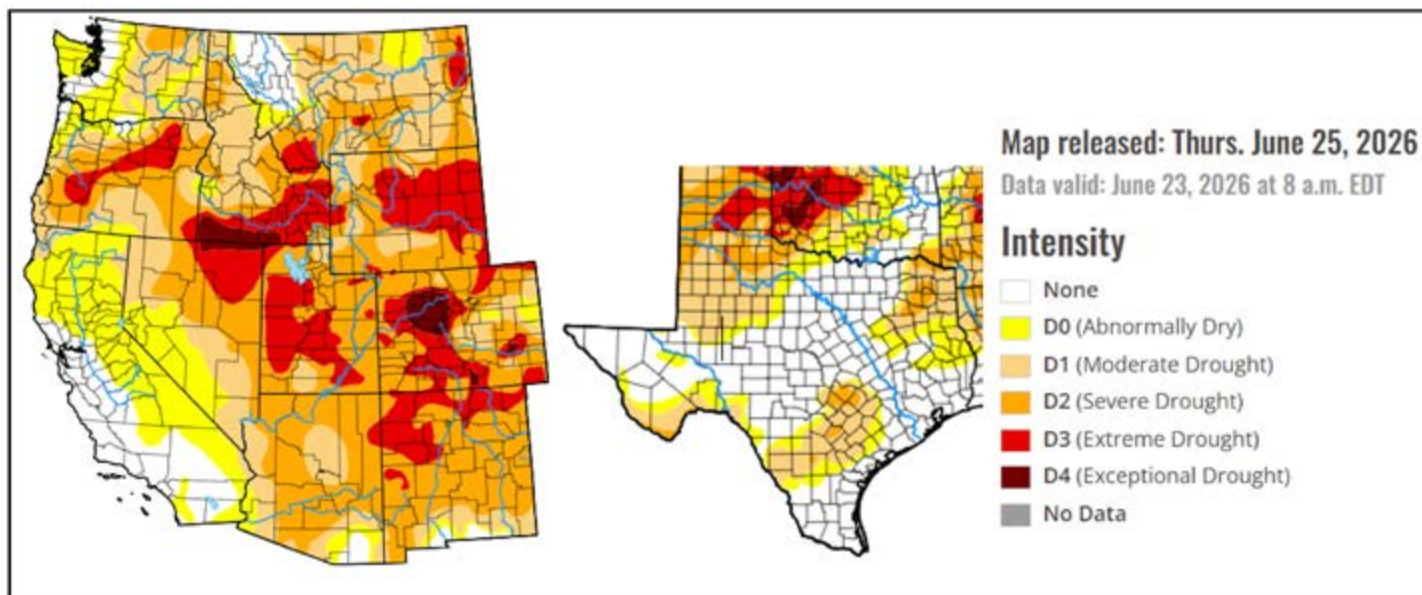
Liz Sieler, Executive Director, WODPA

competitive market, leading many producers to switch processors or brokers. While some milk has recently become available on the spot market, many industry observers attribute this to the disruption and uncertainty caused by producer movement between processors and brokers rather than a true surplus of milk.

At the farm level, drought conditions continue to be a significant challenge across much of the West. Several states are experiencing extreme to exceptional drought, resulting in increased irrigation needs where water is available and requests for National Organic Program (NOP) variances where irrigation is not

an option. One of the greatest concerns is the lack of snowpack following an unusually mild, almost spring-like winter, which has reduced water supplies heading into the growing season. The USDA Drought Monitor (pictured below) illustrates current drought conditions compared to historical norms.

Water restrictions are already being imposed on farmers in many areas, driving up production costs and limiting access to critical inputs. Feed shortages have become increasingly common, with many dairy producers reporting difficulty



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

securing corn and soybeans—even under existing supply contracts. High-quality tested hay has been largely unavailable for some time, and the remaining supply is often of lower quality and sold at significantly higher prices.

Perhaps the most pressing issue facing Western dairy producers today is the spread of New World Screwworm, particularly in Texas and New Mexico. According to the most

recent update from USDA APHIS on June 23, there have been 20 confirmed cases in the United States. WODPA has been working closely with industry stakeholders to monitor developments and advocate for organic dairy farmers during this challenging situation. In early June, WODPA published a comprehensive update outlining the status of New World Screwworm and ongoing response efforts. We encourage members to review the report, *New World*

Screwworm Update – June 2026, for additional information.

WODPA will continue working with industry partners to advocate for and support organic dairy producers as they navigate these evolving conditions. For more information on WODPA, including details about our upcoming 20th Anniversary Conference & Trade Show, please visit our website at <https://wodpa.com/>. ♦

Lia (Van Egmond) Sieler is a third-generation farmer born and raised on her family farm in Galt, Ca - about 45 minutes south of Sacramento. Lia graduated from Chico State with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. After graduating, she moved to the foothills of California where she lives now with her husband, Robert, and their baby boy, RC. Lia worked for a cheese plant immediately out of college before accepting a position as the Quality & Field Manager for an organic milk broker. Now, she works for WODPA as the Executive Director as well as working part time for DairyWorks helping farmers with animal welfare certifications and documentation. She has worked in many facets of our industry which she says has given her the distinct honor of understanding the many stakeholders within the business, but her heart brought her back to working closely with farmers acting as a conduit between them and the decision makers within the industry. Lia Sieler - Wallace, California Lia.wodpa@outlook.com



Celebrating **40** Years of Growing Strong
AGRI•DYNAMICS

Lasting solutions for your... Soil. Plants. Livestock.

Take these 3 Steps
to Improve your farm today:

- 1** Enliven your Soil with **Regenerex™**
Decomposes Crop Residue & Feeds Microbes in the Soil
- 2** Improve your Pastures with **Plant Sure™**
All Purpose and Convenient. Provides Macros & Micros, biologicals and immune boosting E.O's
- 3** Supplement your Livestock with Minerals and Remedies
Dyna-Min™ for trace minerals and to bind aflatoxins
Neema-Tox™ & **Super Start™** for Healthier Calves Starting from Day One



www.agri-dynamics.com • 1.877.393.4484

“... better results with Udder Comfort.”

— Johnny Painter



PAINTERLAND FARMS, WESTFIELD, PA

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

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

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

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

UDDER COMFORT™

Quality Udders Make Quality Milk

Her Comfort is Our Passion!

Softer udders ⇨ Faster milking

Better quality ⇨ MORE MILK

1.888.773.7153

uddercomfort.com

uddercomfort.blog



Helping reach their potential since 1998!

Backpack-Video



For external application to the udder only after milking, as an essential component of udder management. Always wash and dry teats thoroughly before milking.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Small Things Can Have Big Impacts

By Dr. Robert Van Saun, Penn State Extension Veterinarian

Trace minerals and vitamins comprise a very small portion of an animal's diet (< 1% of dry matter), yet they can have a tremendous impact on animal health and performance. When it comes to essential nutrients to support the dairy animal, cobalt, copper, iron, iodine, manganese, selenium, and zinc comprise the required trace minerals. These mineral elements are only required at a level of milligrams (mg; one one-thousandth of a gram) or micrograms (µg; one one-thousandth of a milligram) per day. It is difficult to appreciate how nutrients required in such small amounts can have a significant impact on animal health and performance. Similarly, fat-soluble vitamins A, D, and E are also required in moderate amounts (mg/day). Collectively, these essential nutrients can impact most aspects of metabolism, antioxidant status, and, most importantly, immune function.

One would think that since these nutrients are only required in such small quantities (i.e., micronutrients), it should be easy to meet the animal's nutritional needs. Unfortunately, this is not the situation. Forage, which forms the foundation of an organic diet, is highly variable in its trace mineral concentration. On the East

Coast, our forages are predominantly deficient in selenium and zinc. There is potential for cobalt and iodine deficiencies in areas surrounding the Great Lakes region. East of the Mississippi River, forage copper content is generally good; however, many potential inhibitory factors can induce copper deficiency. Generally, grasses are high in iron and manganese, but these minerals can often interfere with availability of other trace minerals. The bottom line is that one should perform a wet chemistry analysis on forages to determine their trace mineral status. When doing this, be sure to request molybdenum analysis, as this mineral is highly variable in forages and is a very significant inhibitor of copper uptake.

When it comes to fat-soluble vitamins, both vitamins A and E are plentiful in fresh pasture, whereas vitamin D is not present in pasture but only in sun-cured forage. Unfortunately, when forage is harvested, dried or ensiled, and stored, these vitamins are rapidly oxidized due to exposure to moisture and air and depleted from the forage. Feeding stored forage, either as ensiled or dry hay, will result in negligible vitamin content requiring dietary supplementation.

NUTRI-SIL

Forage Inoculant - Making
Forages Go Further

With a custom blend of live beneficial bacteria, Nutri-Sil will control and direct the fermentation of ensiled feeds. Proud to announce that our blend contains Buchneri Bacteria!

Available in both Water Soluble and Dry Blends



Contact Us to Request a Catalog!

The Fertrell Company • PO Box 265, Bainbridge, Pennsylvania 17502
800-347-1566 • www.fertrell.com

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Micronutrients and Disease

We come back to the question, why is this important? Many of these essential trace minerals and vitamins perform specific biologic functions; however, more importantly, they are important regulators of the immune response. Previous Ohio State University research has shown an important role of vitamin E in mastitis prevention. This research found a serum concentration of 3 µg/mL or less increased the risk for mastitis by 9-fold. Another field study from Canada found no direct association of vitamin E status with mastitis in early lactation; however, none of the blood samples collected had a vitamin E concentration above 3 µg/mL. Instead, cows with higher (>1.5 µg/mL) blood vitamin E concentration were at less risk for experiencing retained fetal membranes. This study did show that increasing blood vitamin A concentration had a significant effect on reducing mastitis risk in early lactation. Other research showed that a large quantity of vitamins A and E are lost through the mammary gland just before calving, as these vitamins are concentrated in colostrum. Without proper dietary supplementation, colostrum loss of these vitamins can compromise the vitamin status of the cow, leading to increased disease risks. Besides the potential for compromised cow vitamin status, colostrum could also have less vitamin content

if the cow is insufficiently supplemented. These vitamins do not cross the placenta efficiently; thus, the calf will be born with a low vitamin status and must rely on colostrum intake to provide sufficient vitamins to sustain their metabolism, growth, and immunity. A recent scientific review has suggested that beef calves are deficient in vitamin A and the current National Research Council supplementation guidelines are inadequate. Vitamin A deficiency has been linked to increased risk for stillbirths in both dairy and beef calves. Vitamin D may also be of concern for similar reasons. Newborn nursing animals may present with long bone deformities from vitamin D deficiency rickets. This situation is most serious in animals giving birth at the end of winter, as their vitamin D status will be reduced as a result of limited sunlight exposure in winter conditions.

In contrast to the vitamin situation, the trace minerals are efficiently transported across the placenta during gestation, with the exceptions of iodine and manganese. Mineral supplementation of the cow during gestation will determine the adequacy of fetal mineral status. The fetus is capable of storing these minerals in its liver at levels exceeding what may be found in the cow. The importance of this storage is that milk is inadequate in most trace minerals; thus, requiring mobilization of stored mineral in support of calf metabolism, growth, and

READY TO RISE TO THE CHALLENGE.

Albert Lea Seed is here to help you meet challenges with a high-quality lineup of diverse seed including Blue River organic corn silage hybrids and alfalfa varieties, as well as a range of small grains and grasses specifically selected for forage. Reach out to your local dealer, visit [alseed.com](https://www.alseed.com), or call **800.352.5247** to get started today.



**COMMITTED TO
ORGANIC DAIRIES**



ORGANIC PRODUCTION

immunity. Colostrum does contain a higher concentration of these trace minerals compared to milk; however, it is not sufficient to support early neonatal development and health.

There is a growing body of evidence to suggest trace mineral deficiencies during gestation can lead to fetal demise as an abortion or stillbirth. Marginal trace mineral status in the dam can compromise fetal liver mineral storage and result in mineral deficiencies in early postnatal life. Field observations would suggest these neonatal animals with compromised liver mineral storage are more susceptible to infectious disease conditions due to their immune response being compromised. Their growth may also be diminished. Again, field observations have suggested that weaned animals coming from geographic regions known to have issues with copper or selenium deficiencies will not perform as well in a feedlot system, leading to greater respiratory disease.

Rumen-Micronutrient Interactions

Supplementation of the pregnant dam is critical to ensuring adequate transfer of these essential micronutrients to the fetus and colostrum. Although we understand the importance of the rumen in allowing our production animals to consume forages and convert these feeds into highly nutritious human food, the rumen environment can be detrimental to mineral and vitamin nutrition. The rumen

environment is anaerobic for facilitating microbial fermentation; however, this results in an abundance of reducing equivalents (i.e., negative charges) looking for a stable neutral status. As most minerals are positively charged, these negatively charged reducing agents will be attracted to the mineral atoms and ultimately alter their electrical valence. Why this is important is that mineral atoms are only absorbed in the small intestine based on a specific charge to the atom. It is hard to appreciate that a minor difference in the presence or absence of an electron can impact mineral nutrition. A good example is selenium. The selenium atom is only biologically available if in the +4 (selenite) or +6 (selenate) valence. In the rumen, the selenium atom will attract electrons, changing its charge to 0 (elemental selenium) or -2 (selenide), neither of which is biologically available for absorption.

Another example is related to sulfur, which can interfere with many minerals, preventing their absorption. Water, especially water draining a reclaimed strip mine, can contain high concentrations of soluble sulfates. Plants and some byproduct feeds can also have higher levels of sulfur. In the rumen environment, sulfur or sulfate can be rapidly converted to the sulfide (-2 charge) ion. Sulfides readily bind to any positively charged atom, forming an insoluble metal sulfide (i.e., copper sulfide, zinc sulfide). Insoluble mineral forms cannot be absorbed in the small intestine. For efficient mineral absorption, the metal ion must be dissociated and soluble in water. Only soluble metal ions present in the thin water layer above the intestinal epithelium can be absorbed.

In the situation with vitamins, these organic compounds have complex structures that often contain carbon double bonds or rings. These structures also attract reducing equivalents causing double bonds to be converted into single bonds. In the case of vitamin A, the compound contains three double bonds that are essential for its biologic function in the body. When these double bonds are hydrogenated, the biologic activity is lost. Upwards of 40% of dietary vitamin A can be destroyed in the rumen, especially when feeding a high-grain diet. It is believed that both vitamins E and D can also be altered in the rumen, reducing their biologic activity.

Supplementation Options

One way to address these issues is to feed more of the given nutrient to ensure an adequate amount is being absorbed. Unfortunately, this approach increases costs, may negatively impact other nutrients, and may increase environmental contamination. Another approach is to supplement these nutrients via parental injections. Again, this approach is more expensive, may lead to toxicities, and has short-term responses. A better option is to provide a protected form of minerals to prevent rumen alteration. This is where the feeding of organic-form minerals may play a role. There are several commercial mineral supplements where the metal atom is linked in some fashion to another compound (termed a ligand), making the metal atom less amenable to rumen alteration. What is important to note here is that



GROW WITH BYRNE
SINCE 1933

As Byrne's capabilities grow, so does our need for organic milk.

Call 315-382-2782 today!

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

the ligand must dissociate from the metal atom, typically under the low pH conditions of the abomasum, for the metal ion to be absorbed. Unfortunately, there is little available documentation for this with many of the commercial organic minerals. Various controlled research studies have not shown any conclusive outcome that organic minerals are any better than more inorganic forms, suggesting there are other dietary or animal factors confounding this issue.

There are a number of methods that can be used to improve mineral status of forage via fertilization and soil management. However, agronomists will indicate a need to treat soil to maintain near neutral pH to facilitate plant growth. Most of the microminerals are better absorbed by the plant in a slightly acidic soil pH. Obviously, one does not want to compromise forage yield in lieu of increasing forage micromineral content. This brings us back to paying attention to mineral status of forage and providing appropriately balanced mineral sources to meet the animal's requirements. In addressing amounts needed, one also needs to address potential interfering minerals that reduce mineral availability. There are no readily available guidelines on how to modify mineral content relative to interfering issues, with the exception of copper and molybdenum. This interaction has been well documented in ruminant animals. The recommendation here is to maintain a 6:1 up to 10:1 dietary ratio of copper to molybdenum in the diet. For sheep, we suggest an upper limit of 8:1. If this ratio is greater than 16:1 the risk for copper toxicosis increases. A suggested dietary ratio between zinc and copper is 4:1, but this is not a hard number as copper and molybdenum.

In providing micronutrients, one should focus on supplementation during mid-to-late gestation through the early breeding period. This is when supplementation will provide the greatest return on your investment. Ideally, one should provide adequate minerals year-round. As for mineral sources, providing only organic minerals is expensive; thus, most nutritionists will recommend a blend of inorganic and organic mineral sources. Typically, I recommend between 30 and 40% mineral supply from organic sources and the remaining from inorganic sources. Salt should be available to animals at all times. Remember that animals do not have specific appetites for individual minerals, thus one cannot expect them to selectively consume minerals to meet specific mineral needs. Sodium is what an animal desires and will consume salt-based mineral to meet their sodium requirement. This situation becomes a challenge where forage might contain high (>0.1%) sodium, which will reduce the animal's desire to consume salt sources.

Mineral and vitamin supplementation is best provided through the diet rather than through parenteral injections, as this is more physiologic. It would be best to provide these micronutrients in the diet on a daily basis and minimize the animal's ability to choose to consume or not. Free choice mineral supplementation can be used, but one needs to appreciate there is tremendous individual animal variation in mineral intake. This will result in some animals consuming more than needed

and others less than needed. The mineral concentrations in the mineral supplement need to be assessed relative to forage mineral content and observed mineral intake. Many commercial free choice mineral supplements suggest a higher intake than what is often observed. For cattle, typically we would expect a free choice mineral intake of 1.5 – 2 ounces per day. For sheep and goats, the expected intake would be 0.25-0.33 ounces per day.

Summary

The micronutrients of trace minerals and fat-soluble vitamins play critical roles in animal health, disease prevention, and productivity. Micronutrient nutrition is critically important during gestation and early lactation due to losses to the fetus and colostrum, and increased metabolic and immunologic needs in early lactation. Forage does not supply sufficient trace minerals, and conserved forages are deficient in fat-soluble vitamins; thus, requiring appropriate supplementation to ensure adequate intake to meet requirements. Mineral sources can be organic or inorganic in form, with organic forms being less affected by ruminal alteration. Dietary supplementation is the preferred method in supplying these micronutrients; however, free-choice mineral supplementation can be used, recognizing its limitations. Routine forage testing is essential to be able to appropriately define the needed micronutrients required to be provided in the diet to meet the animal's requirements. ♦



Seaweed Solutions for Plants, Soils, & Animal Nutrition

Concentrated Liquids

Seaweed Meals

Soluble Powders

Custom Formulations

White Labeling

**SAVE MONEY WHEN YOU BUY DIRECT FROM A
USA PROCESSOR & HARVESTER**

**WWW.NOAMKELP.COM | (207) 832-5376
SALES@NOAMKELP.COM**



ORGANIC PRODUCTION



Ask the Vet

Dayna Locitzer, DVM

What can we do about the new tick in the Northeast, the Asian Longhorned Tick?



Unfortunately there is a new tick in town, the Asian Longhorned Tick (ALT). Originally from east Asia, ALT was first identified in the United States in 2017 but likely has been here since 2010. It can now be found in over 22 states with the highest prevalence in Virginia and surrounding areas. In the northeast, it has been found mainly in eastern and southern New York, but also reported in isolated locations in Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Maine. But, its geographic reach is likely to expand due to a number of factors including climate and habitat

change as well as the movement of animals. ALT carries the disease called Theileriosis, caused by the blood-borne protozoal parasite *Theileria orientalis*. Organic dairy cows have a high level of tick exposure due to the time they spend on pasture and the lack of insecticides used, making it important to be aware of ALT and Theileriosis.

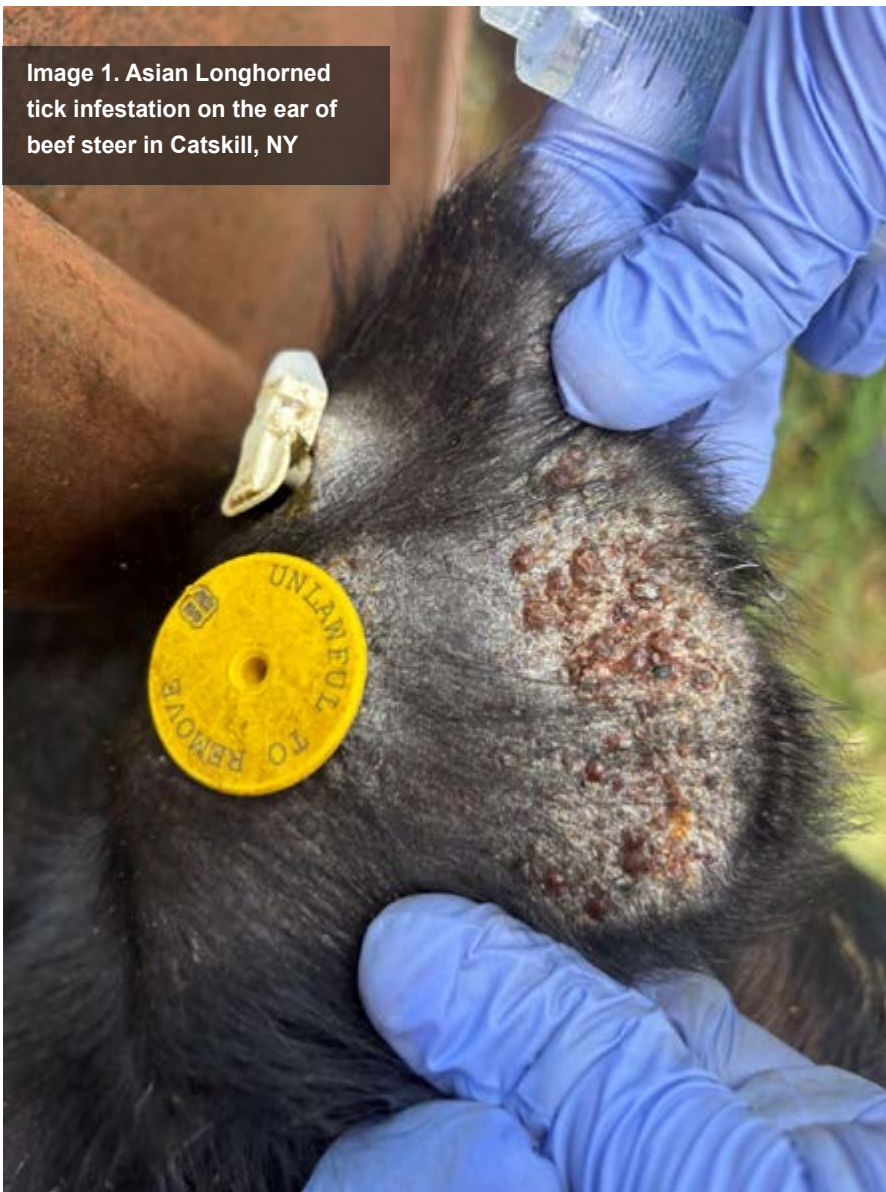
ALT is a particularly insidious bug because of how it reproduces.

It asexually reproduces, therefore a single female can create a significant infestation. Oftentimes you will see patches of skin that are covered in ticks, which sets it apart from other tick species. (Image1) Like other ticks they prefer tall grasses and wooded areas and can travel on wild birds. ALT is the carrier for *Theileria orientalis*, but not all ALT carry it.

Theileria orientalis is the causative agent of Theileriosis, is a protozoa. This means it's a little more sophisticated than bacteria. *Theileria orientalis* lives in the bloodstream and can attack red blood cells, destroying them, leading to severe jaundice and anemia. Clinical signs of this type of anemia are weakness, weight loss, yellow mucous membranes, general lethargy, all due to the destruction of the red blood cells. This disease can only be treated with a blood transfusion and supportive care, no pharmaceuticals approved in the United States are known to be effective against Theileriosis.

I've told you lots of bad news, now for the good news- clinical cases of Theileriosis are rare, and even rarer are the severe cases. Many animals will be infected, but only few will show signs of disease. Clinical disease will potentially occur when an animal is first exposed to *Theileria orientalis* and is more likely to cause issues in younger animals or animals in stressful circumstances. Once an animal is positive for *Theileria orientalis*, they have it for life. While that doesn't sound like a positive, it is because once they have it, they can't get it again!

Image 1. Asian Longhorned tick infestation on the ear of beef steer in Catskill, NY



ORGANIC PRODUCTION

So, what should you do with all this information?

1. Look at the attached map and see if your farm is in an area where ALT has been identified (**Image 2**)
2. Look out for the ticks on your farm and notify your veterinarian if you see them
3. If you have an animal that is showing signs of anemia, have your veterinarian test for Theileriosis in addition to other diseases
4. If you are in an ALT positive area, you might want to sample a handful of your cows to see if the disease is already in your herd
5. When introducing new animals to your herd, follow the below chart for guidelines related to Theileriosis
6. Change needles in between each animal when giving injections. Because it is a blood-borne pathogen, Theileriosis can be transferred with shared needles

To prevent severe infestations on your dairy herd, utilize similar strategies that you use for fly prevention like rotating paddocks regularly, clipping pastures, essential oil sprays, and mineral supplements that deter biting insects. Inspect your youngstock regularly for ticks, and if possible remove the ticks and deposit them in alcohol to kill them. Those killed ticks can then be submitted to your veterinarian for testing.

This is an emerging pest and disease in the northeastern United States and there will continue to be new information released, look out for it! ♦

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

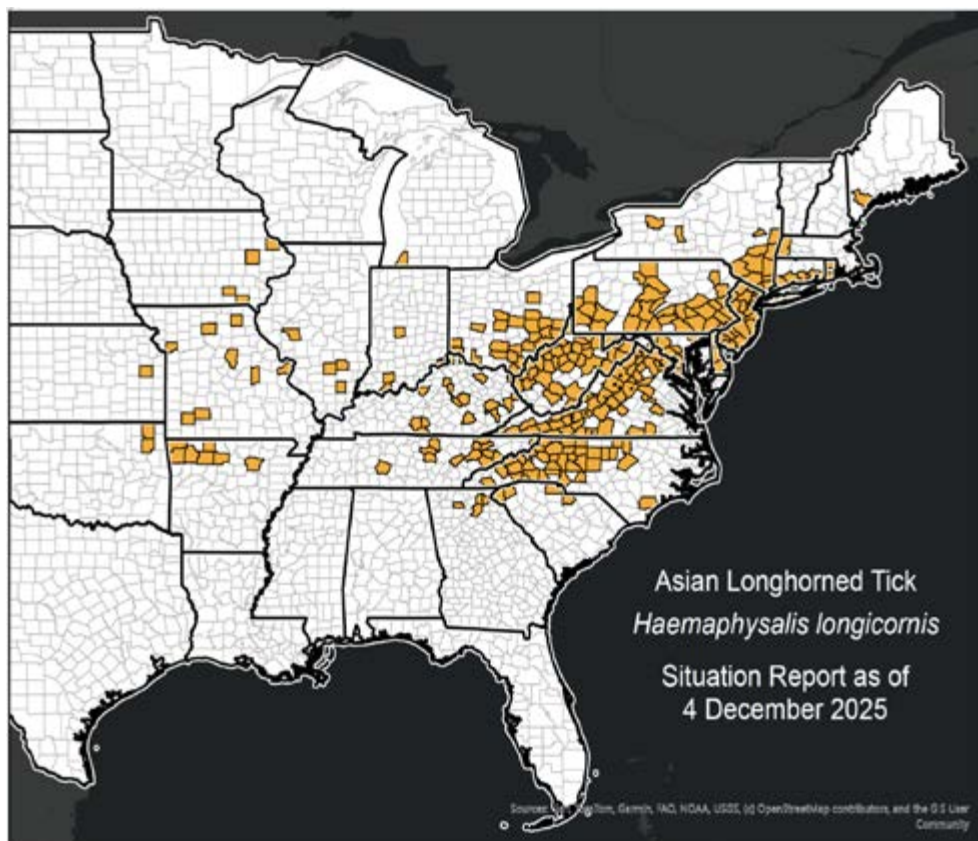


Image 2. Counties in the United States that have reported the Asian Longhorned Tick

Your Herd Status	Purchased Animal Status	Risk Level
Negative	Negative	Safe
Positive	Positive	Safe
Negative	Positive	Increased Risk - Established herd at risk if Asian Longhorn Tick are present on farm - Take steps to protect your herd with increased tick protection and single use needles - Monitor herd for transmission through testing - Observe for signs of illness related to Theileria
Positive	Negative	Increased Risk - Purchased animal(s) at risk - Take steps to protect purchased animal(s) from contracting Theileria during times of stress - Isolate purchased animal(s) for 2 weeks upon arrival - Use effective tick protection while being introduced to herd - Observe purchased animal(s) for signs of illness related to Theileria

Table 1. Introducing new cows and theileriosis risk

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

You Only Get One Shot: A Conversation About Farm Succession Planning

By Ted LeBow, CEO, and Lindsey McDonnell, Business Consultant — Good Roots

Succession planning is one of the most consequential decisions a farm family will ever make — and also one of the most avoided. At Good Roots, we work with farmers and food entrepreneurs every day who are sitting on millions of dollars in land and equipment, dreaming about retirement, and quietly hoping it all works out. It doesn't always.

We decided to sit down together and talk candidly about what we've learned: what goes wrong, what goes right, and why waiting too long can cost a family everything they worked to build. The conversation got honest pretty fast. That's kind of our dynamic.

On Getting Started — The Earlier, the Better

Lindsey: Ted, you've been doing this for a long time. What's the single biggest mistake you see farm families make when it comes to succession planning?

Ted: Waiting. Every single time - waiting. People assume they have more time than they do, and then one day they're 65 years old, asset-rich and cash-poor, unprofitable, and trying to untangle decades of financial complexity while also figuring out who takes over the farm and whether their marriage survives the process.

The farm becomes the retirement plan. The land, the equipment, the livestock — that's where all the money went. And it makes sense in the moment, because you're always reinvesting in the operation. But the problem surfaces when the next generation is expected to both run the business AND take on enough debt to financially support the retiring generation. That pressure can cripple a transition before it even starts.

Lindsey: We just lived this with a client. The parents had put nearly everything into the business. They owned a small piece of personal property and had made some modest loans to the operation over the years, but outside of that, almost nothing set aside for retirement. Meanwhile, millions were tied up in farmland and equipment, the operation carried significant debt, and it wasn't generating enough profit to support both generations comfortably. What made it especially hard was that both the parents and the children were deeply motivated to carry on the legacy. The desire was absolutely there. But the financial reality meant the children were stepping into a high-debt situation from day one. Instead of handing over an opportunity, they were unintentionally handing over financial strain.

Ted: Exactly. And hope is not a retirement plan. I say that a lot, but I mean it.

Lindsey: Ted, I hear you say that all the time, but what does "plan early" actually mean? When should someone really start?

Ted: Yesterday. But seriously, earlier than almost anyone thinks. Most people assume succession planning is something you tackle in your 50s or 60s. By then, you're already behind. Honestly? The answer is 18. I know that sounds extreme, but hear me out. A young person who invests \$100 a month at 18 and gradually increases that amount to \$1,000 a month by age 30 — and keeps going through age 65 — could build more than \$3 million in retirement savings, assuming historical stock market returns. That kind of financial independence completely changes the succession equation. Parents don't need the farm to fund their retirement. Successors inherit opportunity instead of overwhelming debt. The business has room to grow instead of being drained by buyout pressure.

Ted: And if they didn't start at 18 - which, let's be honest, almost nobody does, the second best time is right now. Not next year. Not when things slow down. Now.

Lindsey: I can attest to that. I didn't start at 18, either. A few years ago I finally purchased my own farm, and it was around that time I was truly able to start contributing to retirement in a meaningful way. That was in my late 30s.

On Building the Next Generation of Leaders

Lindsey: So Ted, succession isn't just about transferring ownership it's also about preparing the next generation to actually lead. What does that look like in practice?

Ted: That's exactly right, and it's the piece that gets overlooked most often. The older generation sometimes holds on too long before giving real responsibility to the next generation. Not because they don't trust them, but because letting go of something you've built and loved for decades is genuinely hard! The result is that successors can be well into their 40s before they've made a major decision on their own. That's not a recipe for a confident new leader.

Lindsey: And I imagine it's not always the person everyone assumed would take over who ends up being the right fit.

Ted: Not at all. We worked with one family where there was a long-standing assumption that the oldest sibling would lead the company someday; that's just how it had always been talked about. But through the succession planning process, it became clear that the younger sibling had both the desire and the aptitude to lead, while the older sibling actually preferred to focus on operations rather than executive leadership. With coaching, mentorship, and real development opportunities, the younger sibling built the confidence to step into the CEO role. It was ultimately a better outcome for everyone, including the older sibling, who was relieved not to carry a role they never really wanted.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Lindsey: That had to require some honest conversations with the whole family.

Ted: It did. And it required the parents to set aside birth order and evaluate leadership based on capability. That's not always comfortable, but it's one of the most important decisions a family can make during this process. The goal is to give successors room to develop not just operational knowledge, but the communication, management, and decision-making skills to run a modern agricultural business. And they need space to make mistakes while the consequences are still manageable.

Lindsey: We saw something very similar with another client we worked with closely. They had a succession plan in place, but life happened. The plan centered around their eldest child, but that child ended up pursuing a completely different career path. So the family had to pivot.

Ted: Which is exactly why a succession plan can't just be a document you write once and forget about. Life changes.

Lindsey: For sure. In this case, another child and her husband stepped into the role. She grew up on the farm, so she had that foundational understanding, but her husband came in with no prior production experience at all. So our team went through a real process of assessing their leadership team's strengths, identifying the gaps, and building a development plan around those. Same concept you were just describing: coaching, mentorship, intentional leadership development to build their confidence in taking on that CEO responsibility. It takes time, but it works.

On Fairness, Sweat Equity, and Difficult Conversations

Lindsey: Ted, one thing I hear come up a lot with farm families is the question of fairness among siblings. How do you even begin to navigate that?

Ted: Very carefully. And very directly. Avoiding it doesn't make it go away. It just means it explodes later, usually at the worst possible moment. The core tension is this: in many farm families, one or two children have spent their adult lives working the operation at below-market wages, carrying enormous responsibility, and building up years of sweat equity. Meanwhile, other siblings pursued careers elsewhere. When it comes time to divide assets, a purely equal split can actually be deeply unfair to the people who made that sacrifice.

Lindsey: So how do you help families get on the same page about what "fair" actually means?

Ted: It starts with open conversation, which sounds simple but is anything but. We worked with one family where the farming children had devoted their adult lives to the operation while their siblings built careers outside agriculture. The parents planned to leave the land and business assets primarily to the farming children and provide life insurance proceeds to the others. On paper, it looked unequal

because the farm assets had appreciated so dramatically over time. But once the family openly discussed the years of lower income, sacrifice, and operational responsibility the farming children had carried, everyone came to a much deeper understanding of what fair really meant in their situation.

Lindsey: It sounds like those conversations almost reframe the whole picture.

Ted: They do. What looks unequal on a spreadsheet can make complete sense when you view it through the lens of contribution and long-term commitment. But you have to be willing to have the conversation. That's where a neutral facilitator can be invaluable—someone who isn't emotionally invested in the outcome and can keep things moving forward when it gets hard.

On Letting Go — The Identity Problem

Lindsey: Ted, I want to ask you about something I think catches a lot of retiring farmers off guard: the idea that for many of them, their work is their identity. What happens when that's suddenly gone?

Ted: It's more common than people expect, and it's often the thing that quietly stalls a transition that looks perfectly fine on paper. For farmers especially, the business isn't just a business: it's their identity. It's how they've defined themselves for 30 or 40 years. And when that goes away, it can be genuinely disorienting.

Lindsey: That's a profound loss, and I don't think we talk about it enough in these conversations. I know you've worked through this firsthand with clients. Can you share what happened and how they worked to overcome it?

Ted: We worked with a multi-generational dairy farm where the retiring owner spent nearly a year negotiating the financial terms of succession while repeatedly delaying the final transition. The family assumed the hold-up was financial. But eventually the real issue surfaced: the owner was terrified of losing their sense of purpose and identity once they were no longer needed at the farm every day.

Once we helped the owner think intentionally about what life after farming could actually look like, travel they'd always put off, volunteer work that had always interested them, a new side venture, the whole dynamic shifted. There was suddenly a vision for the next chapter. And once that existed, letting go of day-to-day control became much less threatening. The transition moved forward pretty quickly after that.

Lindsey: That's such an important reminder that succession planning is as much about the people as it is the business.

Ted: Yup. A good succession plan has to address both. What are you going to do on a Tuesday morning in January when you're not needed at the farm anymore? If you don't have an answer to that, the transition is going to be a struggle, no matter how solid the financial plan is.

continued on page 26

26th Annual
NODPA Field Days



NODPA Field Days Lead Sponsors



FARM CREDIT EAST



Hope for the Future: Strategies for Success

continued from page 1

No one wants to repeat the climate and feed challenges that many farmers faced in 2025 so we've designed a program that focuses on strategies to make the most of what you have, whether it's better pasture management, cow health management, and renewable energy strategies to lower energy expenses, or rethinking profit, reinvestment and retirement. The workshops are designed to offer hope for the future. Keeping in mind that dairying is changing and evolving, with many technical, on-farm, and processing improvements, we believe that this year's NODPA Field Days will have interesting and important information for all organic dairy farmers, and hope you will begin your plans to attend.

This year, all of our workshops, keynote presentation and farm tours focus on these key strategies for success on all organic dairy farms regardless of production methods:

- Animal health and transition success: Micronutrients and late-gestation feeding remain the most cost-effective insurance against early-lactation disorders and lost milk—key in tight-margin years.
- Climate resilience and comfort: Silvopasture can materially improve heat abatement, pasture persistence, and animal performance while diversifying income over time.
- Cost control with intent: Energy prices are volatile; conservation plus targeted renewables can stabilize operating costs and improve risk management.
- Precision grazing, real returns: Managing for intake and timing—not just acreage—links forage to tank and margin, strengthening whole-system efficiency.



Country Sunrise Creamery

- Generational continuity: Profit, reinvestment, and retirement planning aren't competing priorities—they're the scaffolding that keeps farms viable for the next handoff.

Throughout this issue of the NODPA News, we are fortunate to have numerous articles from this year's NODPA Field Days speakers so you can get a preview of their presentations.

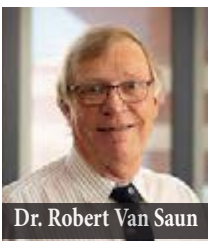
The NODPA Field Days opens Thursday morning with a ***farm tour at Country Sunrise Creamery***, hosted by the Nelson Martin family near Meyerstown (***read about their farm, the Featured Farm, in this issue***). It's a chance to see how a values-driven, vertically integrated family-run dairy balances quality, stewardship, and community connections. Attendees are asked to travel directly to the farm for the tour.

After registration and lunch at the Berks County Agriculture Center, the Martins return for a wrap-up Q&A, answering questions about their operation and the management choices they make.



26th Annual NODPA Field Days

The afternoon's first workshop, *Big Things from Little Packages: The Important Role of Minerals and Vitamins in Cow and Calf Health* focuses on minerals and vitamins as important keys to good cow and calf health. Dr. Robert Van Saun, DVM, Professor of Veterinary Medicine at Penn State University, makes the connections between micro-nutrition, immune function, and disease prevention across the whole lifecycle. There will be discussion of transition feeding, with special emphasis on late-gestation diets that reduce mastitis, uterine infections, and the costly setbacks that can ripple through a lactation. "Dr. Van Saun's articles have been so helpful in understanding the importance of minerals and vitamins especially in our pregnant cows, so I'm so happy he's speaking at Field Days this year," said NODPA Co-President, Kirk Arnold. Read Dr. Van Saun's article on page 6.



Dr. Robert Van Saun

After a short break, attention shifts from the rumen to the pasture with *Silvopasture: The Challenges and Benefits of Adding Trees to Pasture*. Joshua Greene, Director of Education at Trees for Graziers, will discuss how to design, protect, and manage trees within actively grazed systems—where species selection, spacing, and animal behavior all matter. Producers will hear how to establishment, manage competition and capture real-world benefits in shade and forage resiliency.



Joshua Greene

Late afternoon features updates on the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) program and timely news from USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service—practical pathways for building skilled labor and staying current on market standards. A trade show and social hour follow, offering a relaxed forum to meet vendors, catch up with old friends, and share news and ideas before the evening program.

The Thursday banquet leads into a keynote that speaks directly to the long game: *Stop Farming like You'll Never Leave—Rethinking Profit, Reinvestment, and Retirement*. Business advisor Ted LeBow, CEO of Good Roots (formerly Kitchen Table Consultants), along with a farmer panel, lays out a clear framework for balancing today's cash needs with tomorrow's continuity. The session tackles profitability with purpose: setting aside reinvestment capital, building retirement without starving the business, and structuring transitions that respect both the current farm family and the next generation. Read You Only Get One Shot: Conversation on Succession Planning with Ted LeBow on page 12.



Ted LeBow

continued on page 16

NODPA

Thanks all of our Sponsors, Supporters and Trade Show Participants for supporting the

26th Annual NODPA Field Days

LEAD SPONSORS

**Horizon Farm Credit and
Farm Credit East*
Organic Plus Trust, Inc.***

SPONSORS

Byrne Dairy*

The Fertrell Company*

Horizon Organic

Lakeview Organic Grain

Maple Hill

NOFA-NY

Organic Valley/CROPP

UNC/Upstate Niagara Cooperative

SUPPORTERS

Agri-Dynamics

Stonyfield/Lactalis

Albert Lea Seeds

Thorvin

Buffalo Molasses

Pasa*

**Global Organic
Alliance***

**PA Certified
Organic (PCO)*Ik**

* Trade Show Participants

^ Product/Food Donations

September 24 & 25, 2026

Berks County Agricultural Center

1238 County Welfare Road, Leesport, PA 19533



26th Annual NODPA Field Days

Hope for the Future: Strategies for Success

continued from page 15

Friday begins with a continental breakfast and a **Producer-Only Meeting**. With no outside observers in the room, farmers speak candidly about all the pertinent issues impacting organic dairy today and into the near future.

The morning's first workshop turns to the farm's energy balance sheet. In **Renewable Energy on the Farm**, veteran organic grain and dairy farmer Klaas Marten shares strategies to curb rising energy costs with scalable, practical solutions. From conservation-first audits to right-sized renewables, storage, and equipment choices, the focus is on what can help farmers capture savings without overextending capital.

Next up, a dual presentation from Penn State's dairy science team—Dr. Leoni Martins, PhD, and Dr. James Lawhead, DVM—connects the craft of grazing to the calculus of milk in **From Pasture to Profit: How Grazing Management Drives Intake, Milk Yield, and Efficiency**. The session will examine how



Klaas Marten



Dr. Leoni Martin

grazing decisions shape forage quality and cow behavior, which in turn set the ceiling for dry matter intake and nutrient flow. Attendees will learn more about rotation length, residual height, plate meter use, and the timing that helps align peak pasture with peak cow demand—translating into more milk per acre and better whole-farm efficiency. Dr. Martin's and Dr. Lawhead's article can be found on page 33.



Dr. James Lawhead

Before lunch, Forrest and Greg Stricker will introduce us to **Spring Creek Farms** in Wernersville, the site of Friday's afternoon tour. Their preview covers herd, pasture, and cropping systems, plus the planning questions they hope visitors will bring to the farm that afternoon. Lunch includes a door prize drawing, and the meeting adjourns as participants depart for Spring Creek Farms to see how the Strickers integrate the day's themes in practice. ♦



NODPA Field Days Sponsors



26th Annual NODPA Field Days

Take Advantage of the Early Bird Rates!

Are you planning to come to the 26th Annual NODPA Field Days? Would you like to save some money? You can take advantage of the Early Bird rates by registering no later than September 12th. If it's more convenient, you can pay when you arrive on-site but we must hear from you by the early bird rate deadline in order to get the money-saving rates. So, please register early! Details and the registration form on this page, plus the NODPA Field Days brochure will be in your mailbox in the next few weeks..



Final Details

Once again, NODPA is keeping the costs of attending Field Days as low as possible, with free registration for all farmers and their families, and a minimal registration fee for non-farmers; only the cost of meals is passed along. We are grateful for our sponsors, supporters, and trade show participants for helping us keep the costs low, and for their ongoing support for NODPA's work. Please be sure to visit all of them at the trade show!

Lodging

There are many options for lodging in the greater Leesport area, with Reading and Wyomissing PA close by. Hotels are booking up fast and the rates will rise the closer we get to Field Days, so you are encouraged to make plans now rather than waiting until September. A Google search of your favorite travel site is the best place to start. These days, cancellation policies are pretty flexible, so keep that in mind if you aren't totally sure you will be able to attend. In addition to hotels, inns, camping and RV sites, VRBO (www.vrbo.com) and Airbnb (www.airbnb.com) offer vacation rentals, ranging from single rooms to whole houses.

We hope to see you at the 26th Annual NODPA Field Days in Leesport, PA on September 24th and 25th and we hope you will register today! Please contact Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator, if you have questions or to register early. Call 413-772-0444, if you reach the voicemail, please leave a message, or email her at noraowens@comcast.net. ♦

REGISTRATION FORM				
The 26 th Annual NODPA Field Days and Producer Meeting and Dinner September 24 th and 25 th , 2026				
	COST		QTY	TOTAL
	Early	On-Site		
REGISTRATION: Thursday & Friday				
Organic dairy & transitioning dairy producers	FREE			\$0
All who aren't organic dairy producers	\$35	\$50		\$
MEALS: Thursday & Friday				
Thursday lunch for Adults	\$10	\$15		\$
Thursday lunch (under 11)	\$5	\$10		\$
Thursday dinner for Adults	\$25	\$35		\$
Thursday dinner (under 11)	\$12.50	\$15		\$
Transitioning farm member. Thursday evening dinner	Free			\$0
Friday breakfast (7:30-9am)	\$5	\$10		\$
Friday lunch	\$10	\$15		\$
NODPA NEWS SUBSCRIPTION (6 issues)	\$50			\$
DONATION TO NODPA	\$ _____			\$
				<i>Total amount enclosed:</i> \$
Name: _____				
Address: _____				
Phone: _____				
Email: _____				
Make checks payable to NODPA. Mail to:				
NODPA c/o Ed Maltby				
30 Keets Rd., Deerfield, MA 01342.				
Email: ednodpa@comcast.net				
Phone: 413-772-0444; Fax: 866-554-9483				
Pay by credit card. Circle type:				
Master Card • Visa				
Cardholder Name: _____				
Billing Address: _____				

Card #: _____				
Expiration date: _____ Security Code: _____				
YOU CAN ALSO REGISTER ONLINE AT: https://nodpa.com/p/142/Field-Days-2026				



26th Annual
NODPA Field Days



Schedule

Thursday, September 24, 2026

8:30-11:30 am	<i>Farm Tour: Country Sunrise Creamery, 48 Mountain Road, Meyerstown, PA 17067, hosted by the Nelson Martin Family. <u>PLEASE GO DIRECTLY TO THE FARM</u></i>	3:15 - 4:30	<i>Silvopasture: The Challenges and Benefits of Adding Trees to Pasture: Strategic planning and techniques for effective tree establishment in actively grazed pastures.</i> Presenter: Joshua Greene, Director of Education, Trees for Graziers
Noon - 1:00 pm	NODPA Field Days Registration and Lunch Berks County Agriculture Center, 1238 County Welfare Road, Leesport, PA 19533	4:30- 5:00	Presentations on the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) Program and Updates from the USDA AMS personnel
1:00 - 1:30	<i>Country Sunrise Creamery wrap-up and questions for the Martin Family.</i>	5:00- 6:00	NODPA Field Days Trade Show and Social Hour
1:30 - 3:00	<i>Big Things from Little Packages: The Important Role of Minerals and Vitamins in Cow and Calf Health. This presentation will discuss the importance of minerals and vitamins relative to immunity and disease prevention throughout the animal's lifecycle. There will be discussions of how proper feeding of the late pregnant cow is essential for minimizing disease conditions of mastitis and uterine infections.</i> Presenter: Dr. Robert Van Saun, DVM, Professor of Veterinary Medicine, Penn State University.	6:00 - 7:00	Banquet and NODPA Annual Meeting
		7:00 - 8:30	<i>Keynote Presentation: Stop Farming like You'll Never Leave: Rethinking Profit, Reinvestment, and Retirement. Learn about a practical framework for balancing today's demands with a future that supports both the farmer and the next generation.</i> Presenter: Ted LeBow, Good Roots (formerly known as Kitchen Table Consultants) and a farmer panel
3:00- 3:15	Break	8:30 pm	Program ends

NODPA Field Days Supporters





Schedule

Friday, September 25, 2026

- 6:30 – 9:00 am **Continental Breakfast, Berks Agricultural Center:**
1238 County Welfare Road, Leesport, PA 19533
- 7:00 – 9:00 ***Producer-only Meeting: A meeting in which producers can speak freely about all things related to the organic dairy industry***
- 9:00 – 10:15 ***Renewable Energy on the farm: Strategies to address the rising cost of energy on the farm, with innovative solutions that everyone can employ.***
Presenter: Klaas Marten, Klaas and Mary-Howell Farm, Penn Yan, NY
- 10:15 – 11:30 ***From Pasture to Profit: How Grazing Management Drives Intake, Milk Yield, and Efficiency. Learn how grazing decisions influence forage quality, cow behavior, and nutrient supply, and how these translate into milk yield and system-level efficiency.***
Presenters: Dr. Leoni Martins, PhD., Asst. Clinical Professor of Precision Dairy Nutrition, Dept. of Animal Science, Penn State University, and Dr. James Lawhead, DVM, Extension Associate, Dairy Science, Penn State University
- 11:30 – Noon ***Introduction to Spring Creek Farms, 3880 North Church Street, Wernersville, PA, 19565, Friday afternoon's farm tour. Forrest and Greg Stricker, hosts, will give an overview of their operation and answer questions ahead of the afternoon tour.***
- Noon – 1:00 pm **Lunch;** door prize drawing, final announcements
- 1:15 **End of meeting and depart for Spring Creek Farms, Wernersville, PA**

NODPA Field Days Supporters



Farm Tours

Thursday, September 24, 2026

Country Sunrise Creamery and Farm Store

48 Mountain View Road
Myerstown, PA 17067

hosted by the Nelson Martin Family



Although this grass-based farm isn't certified organic, it employs organic practices. The Nelson Martin Family manages this farm using no pesticides and herbicides. It has an on-farm processing facility where they produce milk, butter, cheese, yogurt, ice cream and grass-fed beef, all sold at their farm store. Come tour this farm where the Martin's are using a variety of innovative practices on their thriving dairy farm.

Friday, September 25, 2026

Spring Creek Farms

3880 North Church Street
Wernersville, PA 19565

hosted by Greg and Forrest Strickler



Spring Creek Farms is one of the pioneers of organic and grass-based dairy in the US. Forrest and Greg Strickler will share their wide variety of innovative practices they use on their 600-acre (combination of owned and rented land) grass-based farm.

FEATURED FARM

COUNTRY SUNRISE CREAMERY

MYERSTOWN, PA

continued from page 1

a milking herd of 35 cows, operates a farm stand, and recently launched a commercial-scale poultry production facility, all on a total of 120 acres.

“I was born on this farm,” Nelson shares, “and my parents milked traditionally for over 30 years.” The family began to transition management in 2004 when Nelson began to take leadership. “When I bought in, I had the mindset that the farm that was the biggest and best and fastest and smartest would be the one that would make it,” Nelson says. “Then I realized that approach is a wild treadmill that just leads to requiring more expansion just to survive.” In 2006 they started looking outside of the conventional approach for other opportunities to build and sustain farming operations without such a breakneck speed of physical expansion.

“We got a raw milk permit in 2006 as an offramp to having to keep growing our herd and operation,” he shares. “We wanted to keep it a family business.” When they first started selling raw milk as a value-added product, they were able to continue shipping the bulk of their milk to Land O’Lakes. As they grew away from the expansion mindset, they began looking more seriously at the values of locally-sourced products for their growing consumer base. “We started to focus on, ‘Why should people drink raw milk?’ and more importantly, ‘Why should they drink our milk instead of going to the store for it?’” This focus on milk quality and direct marketing for local purchases was the initial driver to look into grazing techniques.

Integrating regenerative agriculture and silvopasture

Even before committing to improved pasture management, Nelson attended a field day on a nearby farm that featured both a workshop and a pasture walk. “I wasn’t even there for the pasture walk,” Nelson admits, “I was really there for the other event. But I caught the walk anyway, and I was ashamed to be seen in that crowd – I felt so dumb. Here was a farmer with a very nice barn that was empty and the cows were out in the meadow.” While the approach was very different from their practices at the time, within two years of research and similar events, Nelson was convinced and beginning to implement better grazing techniques.

“By 2006 we were really investing in learning how to graze,” he shares. “We joined more pasture walks, and in the fall of 2006 we built our first fence, seeded some grass, and the next spring we opened the door and put the cows out for the first time. What a pleasure that was.”

Their farming journey took a break shortly after that, though, when the family was called to mission work. “God was working,” Nelson says, “and in 2009 our family went to Haiti for two years. We turned the farm over to another young couple so that they could get a start in farming.” Nelson and his family returned to the area in 2011 but didn’t return directly to the farm—they lived nearby while the young couple continued to work the farm.

“A number of things came together in 2016,” Nelson recalls. “First, Land O’Lakes said, ‘no more selling raw milk and selling milk to us.’ And the young couple that was taking care of the cows found their own farm! So it worked out nicely; they took the Land O’Lakes connection and the majority of the cows, and we took back over the farm with just enough cows to supply the raw milk business and do the direct marketing for it.”

Now back on the farm with 19 cows and about the same number of heifers, Nelson and the family re-started their raw milk operations with a renewed focus on grazing with a manageably-sized herd to experiment and learn. “While we were gone, the young couple didn’t use our grazing concept,” Nelson shares, “They used a conventional feed plan. But when we came back our goal was to build a grass-fed brand and aim for higher value product.”

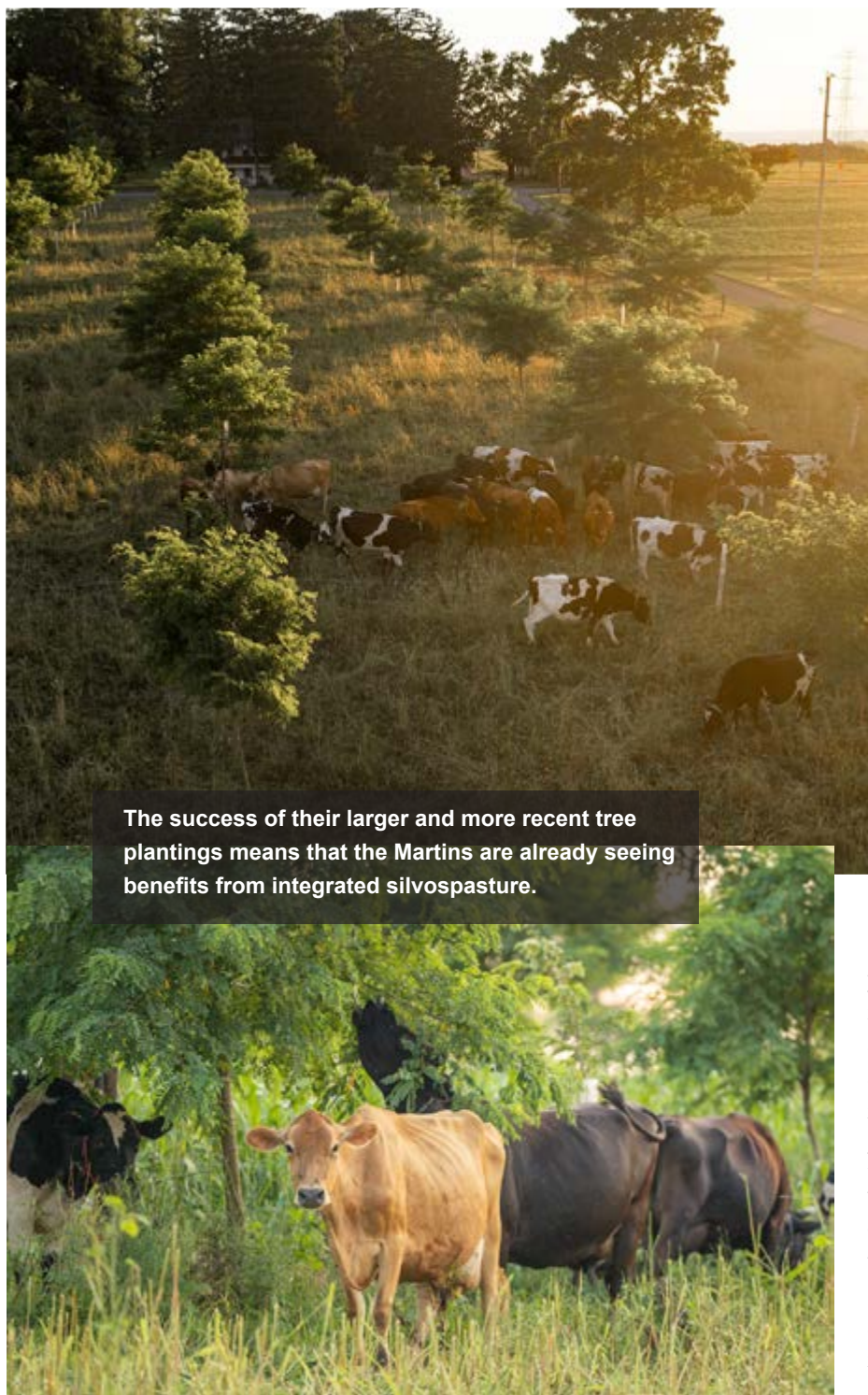
The next three years were invested in this infrastructure, he says. “We fenced off more fields, we seeded more grass, and our emphasis became grazing as much as possible throughout the year.”

The process wasn’t perfect, Nelson freely admits. “We definitely had some learning curves! We ran into changes in seasonal milk production—we would run out of milk in the winter for our customers and have to buy in, then in the summer we would have so much extra that we would make cheese.”

They were committed to the concept, though, even as they evaluated the cost-to-benefit comparison of full certification versus balanced approaches. “We were initially planning to go 100% grass-fed,” Nelson shares, “but you really have to earn the right to do that. Back then, as we were switching away from conventional feeds, we didn’t get to 100% grassfed. We started feeding barley alongside, and we still do, just to keep production up. We buy local barley, it’s non-GMO, and a few pounds of grain does go a long way!”

A natural pairing with this grassfed approach was the introduction of silvopasture techniques to preserve this pasture and protect herd health while they grazed. “Even back in our off-farm days, we were interested in permaculture concepts,” Nelson shares, “and silvopasture was becoming a pretty popular topic. We went to our first silvopasture walk in 2012, and that jump started our learning and experimentation in tree-plantings.”

FEATURED FARM



The success of their larger and more recent tree plantings means that the Martins are already seeing benefits from integrated silvospasture.

Nelson admits that this early experimentation was pretty rocky. “In those early years we really had no lasting success, but we kept trying,” he shares. One of their early plantings was chestnuts. “We direct-seeded stratified nuts in the soil,” Nelson recalls, “and protected with a tube right above the planted nut. We planted 250 on our own—my son Burnell did a lot of the work. He pounded stakes and wrapped everything in barbed wired—we spent hours

and hours and yet only a handful of those actually survived. We had some that froze after stratifying. Mostly the stakes rotted off, or cows would rub on them and break them off.”

Then they received a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to be part of a three-year study on different types of tree protection methods. “Part of that study was done on our farm,” he says, “And we soon learned that cows respect electric fence more than anything else!”

They took the learnings from these first efforts into the next big one, a planting of 1,000 black locust and chestnut trees through Trees for Grazers, and are much more encouraged by that success rate. “Before we got that professional help and installation, we worked hard planting trees and trying to protect them with stakes and barbed wire,” Nelson shares, “and still we had practically no lasting success. With all that work we still only managed to go from 100% loss to 90% loss. But with the success from that Trees for Grazers planting, we’re much more enthusiastic.” Even now Nelson is working with Trees for Grazers to plan a third and fourth planting on the farm, one planned for this fall and another next spring. “I really like how they help evaluate your situation and your goals to determine tree layout and species selection,” Nelson says. “There are just so many factors to take into account.”

Now that they have a few years of experience, they’re starting to see the first visible benefits of all this work. The planting they did with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation included 120 trees with about a 60% survival rate, and after implementing all-electric tree protection measures in following years, they have seen about a 90% success rate in their 1000-tree plantings. “Most of the loss from those electric-protected plantings was not from cow damage,”

Nelson says, but is instead attributed to natural death, rodents, and similar causes. “What is really exciting to see,” he shares, “is that in our sixth year we have practical, useful shade for our cows—one of the outcomes we were looking for! We don’t want to have to bring them in on those bright sunny days, and now they can keep grazing in this shade.”

FEATURED FARM

The Martins have experimented with interseeding cool-season perennial pastures with summer annuals to give the cows more variety to choose from, suppress weeds, improve soil health, and support pollinator populations.



Other early goals for their tree plantings included the potential for diversified cash crops. “Of that early planting of a 120 trees, a high percentage were fruit trees,” Nelson says. “We wanted to sell fruit in our on-farm store. Of course fruit trees take a while to produce, but we have already gotten some fruit. It’s only enough for the family to eat so far, but we’re thankful for it!” This diversified income stream was also the driver for selecting chestnuts as part of their early plantings as well. “We know it takes up to 15 years to produce a commercial crop rate,” he shares, “but it was exciting that at year 3 we did have a few nuts already! They were just little five-to-six-foot seedlings, but we did get a handful of nuts, and every year we get a bit more.”

These tree plantings are only part of the pasture improvements the Martins have been working on. With a total of 120 acres dedicated almost exclusively to grass pasture, Nelson is also trying to boost that critical annual yield. “We have a few acres of existing woodlot by the creek, but otherwise our acreage is all grass,” Nelson says. “We’ve been dabbling with inter-seeding winter and summer

annuals into our perennial pastures. We definitely aren’t seeing 100% success, but it does seem like it has helped.”

Re-centering dairy operations—and milk quality

In addition to all of this investment in long-term pasture infrastructure, the Martins have also continued to slowly and intentionally grow their herd from 40 in 2016 to about 140 now, with plans to continue expanding their milking herd to meet demand. “We’re milking about 35 right now,” Nelson shares, “and we’ve been keeping and raising all our heifers for the past couple of years with the goal of doubling our milking herd in the next two years.”

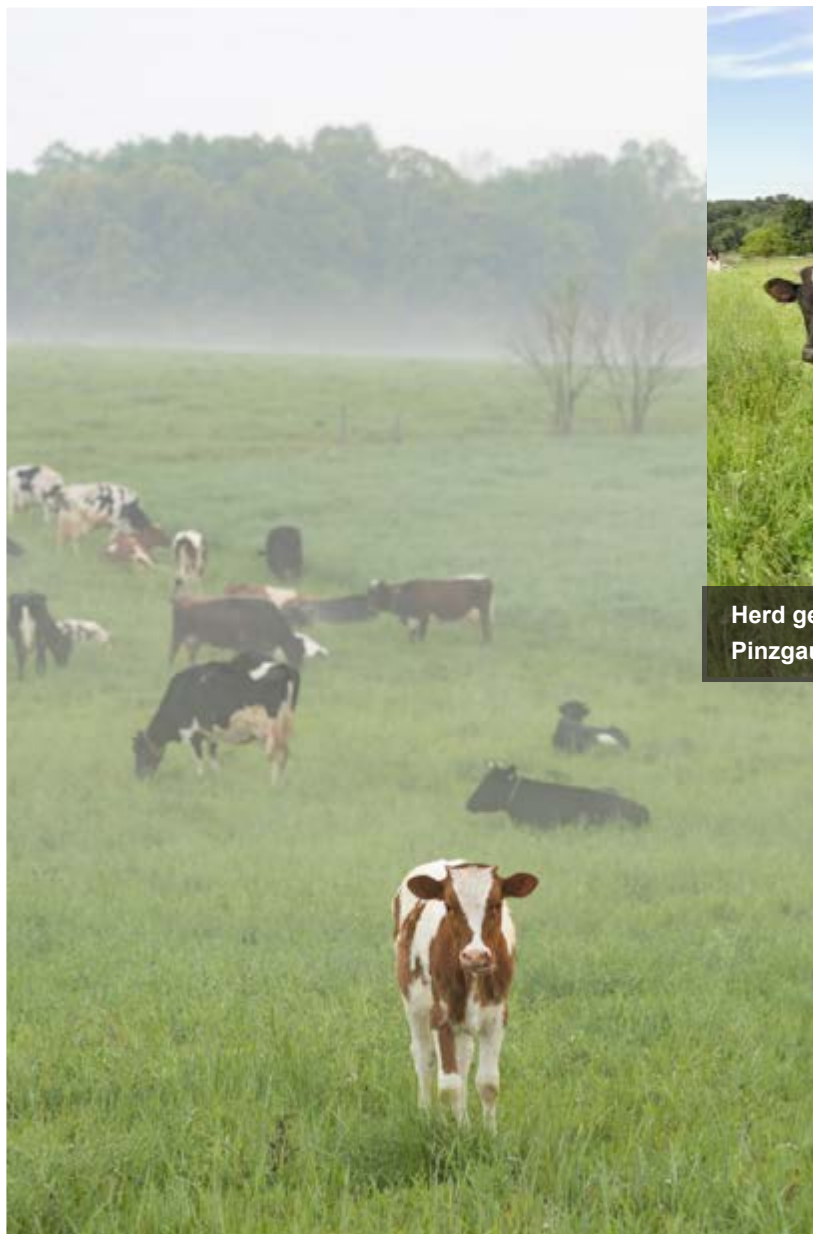
That includes upgrading their milking operations to meet both this current and planned future herd size. The Martins have an older tie-stall barn and milking system that needed to be replaced, so they renovated an addition to that original barn to become the new parlor. “We bought and installed a used single-eight milking parlor,” he says, “and laid everything out so that we can expand to a double-eight when the herd gets bigger.”

Similar to the decision to prioritize grass feeding while maintaining a small amount of grain supplements, Country Sunrise Creamery is not fully organic. Nelson believes in the principles of organic farming, but choosing whether to pursue the full certification comes down to balancing those values with the very practical cost-to-benefit comparison for their specific operations. The Martins have worked hard over the years to build up a local brand based on proven quality, and so they don’t

see that the full certification process would add significant value to their product for their customers. “I tell people we think in organic terms,” Nelson shares. “We don’t use herbicides or insecticides, we want to understand why any issues exist and treat their root causes to prevent them from reoccurring.”

The certification process is a lot of work and not an insignificant expense, and the Martins decided that, in their situation, that wouldn’t be offset by predictable increases in financial gain. “Because we’re direct marketing, our people already know us,” he explains. “We have so much more transparency and visibility than someone shipping to a co-op. So for us, it’s just not worth the expense and paperwork to certify.” The decision also allows them more flexibility, he explains. “If I have a neighbor who has some extra hay and we’re short, we’re able to buy it—it doesn’t impact our certification or status. The same goes for cows—we’re not limited to buying from organic herds. We’ll buy a cow and milk her if she’s a good cow.”

FEATURED FARM



Herd genetics include Holstein, Jersey, Guernsey, Pinzgauer, and Lineback.

This adaptive approach is obvious in the Martins' evolving herd genetics. "We started in 2016 with all Holsteins," Nelson shares, "and we still have a few pure Holsteins—but we got into crossbreeding right away and as we found opportunities we brought Jerseys, Guernseys, and other breeds into the herd. At first we did AI cross-breeding, but then in 2018 we bought a bull—a Pinzgauer." Here he pauses, "Have you ever heard of those?" and then he laughs, "It's not a popular breed."

Pinzgauers are a dual-purpose breed from Austria, he explains. "We were looking for health traits—durability, survivability, calving ease, and strong feet." Crossed with the Holstein herd, Nelson is pleased with the quality and quantity of the steers and

calves that they've raised to supply beef to the farm store and fill orders for quarters and halves directly to consumers.

"We still have some Pinzgauer genetics in the herd," he shares, but likely less than a quarter per cow with the since-added Jersey and Guernsey genes. "We were glad for the genetic influence," he says, "but we did notice that when we selected more for beef, it seems like they were a little wilder... less happy to be milked. We sold a few cows over their temperament, and as the genetics diluted, we now have some nice descendants that are tame enough." The Pinzgauer crosses were great mothers, Nelson shares, but weren't willing to adopt any other calves—and their milk production didn't compare to Holsteins. "The Pins took care of themselves," as Nelson says, "they would sacrifice milk production to maintain body condition." After the Pinzgauer bull they had a Jersey and then a Lineback, but have recently shifted back to Holstein genetics with a new, shorter Holstein bull, and they're excited to bring that milk production back into the genetic pool. Nelson shares, "We've also learned that you can select for good health traits within a breed without needing to crossbreed."

Improving milk production remains a long-term goal for the farm. "As our herd wasn't very big, eventually we stopped using DHIA, so we don't have official records of annual production," Nelson shares. "But our daily average is in the low 30s (pounds-per-cow), and as we improve forage production and bring back Holstein

FEATURED FARM

genetics, we think we're going to get closer to 40 (pounds) per cow—without increasing the grain supplement.”

The Martins have tested and evolved their milking schedule to fit their needs, as well. For a number of years, instead of once-a-day or twice-a-day milking, the Martins milked every 14 to 17 hours. “We’d milk at noon one day, then early morning the next day, then late evening the next day, and back to noon again,” Nelson recalls. “In a given week we’d milk 11 times instead of 14. That has its benefits, but with the young boys coming on and more need for regular routine, we’re trying to milk twice a day with an emphasis on consistency.”

“There’s pros and cons to either schedule,” Nelson shares. “There were times we were glad to take a noon milking and then have the evening free! But in three years a family can change a lot, and that changes your labor pool. Now that we have more adults and fewer youngsters, the routine is good and if someone needs an evening off, we can shift and be flexible and still maintain that schedule.”

The Martins’ “mostly organic” approach is evident in their commitment to natural and non-chemical herd health solutions. “We try to control the conditions to manage animal health,” Nelson says, rather than relying on chemicals to treat the problems that emerge from bad conditions.

“One thing that we are glad for is to feed Fertrell Fly Aside,” Nelson shares, a dry mineral with sulfur powder, garlic salt, and bentonite clay. “We also use Redmond Udder Mud for swollen udders and mastitis—it uses Redmond clay and peppermint oil—as well as Van Beek IntegriVIX pellets for lameness and infection in cattle.”

These remedies reduce but of course don’t remove the need for veterinarian support. “As part of the raw milk permit we vet-test for TB and Brucellosis,” Nelson shares. “Also for information purposes, we tested for Johnes Disease—paratuberculosis. We’ve had it in the herd in the past, but we have none now and we feel that comes mostly from our calving being outside and less exposed to bacterial transfer in bedding.”

Farm labor, management and generational evolution

Family values are at the heart of the Martins’ operation, and family labor is a critical component of their success and their ongoing growth and evolution. “I have nine children,” Nelson shares, “and eight of them are still at home, involved in

some way or another with running the farm. The older ones have outside hobbies and interests, of course. My two adult daughters are into photography—so if I send any pictures in without their permission, I’m in trouble!” he laughs.

This family-focused labor pool means constant change and growth. “Each year they get older, and that changes the dynamics of who is doing what chores—their responsibilities shift as they grow older, and that keeps you on your toes,” Nelson shares. “With the new milking parlor, the boys are able to help more, even the younger boys, and that allows me to do more administration and farm management,” he adds. “My parents are also still involved on a daily basis, and it’s increasingly obvious that it’s not my wit and wisdom keeping us in business!”

The most recent evolution feels like a big shift from this small, family-farm feel and regenerative, mostly-organic approach—but it’s part of evolving as a family and farm: the Martins just built a commercial-scale chicken house on the farm.

Nelson is frank about his initial misgivings about the project, but is completely invested and supportive. “This was a bunch of humble pie for me to eat,” he says, “I didn’t identify with any of the mindset that goes into commercial chicken farming. But the path was clear, I was gently led into it, and today we’re making it work so that we don’t have to compromise any aspect of our grassfed farming... but now we also have a commercial-scale conventional poultry operation.”

The on-farm store at Country Sunrise Creamery includes sales of raw milk, cheese, beef, and produce from the farm as well as featuring a variety of locally-sourced products.



FEATURED FARM

This new enterprise is driven by the next generation, but it's all part of the same farm. "Our family runs it," Nelson shares, "The daily responsibilities really belong to a couple of the kids, but we work together, and financially it's all part of the same operation." Financially speaking, it's an even bigger shift for the family. "For us, this is a huge operation; we budgeted millions of dollars," Nelson says. "It went against what I stood for—we had been operating on a practically no-debt mentality." But to undertake a project this ambitious, an equally ambitious investment is needed—and that meant a completely different financial climate.

Fortunately, it is all working out so far. "We had it all budgeted, and then with a lot of mercy from God we came in quite a bit under budget," Nelson shares. "So we're now able to use some of those already-approved funds to support investments in the dairy operation." Renovating and expanding the milking parlor was phase one of this investment, and now Nelson plans to make improvements to their feed bunk and housing structure. "Our feed bunk is 40 years old," Nelson shares, "and we can't drive a skidloader into it, so we have to load from the side and overall we end up with a lot of waste. This new one we're planning will have accommodations to drive in the end, it will include headlocks, plus a higher roof so we can bring bales in better from the side."

The new chicken operation brings its own benefits to these existing operations as well—namely high-quality manure. The Martins have always composted, from bedding and manure from the dairy to autumn leaf collection piles from the local town, but this scale of poultry manure brings new options. "It's possible that the boys could take on a commercial composting operation to utilize this new resource," he says, further diversifying the farm's cash flow while also improving pasture and tree planting productivity.

All of this was made possible by the commitment to evolving the operations into the next generation's vision of the farm, and Nelson thanks God for both the guidance and the success: "I certainly couldn't have planned it this way."

Looking to the Future, with Gratitude for Past Support

Nelson expresses his gratitude in speaking to every farm subject. To have grown and evolved and learned so much over the years, to have received such unexpected blessings, and to continue to have access to great support—all of these have contributed to where the farm is now.

"We got help from Kitchen Table Consultants, now called Good Roots, to help clean up our finances and make our books more reliable," Nelson shares. "That was a big help, and it would be nice if there were more consultants like them. Most consultants are more geared toward commercial operations. Now that we've stabilized our recordkeeping

and finances, we've just started having them coach us on marketing—they really understand the direct marketing side."

He's also grateful for all the in-person workshops and pasture walks that introduced him to new ideas and guided him along his grazing, permaculture, and silvopasture learning journey. "I always enjoy those events," he shares. "In fact, we hosted one back in May where we had decision-makers from government offices out and we got to showcase the value of silvopasture and educate these representatives so that when it comes up in their discussions they understand it and think favorably toward it. We need more of those."

Nelson has a heartfelt spiritual answer to the question, 'what help do farmers need?'

"Many farmers are religious, and that's a good thing," he says. "They recognize that they have a need that is bigger than themselves. However, a religion about God without God and his power, can only go so far. If any farmer, that is, any human being who wants to please God, would learn to pray in a healthy way they can expect an answer from the living God. This is called, doing business with God. It is not for everyone—only for those who have a healthy fear of God and want to grow in that."

All in all, the future of farming looks bright—not least because he's watching it bloom among his own children and their new vision blended in with the family tradition.

"We've had a number of factors that have helped us out," he says. "We are thankful for all those factors—some days maybe it even feels like an unfair advantage, but when you get those you just have to be humble enough to accept them."

Look forward to meeting the Martin family and experiencing their custom blend of grazing and silvopasture at the NODPA Field Days Farm Tour on Thursday, September 24, 2026 at 8:30 a.m. ♦

CERTIFIED ORGANIC MOLASSES

*Family Owned
& Operated*



**BUFFALO
MOLASSES**

MOLASSES &
LIQUID FEED SUPPLEMENTS

*Serving
USA & Canada*



Excellent Energy Source / Nutrient Value / Enhanced Palatability
Bio-Brix Soil Amendment to Promote Healthy & Rich Soil.
Pickup or Delivery for Any Size Operation.

716.714.9709 | BuffaloMolasses.com | North Java, NY

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

A CONVERSATION ABOUT FARM SUCCESSION PLANNING

continued from page 13

On the Business Itself — Getting the House in Order

Lindsey: Let's chat about the business side for a minute. Not every farm is in great financial shape when succession comes up. How do you handle that reality?

Ted: With empathy, but without avoiding the hard truth. Because the kindest thing you can do for a family is be honest with them. Handing someone a broken operation and calling it a gift helps no one. Some successors inherit operations burdened by excessive debt, operational inefficiencies, or years of unresolved financial strain. Strong succession planning means improving the health of the business before ownership changes hands, not after.

Lindsey: So what does getting the business healthy actually look like in practice?

Ted: It's different every time, but it starts with visibility and veracity. Can you think of a client we worked with recently where this was key to understanding their overall operation?

Lindsey: Definitely, and it was no small feat. The client had three separately operating entities rolled into one set of financials. It made it nearly impossible to figure out where profitability was or wasn't actually occurring. We reorganized their chart of accounts, separated financial reporting across entities, and properly allocated assets. That gave us clear visibility into gross margins by department and entity, along with much stronger insight into cash flow, key financial ratios, and overall net profitability — the full picture.

Ted: There you go. And that changes everything about how leadership makes decisions. Once they could actually see the business clearly, they could run it clearly. And more importantly, the incoming generation had a real foundation to build on instead of inheriting a puzzle they couldn't solve.

On Building the Right Team Around You

Lindsey: Ted, for a farm family who's just starting to think about succession: where do they even begin?

Ted: The first thing I tell people is don't try to do this alone. Succession planning touches family relationships, personal identity, legal structures, tax strategy, and operational complexity all at the same time. That's not a one-person job — or even a one-advisor job.

Lindsey: So who should be in the room?

Products for Your Organic Herd



- Feed Ingredients
- Pest Control
- Health Care

OMRI lists hundreds of products for organic livestock, all compliant. Look for the OMRI seal to know it's right for organics.

Free products search online!
[OMRI.org/omri-search](https://www.omri.org/omri-search)



OMRI Listed – Naturally Trusted

Make Your Feed Succeed With Thorvin

Thorvin is nature's most complete mineral source. Loaded with bioavailable nutrients, Thorvin supports reproductive, digestive, and thyroid health...for just pennies a day!

Animals Thrive on Thorvin



#1 Organic Feed Supplement



www.thorvin.com
800.464.0417

Thorvin™
World's Finest Nutrients

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Ted: At minimum you want an accountant, an attorney, a lender, and a financial advisor. But equally important is having someone who can serve as a neutral facilitator — someone who isn't emotionally invested in the outcome and can keep the process moving forward when conversations get hard. And they will get hard.

Lindsey: What about the emotional aspect of succession? There's a lot of dynamic, relational history in a family. I imagine some of these conversations require more than legal or financial support.

Ted: Absolutely. Some families benefit from professional counseling or family therapy during this process, and there's no shame in that. Succession touches everything — relationships, legacy, identity. You have to be willing to tend to all of it.

Lindsey: What would you say to the farmer who thinks they can figure it out on their own?

Ted: I'd say I understand the instinct. Farmers are resourceful, independent people. But this is the one time where that instinct can really cost you. Most farmers hope they can sort it out themselves, especially when succession feels years away. Then before they know it, that moment arrives and they're trying to untangle everything at the eleventh hour while the rest of the operation still needs running.

You're only going to do this once. Invest in an expert and make sure it's done right the first time.

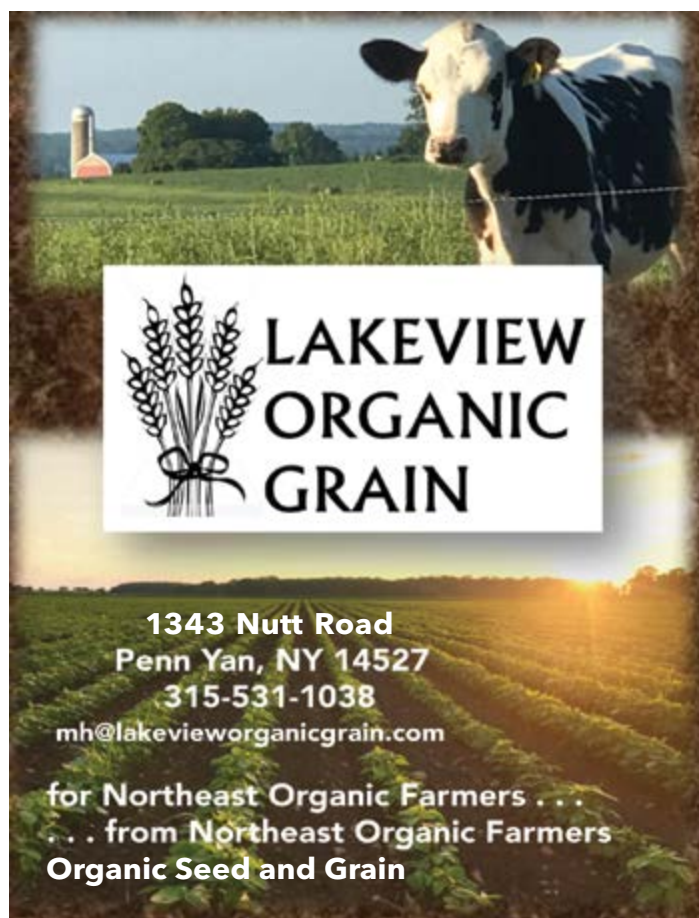
The Bottom Line

The strongest farm transitions focus on four things: financial readiness, leadership development, business health, and open communication across generations. None of those happen accidentally. All of them take time.

If you're reading this and thinking "I should probably start thinking about this," you're right. Start today. Not because the process is scary — though parts of it are — but because done well, it's one of the most powerful things a farm family can do to protect what they've built and give the next generation a real shot at success.

About Good Roots

Good Roots is a professional services firm building a better food system for people, animals, and the earth by empowering farmers and food entrepreneurs with strong foundations in finance, marketing, and management. The Good Roots team works with farmers, food brands, manufacturers, distributors, hubs, grocers, nonprofits, and more. For more information, visit www.growgoodroots.com. ♦



**LAKEVIEW
ORGANIC
GRAIN**

1343 Nutt Road
Penn Yan, NY 14527
315-531-1038
mh@lakevieworganicgrain.com

for Northeast Organic Farmers . . .
. . . from Northeast Organic Farmers
Organic Seed and Grain



**River Valley
FENCING**

*Designing and Installing Agricultural
Fences, Trellises and Bird Net
Systems throughout the Northeast*

413-348-4071

www.rivervalleyfencing.com

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices July 2026

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Total estimated sales of organic packaged fluid milk for March 2026 show an increase of 5.6% over March 2025 sales, as conventional fluid milk sales in the same month shows an increase of 2.3% over March 2025. April 2026 is not so good, with organic estimated sales at 4% lower than April 2025 and a 0.6% increase in conventional sales over April 2025. The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Market Information Branch published estimated national organic fluid milk product sales for March and April 2026, compiled with data from the Federal Milk Marketing Order (FMMO). Total US sales of packaged organic fluid milk products were estimated at 272 million pounds in March 2026, with organic Whole Milk sales at 157 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduced Milk at 113 million pounds. In April 2026, total sales of organic packaged milk were 241 million pounds, with sales of organic packaged Whole Milk at 138 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduced Milk at 103 million pounds.

In March 2026, the data shows an increase in sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged fluid products of 10.3% over March 2025, and the April 2026 data shows a decrease in sales of 1.6% over April 2025. There was a 0.1% decrease in Organic Fat Reduced Milk in March 2026 over March 2025, and a 4% decrease in April 2026 over April 2025. Year over year, there is a 0.9% decrease in sales between year-to-date April 2026 and year-to-date 2025.

The average national retail price for organic milk, as recorded by the FMMO in May 2026, decreased to \$5.24 per half gallon for Whole Milk and Organic Reduced Fat 2% milk compared to \$5.43 in January 2026 but an increase of \$0.18 over May 2025. The average national retail price for June 2026 was \$5.23 per half gallon compared to \$5.24 in June 2025, a tiny decrease of \$0.01 year-over-year. The year-to-date, January to June 2026, average retail price for organic half gallon is \$5.28, compared to \$5.01 in the same period in 2025. There was the usual range in prices for different locations, with a low of \$4.17 in Kansas and a high of \$6.68 in Pittsburgh, PA. In Syracuse, NY it was \$4.52; \$5.01 in Boston, MA; \$5.55 in Hartford, CT. Of the 30 cities reporting data, 13 had retail prices under \$5 and six had retail prices over \$6, with 11 in the \$5 per half gallon range.

Organic milk and cream are still short in the Northeast and nationally, with spot prices reported in the \$55-60/cwt range for fluid milk. Buyers are paying premiums to assist transition nationally, which is becoming attractive for herds that have the land to transition to pasture. Buyers are increasingly dropping producers further away from plants, 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. With the dynamic competition

for organic milk, producers need to assure themselves that the company they are signing with has the capacity for a prolonged time to ensure milk pick-up and stable pricing. The demand for conventional milk is testing the limits of processing facilities in the West, while Rumiano 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 April 2026, fluid Organic Milk packaged and utilized within the Order totaled 33.69 million pounds; lower than the April 2025 total of 35.86 million pounds. In April 2026, sales of Organic Whole Milk

- continued on page 30

Estimated Fluid Milk Products Sales Reports

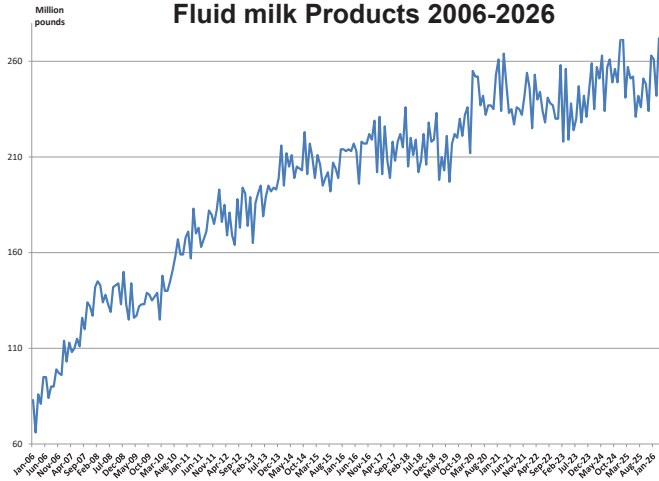
Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	March 2026	2026 Year to date	March 2025	Year to date -2025
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	157	443	10.3%	5.5%
Flavored Whole milk	1	2	31.5%	36.0%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	82	242	1.1%	-2.8%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	16	46	-8.4%	-16.5%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	10	29	-2.3%	-8.7%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	6	13	14.6%	-20.8%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	0	-100%	-87.5%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	113	329	-0.1%	-6.3%
Total Organic Milk Products	272	774	5.6%	-0.1%

Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	April 2026	2026 Year to date	April 2025	Year to date -2025
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	138	581	-1.6%	3.7%
Flavored Whole milk	1	3	37.6%	36.4%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	75	317	-7.40%	-4.00%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	15	61	-3.4%	-13.6%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	8	37	-15.1%	-10.2%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	4	17	-15.3%	-14.1%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	0	-100.0%	-91.0%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	103	432	-6.8%	-6.4%
Total Organic Milk Products	241	1,016	-4.0%	-0.9%

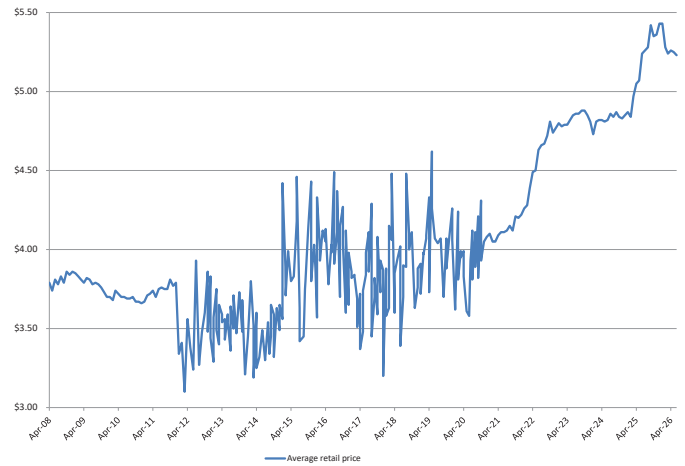
Data may not add due to rounding to the nearest million pounds

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

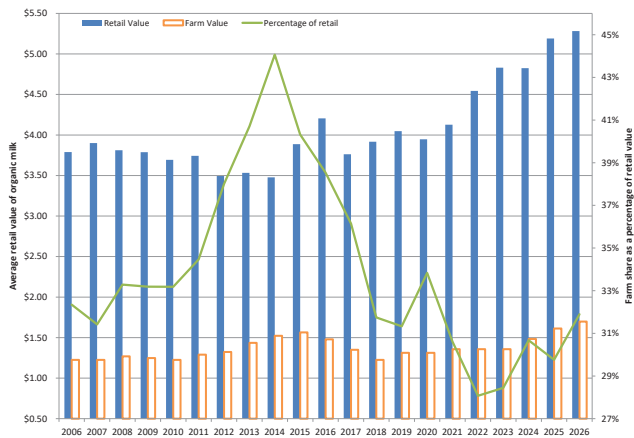
Estimated Total U.S. Sales of Organic Fluid milk Products 2006-2026



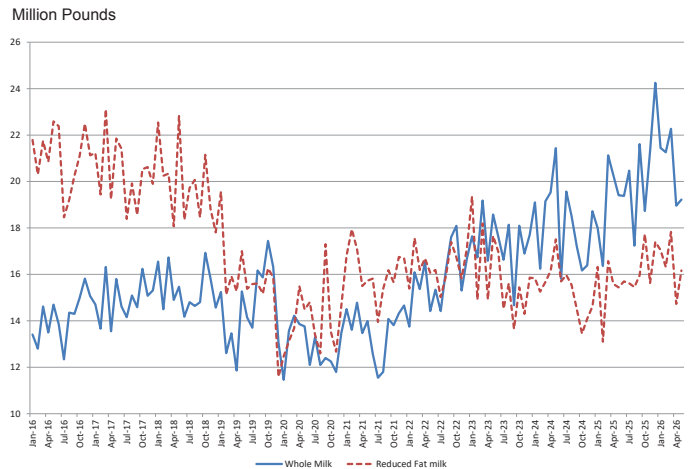
Average Organic Retail price for 1/2 gallons as reported by USDA AMS 2008-2026



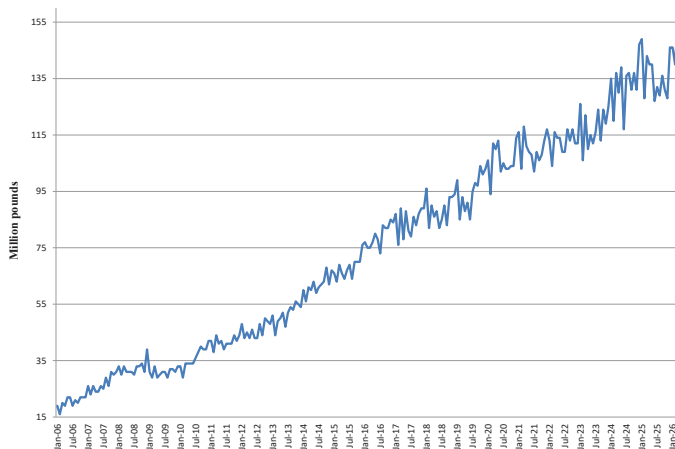
Average retail price, average farm share and percentage for half gallon of organic milk



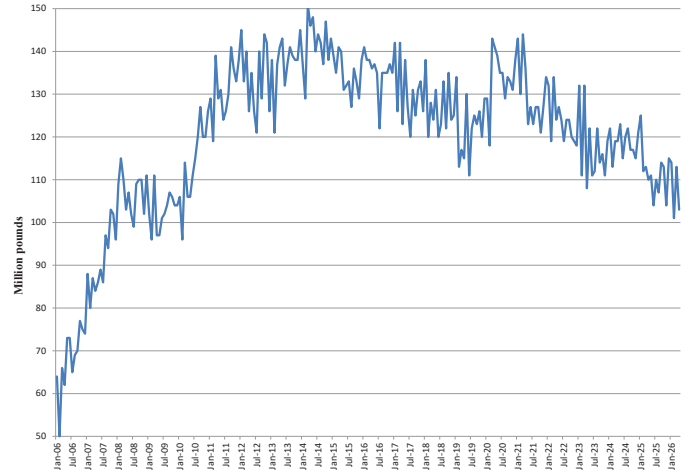
Utilization of Organic Fluid milk in FMMO 1 2016-2026 (not including fluid packaged milk processed out of order)



Organic Whole Milk Retail Sales 2006-2026



Organic Reduced-Fat retail sales 2006-2026



ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices

continued from page 28

packaged in the Order were 18.96 million pounds, 1.31 million pounds lower than April 2025. In April 2026, sales of Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged and utilized in the Order were 14.73 million pounds, 0.86 million pounds lower than April 2025. Total Class 1 milk (both conventional and organic) packaged outside the Order, but sold within the Order, increased by 12.16 million pounds in April 2026 over April 2025 to 151.02 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 May 2026, sales of fluid Organic Milk packaged and utilized within the Order totaled 35.39 million pounds, higher than the previous year of 34.85 million pounds, a small increase of 0.54 million pounds. In May 2026, sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged in the Order were 19.22 million pounds, slightly less than the May 2025 19.41 million pounds. In May 2026, sales of Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged and utilized in the Order were 16.17 million pounds, 0.72 million pounds higher than in May 2025. Packaged organic and conventional milk coming into the Order in May 2026 increased by 5.71 million pounds over the same period in 2025. Year to date, May 2026, there has been 57.32 million pounds more of packaged milk coming into the order than in 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 April 2026, of the 241 million pounds packaged and sold as Class 1 organic milk in the US, 48.57 million pounds were from Order 32 (Central), of which 43.61 million pounds were utilized in other Orders. FMMO order 1 (Northeast) packaged 33.69 million pounds of organic milk in April 2026. FMMO 51 (California),

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	33.69	35.86	35.68	31.51	33.23	28.97	29.35
May	35.39	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	48.57	46.61	47.65	42.20	54.13	48.09	49.18	43.53
May	46.57	41.21	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

packaged 36.85 million pounds, of which 893,541 pounds were sold in other Orders (just over 2% of the total packaged product). Order 33 (Midwest) packages less than Order 1, 32 and 51, with 23.68 million pounds in April 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 and aggregated by the AMS Dairy Program Market Information Branch, approximately 98 million pounds are not accounted for (about 40%) in the individual FMMO's public reports. We have no independent

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

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 reported weighted average Pay Price for the first quarter in 2026 was \$41.67/cwt, with a monthly range of \$40.05/cwt to a maximum of \$42.62/cwt (does not include any deductions for hauling). The average daily production per cow, for 2025, was 46.65 lbs./cow and for the first quarter 2026 it was 52.72 lbs. The weighted average Pay Price for March 2026 was \$40.05/cwt. with daily production of 51.01lbs.

The USDA AMS Market News Pennsylvania Report shows a weighted average Pay Price was \$43.62/cwt for first quarter 2026, with a monthly range of \$41.21/cwt to a maximum of \$45.39/cwt (does not include any deductions for hauling). The average daily production per cow for 2025 was 31.35 pounds, and for the first quarter of 2026 it was 27.89 pounds. The weighted average Pay Price for March 2026 was \$41.21/cwt. with an average daily production of 28.28lbs.

Organic Milk Exports

The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) releases monthly export data which includes export volumes and values for organic milk categorized as HS-10 code 0401201000, milk and cream, not concentrated nor sweetened, of a fat content, by weight, exceeding 1% but not exceeding 6%, certified organic. The data from March 2026 shows that organic milk HS-10 exports were 11,571 cwt., an increase of 4,650 cwt. over the same month in 2025. April 2026 data showed exports of 8,345 cwt., a decrease of 3,046 cwt. over April 2025. Year-to-date April 2026 total exported milk was 35,140 cwt, an 11.6% drop on the same period in 2025. None of this milk is subject to tariffs under the USMCA and any increase will still fall below the level where current agreements mandate tariffs being added.

Auction News

There were no published sales of organic cows and heifers at the Premier Livestock and Auctions, Withee, WI in April and June 2026. Organic cull cows remained constant at \$155/cwt and calf prices remain consistently high.

At Hoskins Livestock Auction, New Berlin, NY in May and June 2026, the average price range for organic cattle hasn't changed much: 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

Effective 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.

Screwworm establishment in the northeast is much less likely than in warmer southern regions. The greatest risk to the region comes from the movement of infested animals from affected areas rather than natural spread. Producers know where their livestock comes from and take more precautions if they were recently transported from the South or from areas under animal health restrictions. Canada and at least 12 states have some form of import bans, quarantines, or enhanced entry biosecurity for livestock arriving from impacted areas. These include **Pennsylvania, New York, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Montana, West Virginia, North Dakota, South Dakota, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina**. Even though the current risk is low, early detection matters. Producers should monitor animals for unusual wounds, wounds that worsen rapidly, foul odor, visible maggots, or signs of pain and irritation, and contact a veterinarian if they see anything suspicious. For those producers that find themselves in an affected area and want to take selected animals (young stock, dry cows) off pasture or into areas that they can more closely observe them, there is already a provision within the organic regulations to do that. The provision is in 7 CFR 205.238, Mammalian and non-avian livestock living conditions. This section requires that all animals must have year-round access to the outdoors, except that they may be temporarily confined in certain situations. One of these conditions (listed in paragraph (b)(3)) is when the health, safety, and well-being of the animal could be jeopardized. An active screwworm quarantine would qualify as jeopardizing the health, safety, and well-being of an animal.

Organic Feed

Data from USDA for the Northeast has organic feed corn delivered to the elevator increasing in price (and probably in trucking to a farm) with the price averaging \$14.31 per bushel in May and \$15.00 in June 2026. Organic feed soybean delivered to the elevator averaged \$26/bu. in May and June 2026. Organic feed wheat averaged \$10.50/bushel in May and June 2026. Soybean meal was trading at \$934/ton in May and \$944/ton in June 2026, with consistent demand. I have no accurate information on the price of hay, which depends on availability and expensive trucking. Buy regionally as soon

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

as possible. Hay availability in the US is affected by prolonged drought in many areas.

The US Drought Monitor reports for the Northeast that areas from eastern Massachusetts into Maine experienced temperatures 8–10 degrees above normal. Much of West Virginia, western Pennsylvania, western New York, and portions of New England also received above-normal precipitation. Rainfall in Maine allowed for improvements to moderate drought across much of the state but moderate drought expanded in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and eastern New York, while severe drought now encompasses all of Long Island. Extreme drought expanded farther north in Delaware and into additional areas of eastern Maryland. ♦

(Feed pay charts can be viewed online at www.nodpa.com)

Classified Ads

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Senior Manager of the Dairy Program, Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture & the Environment (WNC) a fast-growing nonprofit organization based on a campus of over 600 acres of coastal farmland in Freeport, Maine. Reporting to the Director of Farmer Training & Partnerships and participating in WNC's Program Leadership Team, the Senior Manager of the Dairy Program is responsible for the overall management of Wolfe's Neck Center's organic dairy and cattle operations, ensuring herd health, milk quality, pasture productivity, and farm viability. The position also serves as the lead mentor and supervisor for the on-site Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship program, helping train the next generation of grazing dairy farmers. For complete information and to apply, go to this link: <https://wolfesneck.isolvedhire.com/jobs/1797349>

HAY/FEED

FOR SALE: Certified Organic wrapped round hay bales.

2026 crop, dairy quality feed, 4' x 4.5' bales, 75% dry. Large and solid bales. Make sure that you have enough feed for winter now, don't wait until supplies are short. Large quantities and trucking available. / \$50 / bale for 1st cut, \$60 / bale for 2nd and 3rd cut. Contact ericatparis@gmail.com, 802-274-6402.

Location: Lyndonville, VT.

HAY FOR SALE: Certified organic wrapped round bales.

60% to 70% dry but somewhat cured. 4 x 4 ft bales but slightly overstuffed, solid and firm. Great milk quality hay, test results will be available. Large quantities available, don't get caught short, make sure that you have enough feed now to make it through the winter. \$50/bale for 1st cut, \$60/bale for 2nd/3rd cut. Trucking available. Contact Eric Paris, ericatparis@gmail.com, 802-274-6402.

Location: Lyndonville, Vermont

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@familyfarmstead dairy.com, 607-397-4044; www.familyfarmstead dairy.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 PRODUCTION

Integrating Grazing Management and Behavioral Responses to Optimize Pasture Utilization

By James Lawhead and Leoni F. Martins, The Pennsylvania State University

Numerous factors influence decisions in grazing systems. Cattle number, land availability, soil types, weather conditions, and animal productivity are some of the key variables directly affecting pasture management for dairy cows. In grazing systems, the decision of when to graze and how much to harvest often considers the economic trade-offs between maximizing milk production per animal and per acre. For instance, increasing the stocking density (number of cows/area) and the grazing intensity may contribute to maximizing the total amount of forage harvested; however, it could also limit the productivity of individual cows due to decreased forage quality.

Data collection in grazing systems has long relied on manual, intensive, and time-consuming activities. With the rapid ascension of precision technologies, farmers now have the potential to generate information and improve grazing management more efficiently. In this article, we discuss novel grazing strategies with the potential to improve cow and land productivity, with a focus on grazing intensity and cow behavior. Additionally, we discuss the variability in forage mass yield across different grazing systems in Pennsylvania, and how this variation needs to be considered when evaluating pastures.

Sward Height and Grazing Management

Sward height, defined as the length of the plants from the ground to the top of the leaf canopy, is a measure commonly used for pasture evaluation. Sward height can be easily determined with a pasture (i.e., grazing) stick by holding the stick vertically in the pasture vegetation. The height is not determined at the tallest leaves reach, but at the height of the densest part of the vegetation (**Figure 1**). In the example below, pasture height reading should be 9.5" rather than over 11" (the height of the tallest leaves).

The sward height is a direct measure of light interception, which is correlated with forage production (lbs/acre). Light interception refers to the amount of solar radiation that is intercepted by the forage canopy, with research showing that optimum forage production is achieved when 95% of the light is intercepted. Exceeding 95% light interception at pre-grazing does not promote net gains in forage production but substantially decreases forage quality due to greater accumulation of aging material, reproductive structures (e.g., blooms and blossoms), and lignification (i.e., decreased digestibility) of basal plant structures. Sward height corresponding to 95% light interception has been extensively studied, and general recommendations for different forage species are available in the literature.

For long-term pasture productivity and persistency of cool season grasses, a practical goal is to aim for post-grazing height of 1.6 to 2.0" because most of the water-soluble carbohydrates needed for plant regrowth are stored below this point. In rotational (intermittent) systems, post-grazing heights could be managed around 50% of the pre-grazing height. For example, for many tall-growing cool season grasses, such as orchardgrass, pre- and post-grazing heights would be 8–10 and 4–5", respectively. This practice would likely decrease grazing interval and may improve forage quality.

Post-grazing Heights for Dairy Cows: What Does the Research Show?

Recent research (Menegazzi et al., 2025; <https://doi.org/10.3168/jds.2025-26767>) has evaluated the effects of two post-grazing heights on forage production and lactational performance in dairy cows maintained in a strip-grazing system of tall fescue (*Lolium arundinaceum*) across nearly an entire lactation. Pre-



Figure 1. Grazing stick used to measure pasture sward height.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

grazing height was 9.3 and 8.7" whereas post-grazing heights were 3 and 6" for conventional (control) and moderate grazing (treatment), respectively. Sward height depletion was 66 and 35% of pre-grazing height, period of stay was 2.9 and 3.9 days/strip, and number of grazing cycles was 3.3 and 8.3 for control and treatment strategies, respectively. Area used was lower (2.9 and 4.0 acres) and stocking rate (1.4 and 1.0 cow/ac) was greater in conventional than moderate grazing systems.

Overall, cows managed in a moderate grazing system (highest sward height) had increased milk production (72.8 vs. 67.2 lbs/d energy-corrected milk; ECM) and earlier recovery of body condition score in the lactation compared with cows managed in a conventional grazing system. Additionally, higher post-grazing sward reduced feed use per unit of milk produced. The drawback was that the stocking rate was 29% lower for the higher sward height group, leading to decreased milk and ECM yields/acre compared with the lower post-grazing sward height. Despite a numerical difference (\$1,245 vs. \$1,092/acre per 215 days), income over feed costs did not statistically differ between treatments in that study. Clearly, moderate grazing positively affected individual cow performance, but these benefits were offset by lower land productivity.

The mechanisms underlying the improved individual cow performance observed at the taller post-grazing height reported by Menegazzi et al. (2025) were further investigated in a follow-up study (Menegazzi et al., 2026; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.animal.2026.101850>). The authors demonstrated that cows managed under a 6" post-grazing height exhibited shorter but more frequent meals and sampled feeding stations at a faster rate than cows managed under a 3" post-grazing height. The taller post-grazing height resulted in fewer but larger bites per feeding station, increasing nutrient intake rate without extending daily grazing time. These findings suggest that differences in post-grazing sward height primarily influence grazing behavior, with taller post-grazing heights promoting greater selection of higher-quality forage by dairy cows.

Forage Mass, Between- and Within-Farm Variation in Forage Yield

In addition to height, density or volume (estimated as the forage mass lbs/ft² or lbs/ft³, respectively) also affect the availability of forage and grazing behavior. Cows grazing pastures with high versus low forage density show marked differences in biting activity and number of feeding stations—both representative of short-term



THE ACA IMPROVES CONSISTENCY
IN ORGANIC STANDARDS

**Because the
organic seal
should mean
something**

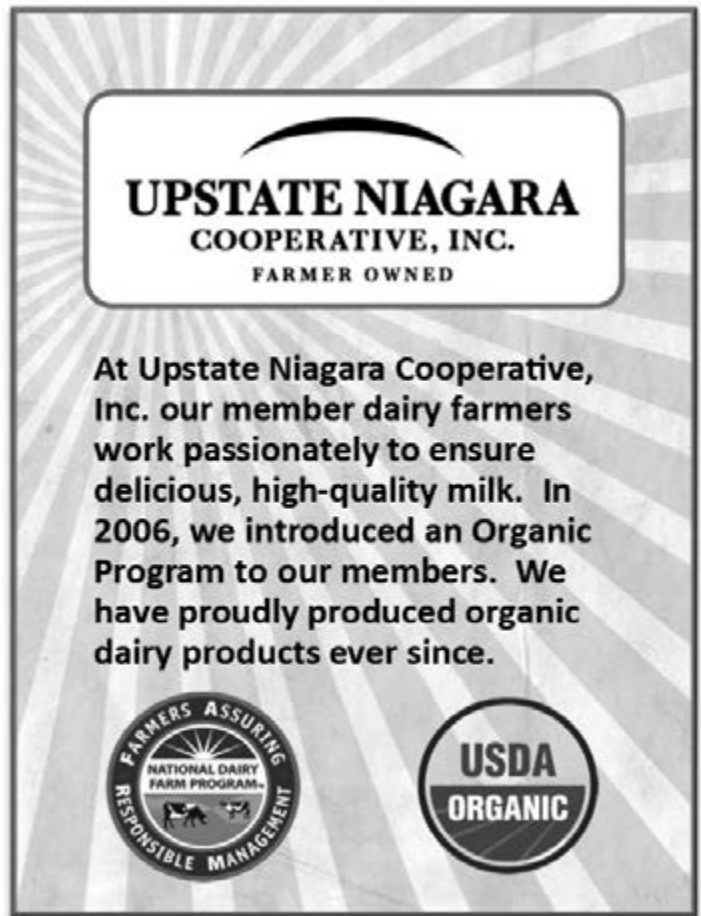
Without consistent standards:

- Organic loses its meaning
- Consumers lose trust
- Farmers lose the premium that keeps them thriving

aca

accreditedcertifiers.org/membership/

USDA ORGANIC



**UPSTATE NIAGARA
COOPERATIVE, INC.**
FARMER OWNED

At Upstate Niagara Cooperative, Inc. our member dairy farmers work passionately to ensure delicious, high-quality milk. In 2006, we introduced an Organic Program to our members. We have proudly produced organic dairy products ever since.

**FARMERS ASSURING
NATIONAL DAIRY
FARM PROGRAM
RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT**

**USDA
ORGANIC**

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

grazing behavior. It is important to note that cows have preference and motivation during grazing, and forage quality and availability are key determinants for optimum feed intake in grazing systems. Low quality swards are expected to reduce grazing efficiency as cows waste time sorting for the most nutritive plant structures (leaves versus stems and aging material). In this sense, grazing intensity plays a role in forage quality and intake, which can be easily determined by post-grazing height.

Forage mass can be measured using the quadrat technique, which consists of harvesting forage within a frame of known area (**Figure 2**). A quadrat can be constructed using four PVC pipes measuring 1.64 ft in length, resulting in an area of 2.69 ft². The quadrat should be placed randomly throughout the paddock, and all forage within the frame should be harvested and collected in a bag or bucket. Be sure to record both the initial and final sward heights. The final height should represent the target post-grazing residual height defined by your grazing system. Weigh the harvested forage and collect a subsample for dry matter determination using your preferred method (e.g., microwave, Koster tester, or air fryer). Multiply the harvested forage mass by the dry matter concentration to calculate forage dry matter yield within the quadrat. This value can then be converted to forage mass on an area basis and expressed as either lb/ac or lb/in/ac. When estimating the amount of forage available to grazing cows, it is important to account for grazing efficiency, as not all forage present in the paddock will be consumed. Depending on pasture conditions and grazing management, grazing efficiency typically ranges from 30 to 50%.

Alternatively, forage mass may be determined using a rising plate meter. The plate meter estimates total forage mass (lb/ac = kg of dry matter/ha × 0.89) based on compressed height of the sward. This represents an easier and efficient way to determine forage mass and sward height, although frequent calibrations may be required. Compressed height determined by the plate meter is used in a model to estimate total forage mass, and several studies have reported the limitations of these models to accurately predict forage mass across different forage species, seasons, and sward structure (e.g., grazing architecture and sward height).

Data collected by our team from April to June 2026 on organic and regenerative dairy farms across Pennsylvania illustrate the variability between forage mass estimates obtained using a rising

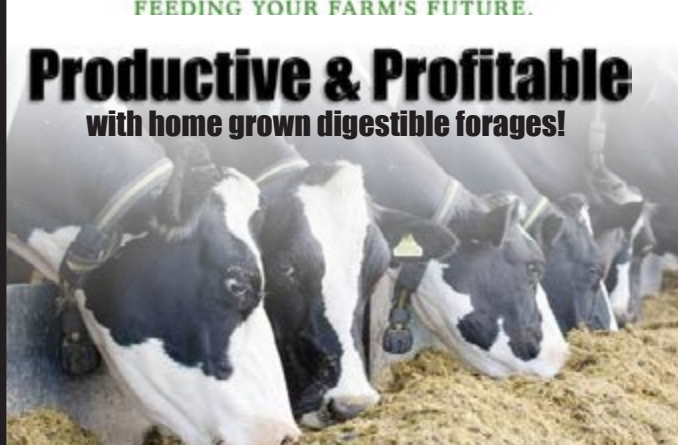


Figure 2. Quadrat with an area of 2.69 ft² used for forage mass determination in pasture systems.



King's AgriSeeds Inc.
FEEDING YOUR FARM'S FUTURE.

Productive & Profitable
with home grown digestible forages!



**Contact your local dealer
today to find the best fit for
your operation!**

717-687-6224
KingsAgriSeeds.com
Lancaster, PA

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

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
SPRINGFIELD, MA
PERMIT NO. 1094

NODPA News • Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance • www.nodpa.com

plate meter and the quadrat technique (Table 1). Notably, substantial discrepancies were observed between the two methods, with the rising plate meter overestimating forage mass on a dry matter basis by approximately 3- to 13-fold relative to the quadrat method. These

findings highlight the importance of calibrating plate meter equations to local pasture conditions to ensure accurate estimates of forage yield and, consequently, more reliable assessments of forage intake by grazing cows.

Table 1. Characterization of height and forage mass estimated using the rising plate meter or quadrat techniques across farms between April and June 2026 in Pennsylvania

Datapoint	Height	Rising Plate Meter		Quadrat		Ratio ²
		lb/ac ¹	lb/in/ac ¹	lb/ac ¹	lb/in/ac ¹	
1	4.50	3,249	728	331	74	9.8
2	4.22	3,057	750	375	89	8.2
3	3.70	2,744	756	605	163	4.5
4	4.65	3,326	724	1,025	221	3.2
5	4.82	3,445	729	1,150	238	3.0
6	4.82	3,450	730	1,303	270	2.6
7	4.51	3,251	737	413	92	7.9
8	7.05	4,860	711	677	96	7.2
9	7.24	4,968	690	2,182	301	2.3
10	2.01	1,670	854	130	64	12.9
11	8.45	5,753	685	3,317	393	1.7
12	7.76	5,317	732	1,768	228	3.0
13	4.65	3,330	732	932	201	3.6
14	6.32	4,402	702	1,177	186	3.7
15	3.75	2,763	747	852	227	3.2
16	5.92	4,146	706	1,446	244	2.9
Average	5.27	3,733	732	1,105	193	3.4
SD ³	1.71	1,083	38	806	92	1.3
CV ³ , %	32.4	29.0	5.2	73.0	47.8	-

¹Forage mass is expressed on a dry matter basis.
²Ratio was calculated as rising plate meter forage mass ÷ quadrat forage mass.
³Standard deviation and coefficient of variation (SD ÷ Average).

The choice of calibration equation can substantially influence the relationship between forage mass estimates obtained from the two methods. In our dataset, the best fit was achieved using a linear regression with the intercept constrained to zero. Based on this model, each 1 lb/ac increase in forage mass measured by the rising plate meter corresponded to 0.32 lb/ac measured by the quadrat. Therefore, rising plate meter values can be converted to quadrat-equivalent forage mass estimates by applying the corresponding calibration equation. It is noted, however, that these values may only be accurate for the dataset used to generate the equations.

Summary

Different grazing intensities and management are expected to modulate cow behavior and productivity. Farms with limited acreage may choose to be more aggressive with the stocking density and utilize lower sward heights to maximize production per acre. Other farms may have the opportunity to utilize lower stocking densities and higher post-grazing sward heights, taking advantage of faster regrowth and higher-quality forage to increase individual cow production. Alternatively, some farms may choose to group cows based on production merit and manage these groups using different grazing approaches. ♦