NODPA News

Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

September 2026 Volume 26, Issue 5 WWW.NODPA.COM

INSIDE THIS ISSUE: Organic Industry News

Organic Production

Member Info

Jill & Stephon Gould of HaR-Go Farm

FEATURE FARM: HaR-Go FARM

PAVILION, NY

Owned and operated by the Gould Family

HaR-Go Farm with Stephen Gould

By Ris Pareti, NODPA Contributing Writer

In 1956, Harold and Rose Gould had a dream: build and run their own dairy farm.

Three generations later, Stephen Gould - their grandson - is keeping that dream alive.

Stephen Gould runs HaR-Go Farm, an organic dairy in Pavilion, NY, with his wife, Jill Gould. "Being able to work together is special," he shares in earnest.

HaR-Go Farm owns 550 tillable acres and rents an additional 450 acres. The farm also has 100 acres of woodland, 190 acres of permanent

- continued on page 20

Idaho Organic Dairies Receive Statewide Temporary Variance from Pasture Requirement; Aurora Dairy's Colorado Operations Receive More Generous Variance

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director and Kathie Arnold, NODPA Policy Committee Chair

Producers need temporary variances. Farming is all about dealing with the unexpected, even more so with dramatic weather fluctuations in regions that have not experienced such a range of weather extremes. What starts as a drought year may change as the year progresses and equally the opposite.

If it looks like drought or other natural disaster is going to prevent an operation from meeting

- continued on page 12

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Message from NODPA Co-President

It's time to attend the 26th Annual NODPA Field Days, September 24 & 25, 2026, at the Berks County Agricultural Center, Leesport, PA. This is an important learning opportunity hosted near organic farms once a year. There will be two farm tours. Touring both Farms is an important part of the learning at the NODPA Field Days. This year, the Thursday morning tour will be at Country Sunrise Creamery and Farm Store, Meyerstown, PA, operated by Nelson Martin, and the Friday afternoon farm tour is at Forrest and Greg Stricker's farm, Spring Creek Farms, Wernersville, PA. I am familiar with both farms and the operators, and I can tell you there is a lot to learn from both farms. I would highly recommend your attendance if you are serious about producing quality organic dairy.

Nelson Martin's farm is operated by his large family and directed by Nelson. Nelson is an 'outside of the box' kind of thinker. Forrest Stricker on the Spring Creek Farm and his son Greg run an all Grassfed operation and ship milk to Maple Hill dairy. They prove you can farm on the hills without them washing away. They prove you can do dairy profitably without Grain and take care of your cows at the same time. They prove you can deal directly with the public and ship Milk to Maple Hill. They prove that two generations can work together and have enough profit for both to live comfortably.

Both of these men have vision beyond their farms and work with Lancaster County Graziers in planning their annual two day meeting in Quarryville, Pennsylvania, usually held in February. Both men come from conventional dairy to organic and grass fed dairy. So what you will see on both farms is innovation in real time that is evolving and learning and profiting as we go. The other speakers are all worth hearing-addressing how to improve cow and calf health, improve pastures through silvopasture, and managing pasture for better profits, but especially Ted LeBow, the keynote speaker. He is an experienced financial advisor and has helped us greatly on our farm, and I think Nelson Martin works with him as well. He brings with him a wealth of knowledge about how to keep a good set of records and how to use them to make business decisions. His talk will be well worth your time, and visiting two farms and mingling with other producers from different states will also be good for your future. That's what NODPA's goal is-to build your future in the organic dairy business. Now it's up to you to use them to help you on your farm. See page 16 for details and to learn how to register.

Roman Stoltzfoos, NODPA CO-President

Phone: 717-278-1070, and texting is preferred
Email: romanstoltzfoos@gmail.com

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

The 2026 Farm Bill: Risks but No Rewards

The 2026 Farm Bill, Agricultural Act of 2026, and its provisions to establish Risk Based Certification is not what Organic Producers need or want

By Ed Maltby, NOPDA Executive Director

The organic community has been grappling with what is the best, most transparent and inclusive process to make changes to modernize program oversight and verification that will support a highly credible but more affordable, competitive and inclusive organic market for producers and consumers. Is it better to make changes, legislatively, through the Farm Bill or by working with the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) and the National Organic Program (NOP)? There are no shortcuts as both approaches take time, regulatory change and are subject to outside pressure. The organic community's decision to make organic certification a federal regulatory process in 1990 means that any change will be slow and affected by the national politics of Congress and the administration.

Organic farming is about continuous improvement and soil improvement, which should be reflected in how the USDA certified organic program is managed, adapts to changing circumstances, and grows. The Organic Trade Association (OTA) and its partners have worked to include language in the 2026 Farm Bill to make changes to the Organic Food and Production Act of 1990 (OFPA). The language directs the Secretary to conduct a comprehensive study of the NOP to determine how risk-based oversight could be applied to compliance enforcement and certification verification. NODPA and other organizations believe USDA should use the existing tools and expertise of the NOSB and the NOP to support continuous improvement. NODPA does not support using Farm Bill legislation to do that work and supports striking the National Organic Program Oversight Protocols and Inspection section from the current text of the Farm Bill.

Challenge of introducing programs into the Farm Bill

The Farm Bill process is highly political, shaped by national debates over social issues, and vulnerable to last-minute amendments from key lawmakers under lobbyist pressure. Even after compromises have been reached and the bill is nearly complete, such amendments can undermine the integrity of small programs, including organic certification. The nutrition programs dominate both the process and the politics of the Farm Bill, making up approximately 72% of the Farm Bill budget. Organic programs amount to approximately 0.15% of the Farm Bill budget and are distributed amongst many different parts (Titles) of the Farm Bill.

This risk is especially heightened under the current administration and Congress. Anything included in the Farm Bill must still go through the regulatory process of rule publication and comment period on the Federal Register. Proposals that first appear in a Farm Bill but fail to reach the final version may later be attached to other legislation that does not carry the intent of the original idea. Many programs take years to finance and enact. Agencies tend to ignore deadlines placed by Congress for enacting new proposals.It's important to know that the Farm Bill used to be enacted approximately every 5 years, but the last one was in 2018. There has always been discussion about stripping the Nutrition title out of the Farm Bill but that has gone nowhere in a partisan Congress. Without more recent legislation, the 2018 Farm Bill provisions have been repeatedly extended until September 30, 2026, with important agriculture and nutrition bills attached to other must pass legislation.

At the time of this writing, The *Agricultural Act of 2026*, or Farm Bill, is stalled. The Senate Agriculture Committee chair recessed the mark-up meeting for the Senate version of the Farm Bill on August 6, 2026 after failing to secure enough votes to approve the Republican version of the Farm Bill, due to Senator Mitch McConnell's (R-KY) absence, and unanimous Democratic opposition. The hold-up occurred because the committee could not agree on the nutrition programs, even though there was bi-partisan agreement on many of the different parts of the Bill by the Senate committee. There is no possibility that the full Senate will vote to approve a Farm Bill and that the House and Senate conference committee will fix differences between the two versions in time by a vote from both House and Senate on the combined version before they leave Washington for the mid-term elections. The 2018 Farm Bill will likely be extended again before the end of this September. Some observers expect Congress to pass a full Farm Bill during the December 2026 lame-duck session, while others anticipate an omnibus bill with key agriculture provisions in December 2026 and a restart of the Farm Bill process in the new Congress in 2027.

The Organic Standards Board

With the enactment of the OFPA in 1990, organic agriculture was designed to differ from other commodities by establishing the NOSB, which works with the National Organic Program

continued on page 5

"... 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.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

THE 2026 FARM BILL: RISKS BUT NO REWARDS

continued from page 3

to oversee accreditation and the program. The NOSB advises the USDA on the management of the National List, on organic standards, practices, and policies, and supports the continued development of organic rules. It also promotes transparency by giving the public, farmers, scientists, and consumers a direct role in shaping and updating organic food regulations and preserving organic integrity. This gives the organic community the opportunity and right to be directly involved with the continuous improvement of the organic certification program. This process can be slow and is deliberately transparent. It is open to influence from the policies of each administration and, as a small program, has difficulty maintaining its unique status and some independence. The NOP is severely underfunded and understaffed for an international certification program, so NOSB recommendations can take years to become Proposed and Final regulations through the Federal Register.

NODPA believes we can achieve more by working with the NOP to make certification practices sound and sensible, size appropriate, and to educate inspectors/certifiers not to impose unnecessary requirements. We can work with many certifiers who already achieve that goal. We need to work with the NOP to improve inspector training and customer relations between certifier and producer. NOP already has regular meetings with certifiers and annual educational sessions to share evaluations of different processes and provide updates on the NOP's priorities.

What is wrong with the current legislative language: a Summary

NODPA and others have learned through experience the legal and practical importance of precise legislative language, for example, definitions of Access to Pasture, Origin of Livestock, and now defining what 'Temporary' means when attached to a variance. A major concern with OTA's proposed Farm Bill language is that it is unclear, overly broad, undefined, and open to interpretation. It gives the Secretary of Agriculture discretionary, statutory authority that could weaken the oversight process. While more support is needed for organic farmers to meet recordkeeping requirements, the proposed legislative language does just the opposite by providing the Secretary with authority to reduce oversight and verification as part of certification (reducing in-

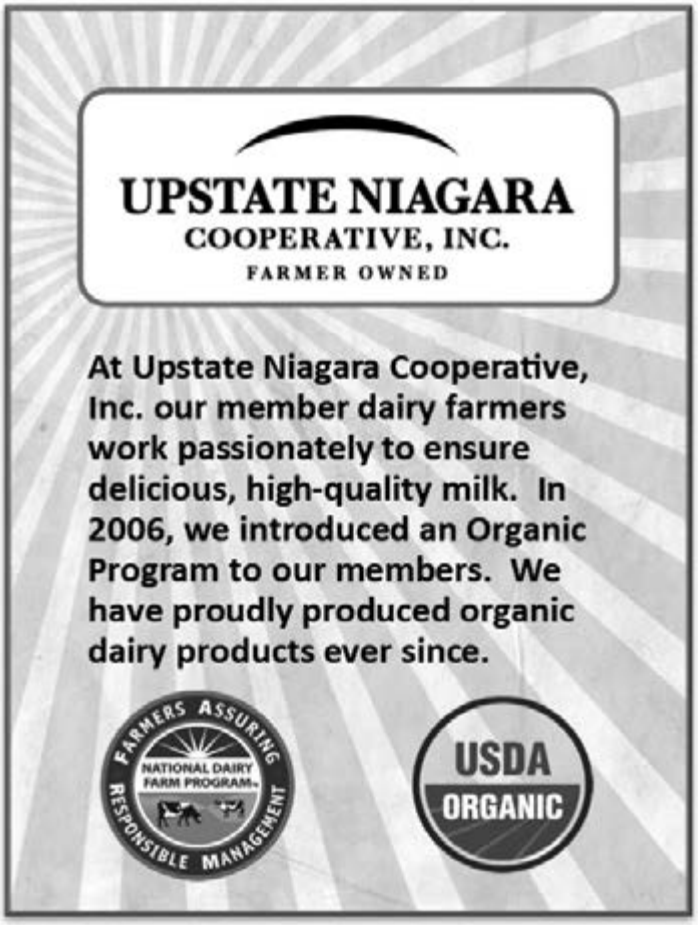
ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

person inspection to every 3 years), which will likely result in the erosion of consumer and producer trust in the organic label. The language sidelines the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) to consultative status in the process of establishing integrity protocols when there should be a strengthening of NOSB's authority over standards with stakeholder engagement. The language weakens the annual on-site inspection process established to ensure compliance rather than creating resource support for farmers to meet rigorous standards in a growing market that is demanding more, not less, verification of product, for example--demands for a 'clean label.'

Problems with the Proposed Study by the USDA

The OTA language included in the draft Farm Bill directs the Secretary to conduct a comprehensive study of the National Organic Program and assess how risk-based oversight could apply to compliance enforcement and certification verification.

- The USDA lacks the capacity to complete a comprehensive and transparent study. The USDA is in the process of large-scale reorganization, and the National Organic Program has lost one third of its employees and is looking at being level funded for the upcoming year. There was no request for funds to pay for the study.



- We already have the NOSB which is mandated by law, has a defined process, and is a representative body of stakeholders from the organic community that is already funded and whose mission it is to do this work.

- The NOSB has already considered some of the issues raised by the OTA and has produced informed comments that can be reviewed and commented on by the industry in a transparent process. Some of them have said they need more consideration before moving to become regulation.

- USDA, not the Inspector General or an independent committee, will be running an internal assessment of its own program and choosing who is on the committee. USDA has a lengthy history of accepting pressure from many different commodities and trade groups who have an interest in undermining the long-term integrity of Organic certification and little support for farmer led involvement.

- Despite the guardrails that OTA has introduced into the proposed legislation, USDA studies are historically usually buried, too long, dominated by trade groups or unable to reach agreement on recommendations. In addition, there is a history of such studies being dragged out later and re-purposed after institutional memories are long gone -- typically again by a trade group that sees it can use it (or part of it) to their advantage.

- Any recommendations from the study will have to go through the Federal Register rulemaking process with a proposed comment period of 90 days. The administration has total control over whether those comments are received and used positively or ignored. This administration has a track record of not responding to comments on its plans. For example, according to the USDA Reorganization Analysis, 82% of the individual comments and 89% of the campaign submissions expressed negative opposition or serious concerns regarding the restructuring of USDA when the USDA asked for comments on its plans. The Secretary has continued to move forward with the reorganization plan with no changes.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

- Some aspects of the proposed study, for example reducing certification fees, are not within the power of the USDA to change. In the case of certification fees, certifiers are sub-contractors to the USDA and can charge whatever they want or their market can stand. The USDA can change the amount of work that certifiers need to do but not how much they charge for it.

NODPA is working with other groups to strip the risk-based integrity language from the Farm Bill as it moves through the Senate Agriculture Committee and potential vote of the whole Senate, and replace it with language that provides the resources necessary to have a strong and growing organic sector. We are working with other groups to include the Opportunities in Organic Act into the Farm Bill which supports technical assistance and the underwriting of certification costs associated with the transition to organic, as well as any other legislation that supports organic systems with additional mandatory resources and capacity.

Please send this message to your Senator:

Introduce an amendment to the Farm Bill:

Don't allow the weakening of public trust in organic by relaxing standards. Please introduce an amendment to uphold a rigorous inspection system. Do not authorize a risk-based oversight/inspection/verification system.

a. **DELETE proposed authorizing language** on establishing a risk-based oversight/inspection system with wide discretionary authority to the Secretary and the weakening organic inspections critical to public trust in the USDA organic label.

b. **DELETE Subsection (e) Authority to Establish Additional Terms and Conditions of Section 10112, National Organic Program Oversight Protocols and Inspection.**

Help organic agriculture grow with the support it needs.

Please introduce an amendment with the language of the *Opportunities in Organic Act* (S.3717). This provides the support to farmers that is needed, rather than adopting subsection (e) of Section 10112 (see above) and reducing organic standards and the integrity of the organic label. ◆

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Organic Dairy News: September 2026

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

It's official! The Northeast has had 'limited rainfall in the past week, leading to degradations in drought' (US Drought Monitor). This is a big difference from last year, with significant rain in many areas for improved grazing and forage production to take us into Fall. Not so good news is the price of diesel and the increasing costs of parts and equipment. Pay Price is holding steady, though some buyers are shifting to paying more for protein. Retail fluid sales are level, and the average retail price has dropped a few cents. Demand for organic cows is high with prices averaging $3,000 and above. The hope is that government actions will not affect the strong calf market or, what is more likely the cull market, which continues to be strong sources of income for all dairy farmers. And the best news of all is that the NODPA Field Days are less than a month away!

Good news for producers: at last, certification cost share is available. Now is the time to apply for the **Organic Certification Cost Share Program** (OCCSP). FSA county offices are currently accepting and processing applications. The updated OCCSP application form was published on Monday, July 6, 2026.

Here are the answers to some cost share questions that producers have asked:

FSA will pay on a first come basis until all the money is expended. Each year has a separate amount of money available.

- An operation can apply for both 2025 and 2026.r Applicants will need to fill out an individual application for each program year.
- For program year 2025, certified operations will be eligible if they were certified at any time during the 2025 program year.
- The application deadline for both 2025 and 2026 is **December 31, 2026**.

Good news for producers who signed up for **Dairy Margin Coverage** in 2026: although the All-Milk conventional price is expected to average a solid $19.80/cwt in the second half of the year, prices are projected to ease from spring highs, while feed

continued on page 10

NATURE HAS IT RIGHT

Calving season can be very stressful for humans and animals alike. Redmond is here to make sure you have nature-made solutions on hand to keep moms and babies healthy so you can get back to what you love about raising animals.

VOLCANIC CONDITIONER FOR DAMS

Pregnant cows' rumen must be in tip top shape to make sure they are absorbing the fiber, minerals, protein, and energy their bodies need.

The sodium bentonite clay in Redmond Conditioner is an effective, all natural rumen buffer that also improves feed efficiency, digestion, and binds to toxins in the gut.

Mixing 1 part Conditioner with 2-3 parts Redmond sea minerals is a simple way to help:

- Prevent mineral deficiencies
- Boost rumen health
- Support lactation
- Protect from hypocalcemia/milk fever

*"I've been feeding them nothing but Redmond salt and Conditioner... our [milk] **fat and protein have gone up** considerably, our **death loss went down** considerably." -Jason N.*

*"I got to looking at Redmond Conditioner and Redmond Salt and came to experience **tremendous success and financial results**...I attribute it all to the Redmond program I was on." -Tom D.*

FIRST MONTH™ FOR NEWBORN CALVES

Newborn calves are extremely vulnerable to gut diseases like scours. Redmond First Month takes the gut benefits of our Conditioner plus probiotics, prebiotics, and electrolytes to boost immune health when they need it most. With mixable powder for prevention, and hydrated paste for treatment, First Month has your newborn calves covered:

- Cut death losses
- Restrict pathogen growth
- Stop dehydration
- Improve digestion
- Prevent and treat scours/diarrhea

*"Thank goodness for Redmond First Month! Had I been using it from the start, I believe I could have avoided a lot of problems of scours and her recovery would have been much quicker... **I will be using this wonderful product for all my bottle calves**!" -Cynthia A.*

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

redmondagriculture.com

866-676-8519

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

ORGANIC DAIRY NEWS: SEPTEMBER 2026

continued from page 8

costs rise from $10.22 to about $10.43/cwt by year-end, narrowing margins. The July DMC margin is currently projected at $9.40/cwt, which would trigger a 10-cent payment at the $9.50 coverage level for the first time since March. Projected margins are $8.96 in August, $9.21 in September, and $9.45 in October before rising above $9.50 later in the year. The second half-year average DMC margin is now projected at about $9.48, bringing the full-year forecast down to $9.57/cwt.

The Northeast cull market will be severely affected by **JBS's announcement on August 10 that beef harvesting and processing operations at the former MOPAC plant in Souderton, PA** will end that week. The facility, built in 1974 and expanded in 1993 by the former Moyer Packing Company, will be converted into a dedicated value-added operation through more than $30 million in investment over the next decade. Let's hope that it is American beef that they are packaging, not imported beef, since PA is an import hub for many South American countries. Many cull cows from the Northeast ended up in this facility, either by direct purchase or through auctions. JBS said that livestock affected by the closure will be absorbed elsewhere in its U.S. network. The nearest facility for northeast producers with available capacity is in Plainwell, Michigan—about 700 miles from Albany, New York, compared with the roughly 200 miles to Souderton—raising concerns about transportation costs, whether JBS will continue buying the same volume from the region, how much producers will be paid, and what loss in weight animals will suffer with the extra transport time.

The Dairy Processing magazine reported in its July-August 2026 issue that fluid milk sales stayed steady in 2025. Private Label is still the number one seller of products, but with a 0.5% decrease in unit sales year over year. There is no breakdown between organic and conventional sales of Private Label product. In fourth place for dairy milk brands in the US was Horizon with 109,538,780 in unit sales, an increase of 7.3% on the previous year. In fifth place was Organic Valley brand with 56,289,388 in unit sales, an increase of 17.2% over previous year. In twentieth place was Maple Hill with 6,594,253 in unit sales, which is a massive 36.7% increase over the previous year. The data was provided by Chicago based, Circana. The article reports that John Coletta, chief executive officer, Clover Sonoma, Petaluma, California saying "After years of headlines about fluid milk's decline, consumers are coming back to the cow with dairy consumption continuing to increase." He said his consumers wanted value-added fluid milk, namely higher-protein, lactose-free and flavored options. He was surprised by the response to the launch of their Pasture Raised Organic A2/A2 4% Whole Milk which "exceeded our expectations." The article also quotes Nicole Pavlica, senior brand marketing director, Horizon Family Brands, Broomfield, Colorado, who agreed that premiumization and segmentation are fueling product innovation. "Increased adoption of GLP-1s is continuing to impact consumer demand for nutrient-dense foods, including milk," she said. "Few consumers know that a serving of milk provides 8 grams of protein. For this reason, we have amplified communication of protein on our refrigerated and shelf-stable milk products."

Milk Buyers

Maple Hill shippers who are DFA members will have to find a new handler. DFA has announced that it would no longer support members that ship to Maple Hill after their anniversary date, or close to it. Producers are looking to join NFO. The action by DFA is not surprising and very predictable but there will, of course, be questions as to how much business NFO can handle. When asked for a reaction to DFA's actions, Horizon Family Brands/Maple Hill replied, 'Similar to Horizon Organic producers, Maple Hill Creamery producers have the flexibility and choice to work with a variety of milk handlers. We are committed to ensuring producers experience no interruption in their ability to market and sell their milk to Maple Hill Creamery." When asked about producers' options regarding the confusion over the future of Origin Milk, the company responded that, "Both Horizon Organic and Maple Hill Creamery are actively welcoming new producers. In addition, Maple Hill Creamery is currently offering incentives to farms who are considering transitioning to grass-fed. Interested farms are encouraged to reference the contact list provided to learn more about the latest programs offered by both brands." The information they reference is in the Milk Buyers List on page 35, and on the home page of the NODPA website at www.nodpa.com.

Lactalis/Stonyfield comment that they are still seeing increased interest from conventional farms looking to transition to the Organic market and experiencing continued growth in New York's

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

North Country and Mohawk Valley, plus expansion into other parts of New England. The strong rumors persist that a large dairy in Maine is transitioning to organic. Jason Johnson from the farm services and procurement team has left the company but they have hired two Organic Valley alums: Michael Brown as manager, Farm Relationship for Maine, and Pam Riesgraf as manager, Farm Relationship and Procurement for the Midwest.

Byrne Dairy

Byrne dairy reports that they "continue to demonstrate strong performance in the organic market, supported by sustained customer demand and our ongoing focus on quality, reliability, and service." They remain committed to strengthening their position in this market in order to support the needs of their customers and partners. The construction expansion project at their Cortlandville facility remains on schedule, and the project is currently slated for completion by the end of 2026. Once complete, they report that "the expansion will further enhance our operational capabilities and position us to better support future growth."

Good Luck and congratulations to Leslie Ball who is entering into semi-retirement and welcome to her replacement as Director of Dairy Programs, Mike Winkler.

Origin Milk

Pete Hardin, with Milkweed, and producers shipping to Origin, report that from August 1st National Farmers Organization (NFO) terminated its marketing arrangement with Origin Milk for non-payment. Producers are looking to other handlers, including Lancaster Organic Farmers Coop based in Maryland. The reports are confirmed that some processors are not being paid by Origin. Individual producers' reports vary with some larger operations being paid on time while others report that they are not being paid or payments are delayed. Some of those transitioning under contract with Origin are not receiving promised transitional bonuses. This uncertainty is very harmful especially for the smaller dairies that have increased their herds, paying top dollar for animals, in response to Origin's higher Pay Price. It also underlines the difficulties of handling and balancing organic milk at any scale. Maple Hill managed to survive for many years with outside capital until its sale to Horizon Family Brands, but they went through periods where they cut back on producers and suspended contracts to handle the balancing of product.

Origin owner, Adrian Boto, did return my request to talk about the situation with Origin and he responded to questions and concerns raised by producers and the organic dairy community with a simple comment "I do not comment on rumors." I offered the opportunity for him to comment on the current situation with Origin to give some context to the position Origin is in and its plans for the future, but he stuck with his original short comment. I left it open that we would welcome any comments in the future from the company. It's important to note that any actions by one buyer has an immediate effect on their shippers but also a trickle-down, or in some cases an avalanche effect on the whole market, especially in the Northeast where size-appropriate processing is scarce, trucking small amounts of milk expensive, and operational costs higher than other parts of the country.

USDA

As USDA reorganization continues, the loss of staff who serve as the primary points of contact for farmers, especially those with long institutional knowledge, is affecting the implementation of all programs, including the design of conservation plans, and assistance with complex applications, making it even more difficult for new entry farmers.

We can confirm that the NOP staff currently in Washington DC will remain there, but future hires will probably work from one of the new hubs around the country. The budget for the NOP will probably be level funded for the next fiscal year despite the Senate Farm Bill draft proposing an increase, plus a step increase every year for the Farm Bill term. ◆

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

IDAHO ORGANIC DAIRIES RECEIVE STATEWIDE TEMPORARY VARIANCE FROM PASTURE REQUIREMENT; AURORA DAIRY'S COLORADO OPERATIONS RECEIVE MORE GENEROUS VARIANCE

continued from page 1

the grazing standard, producers need to request their certifier apply to the National Organic Program (NOP) on their behalf for a temporary variance from pasture requirements **during the grazing season**, even though no one knows for sure what the weather and pasture growth for the rest of the grazing season will be. If an operation waits until the grazing season is near its end or is over, they will receive a non-compliance if they were unable to meet the minimum pasture requirements. Producers cannot apply for a variance themselves—it must come from their certifier and be submitted to the NOP.

With drought across many regions in 2026, we must expect applications by operations for a variance on the requirement for access to pasture. The NOP has posted variances for this requirement for three individual organic dairy operations, as well as a statewide variance for Idaho in 2026.

Idaho is ranked by Idaho Preferred as the number three state in the nation for certified organic milk production in 2024 and the Organic Integrity Database has 21 operations classified as dairies in the State. Certifiers that have clients in the state of Idaho applied for variances for many operations in Idaho and the NOP decided that the variance would apply to all certified ruminant livestock producers in the State. The temporary variance for the 2026 grazing season in Idaho due to drought reduces the DMI (dry matter intake) to 20 percent of the average dry matter demand from dry matter fed (instead of the 30% minimum requirement) during the 2026 grazing season. They halved the minimum required number of days that livestock had to be on pasture from 120 to 60. There was no posted definition of what their normal grazing season is. The temporary variance applies to all operations, both irrigated and not.

Aurora Dairy owns operations in Colorado at High Plains and Platteville, and their certifiers-- the State of CO and Where Food Comes From Organic--applied for a temporary variance and it was issued by the NOP for the 2026 grazing season. This variance applies only to their operations at High Plains, located in Gill, CO and Platteville Dairy in Platteville, CO which house approximately 40% of the total number of cows they own. NOP was even more generous with their allowance, requiring only 10 percent average dry matter intake from pasture (1/3 of the minimum DMI requirement), and must be grazed on pasture for no less than 75 days instead of the minimum of 120 days during the 2026 grazing season. Realistically, that means their livestock over six months in age need to be outside on pasture that has some nutrition for 75 days in 2026. Aurora Dairy in Platteville had 300 cows in March 2025 and is where one of Aurora's two processing plants are located. Aurora Dairy has 4 dairies in Gill, CO with a total of 10,700 milking cows as of March 2025: High Meadow Dairy (2,600 milking cow), High Plains Dairy (4,000 milking cows), High Ridge Dairy (2,000 milking cows) and Little Calf Dairy (2,100 milking cows). According to the Organic Dairy Database, they are certified as one operation.

We can only guess at the volume of milk that these dairies with variances will produce in 2026 as we don't have that data and the possible resulting effect on consumer confidence of having so much organically certified milk sold across the country produced from organic cows that have so little feed from pasture.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

An evaluation of the process of granting temporary variances on access to pasture

NODPA, WODPA and OFA raised some questions as to both the process and concerns around obtaining a temporary variance in a meeting with the National Organic Program. Some of the points raised at the meeting included the process, which is somewhat opaque. A few examples:

- The power to submit a variance is with the certifier, not the producer, so if your certifier does not have the capacity or disagrees with your claim or does not submit the request during the grazing season, the producer cannot apply directly or appeal their decision.
- A variance is not a non-compliance. There is no requirement for a producer to change their operation or Organic System Plan (OSP) in the following year to mitigate the difficulty in reaching the required grazing standards.
- The variance is temporary and tied to one event in one year. As there is no definition of temporary within the standards, an operation can apply for a variance year after year and still be granted one, as they have not had a non-compliance.
- The variance can also be applied for an "interruption of business." There is no definition of what that means. In 2026, all domestic organic laying operations have a variance to allow induced molting due to business interruptions from Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. I can only imagine what an imaginative lawyer can put together as a case for a variance for 'business interruption.

Producers need variances of regulations for many legitimate reasons that are out of their control. There needs to be more transparency on who is getting the variance, even though that is time consuming for certifiers and the NOP, plus a level playing field is needed for all producers to apply for a variance.

The use of the word 'temporary' implies that the event is not repeated regularly. A regulatory definition of what temporary means is needed to provide consistency and legal standing in any court case. Similarly, we need a definition of what is a "business interruption," and how this may factor into a risk management approach to verification of standards. This is work for the Organic Standards Board.

We need to return to stating the dates of the grazing season on the operation's temporary variance and a short description of why a variance has been granted.

Some certifiers are experienced with what is needed by NOP to grant a variance and others are not. We do not want a situation where operations are certifier shopping to cover the possibility of needing a temporary variance because of the experience or capacity of certain certifiers.

It costs certifiers time and money to apply for a waiver and NOP staff have been reduced, so the responsibility falls mainly on certifiers to respond to questions and request more data from the NOP. Who picks up the expense of the process? Certifiers can charge for it as they do for other services. For smaller operations that certifiers make little or no profit from, any charges they may have to pay, and the time involved in producing paperwork may impact their ability to prepare and successfully receive a variance.

When so much product is at stake, we need to be able to show the media and the consumer that the process is protecting organic integrity and that large scale variances are followed up by changes to the Organic System Plan when necessary. Producers need to know that the process is consistent, fair, and accessible by all operations. ◆

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

Solar Panels and Pastures: Can Dairy Farms Grow Forage Under Agrivoltaics?

By Brad Heins and Sabrina Florentino, University of Minnesota

Solar energy is becoming more common across rural landscapes, but many dairy farmers have an important question: What happens to the land underneath the panels? For pasture-based dairy farms, the answer could be agrivoltaics. Agrivoltaics combines agricultural production and solar photovoltaic energy generation on the same acres. Instead of removing land from farming, the land can continue to produce forage while also producing renewable energy.

At the University of Minnesota West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris, we evaluated whether common forage crops could grow underground-mounted solar panels and still provide a useful feed source for livestock. The study compared forage biomass and nutritive value under two solar array designs and a control pasture with no solar panels. The work was conducted on certified organic land and included forage species commonly used in dairy grazing systems.

The forages were planted in May 2022 under a 30-kilowatt solar site, a 50-kilowatt solar site and a control pasture without solar panels. The 30-kilowatt site consisted of two fixed solar arrays mounted 6 to 8 feet above the ground, high enough to allow dairy cows to graze underneath. The 50-kilowatt site was a flat-top solar array with more complete shade. The control site was an open pasture with no solar array. Forage crops included alfalfa, field peas, meadow fescue, orchardgrass, red clover, brown midrib sorghum-sudangrass, white clover and three grass-legume mixtures. The mixtures included meadow fescue and orchardgrass with either alfalfa, red clover or white clover. Biomass samples were clipped when forages reached appropriate maturity for grazing, dried and analyzed for nutritive value.

The 50-kilowatt (3,223 kg/ha) solar sites had less biomass compared with 30-kilowatt solar site (8,968 kg/ha) and the control pasture (9,987 kg/ha). This was likely because less solar radiation reached the plant canopy under the panels. Meadow fescue and orchardgrass, had higher biomass underneath solar panels and grass legume mixes had similar biomass amounts for the 30-kilowatt site compared with the control pasture. Alfalfa, red clover, and white clover were lower for the 50-kilowatt site compared with the control pasture.

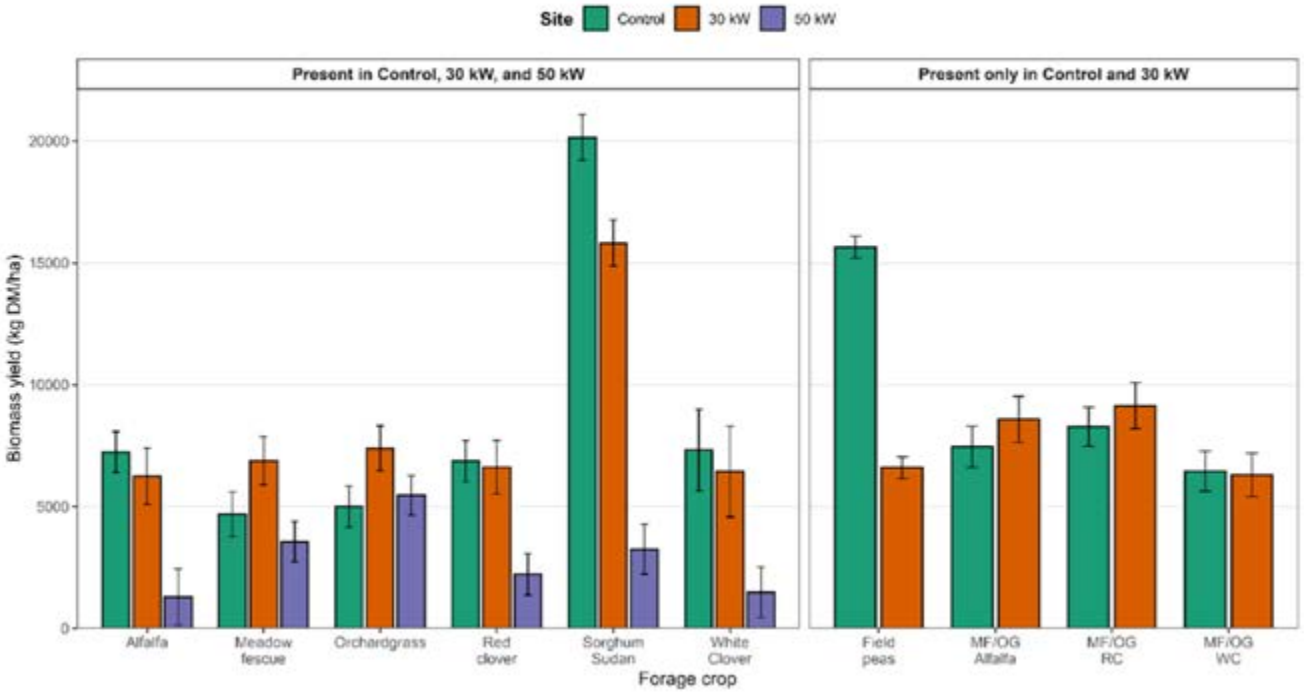
However, forage quality told a different story. Average crude protein was highest in the 50-kilowatt site at 25.8% of dry matter, compared with 21.4% in the 30-kilowatt site and 20.9% in the control pasture. Total-tract neutral detergent fiber digestibility was also greatest in the 50-kilowatt site at 57.1%, compared with 52.5% for the 30-kilowatt site and 51.0% for the control pasture.

This means dairy farmers should think about both yield and quality when evaluating agrivoltaics. More shade may reduce the amount of forage produced, but the forage that does grow may be higher in crude protein and fiber digestibility. For grazing dairy cattle, forage quality is an important part of the system, especially when trying to maintain intake and milk production from pasture.

Dry matter concentration also differed among sites. The control pasture had the highest dry matter at 25.1%, followed by 16.8% for the 30-kilowatt site and 12.8% for the 50-kilowatt site. Lower dry matter under the panels may be related to reduced evapotranspiration and greater soil moisture retention in shaded areas. That could be helpful during dry periods, but it also means farmers may need to manage grazing timing carefully to avoid pugging or damage in wetter conditions.

Species selection mattered. Sorghum-sudangrass produced the greatest biomass across the sites, but it also requires more

ORGANIC PRODUCTION



sunlight than cool-season perennial grasses. Under heavier shade, warm-season annuals may not be the best fit. Cool-season grasses such as meadow fescue and orchardgrass, along with legumes such as red clover and alfalfa, may be better options for agrivoltaic grazing systems.

Mineral content was also affected by the solar environment. Calcium was highest in the 50-kilowatt site at 1.05% of dry matter, compared with 0.75% in the 30-kilowatt site and 0.84% in the control pasture. Red clover and alfalfa were among the forages with higher calcium levels. These results show that solar array design can influence not just forage yield but also forage composition.

For dairy farmers, the practical takeaway is that solar panels and forage production can work together, but design matters. Panel height, spacing and orientation will influence how much light reaches the forage. Systems that create too much shade may limit forage production. Systems that allow more light penetration may better support pasture growth while still producing renewable energy.

The system is not without challenges. Farmers need to consider fencing, animal movement, water access, panel protection, forage species selection and grazing management. More research is also needed to understand long-term effects on soil moisture, forage persistence, animal behavior and milk production. ◆

*Bradley J. Heins is Extension Specialist, Dairy Management and Professor, Dairy Management West Central ROC | wcroc.cfans.umn.edu, University of Minnesota, 46352 State Hwy 329, Morris, MN 56267, hein0106@umn.edu | 320-589-1711, Ext. 2118. Sabrina Florentino is an Extension Educator, Alternative Livestock Systems, Regional Office Mankato, UM Extension, 1961 Premier Dr., STE 110, Mankato, MN 56001, slpflore@umn.*edu, 612-626-9217

Welcome

26th Annual NODPA Field Days

Hope for the Future: Strategies for Success

September 24 & 25, 2026

Berks County Agricultural Center • 1238 County Welfare Road, Leesport, PA 13138

Hope for the Future: Strategies for Success is the theme of the **26th Annual NODPA Field Days**, taking place September 24–25, 2026, at the Berks County Agricultural Center in Leesport, Pennsylvania.

The two-day event will bring together organic dairy farm families, agricultural professionals, and industry partners for farm tours, educational workshops, and opportunities for farmer-to-farmer learning and discussion, and to catch up on all the gossip.

This year's program will focus on practical strategies for success in organic dairy, regardless of production methods, with these workshops:

- *The Important Role of Minerals and Vitamins in Cow and Calf Health*
- *Silvopasture: the Challenges and Opportunities of Adding Trees to Pasture*
- *Renewable Energy on the Farm: Strategies to Address the Rising Costs of Energy on the Farm*
- *From Pasture to Profit: How Grazing Management Drives Intake, Milk Yield and Efficiency*

We are thrilled that Ted LeBow, CEO, Good Roots (formerly Kitchen Table Consultants), will join us for the Keynote presentation on Thursday evening. His topic, *Stop Farming like You'll Never Leave: Rethinking Profit, Reinvestment, and Retirement* is relevant to farm families at all stages of life, not just those ready to retire.

In addition to these workshops, attendees will visit two farms for excellent farm tours.

Thursday morning's tour, Sunrise Country Creamery and Farm Store, Myerstown PA, is owned and operated by the Nelson Martin family. The Martin's farm, while not certified organic, is grass-based and employs organic practices. Their many innovative farming strategies will be showcased. An added treat at this stop will be fresh, homemade donuts, hot chocolate, and coffee made by AnnaMary Martin, the farm's matriarch. As AnnaMary says, "no one leaves my table hungry!" ***If you are attending, please go directly to the farm on Thursday morning.***

The second tour, following Friday's workshops and lunch, will be at the pioneering organic, grass-based dairy, Spring Creek Farms, Wernersville, PA, owned and operated by Greg and Forrest Stricker. The Strickers always attract a crowd for their tours, so plan on being there, too.

Attendees will have opportunities to see innovative practices in action, exchange ideas with fellow farmers, and take home information that can be applied on their own farms.

In the following pages, there's plenty of information about Field Days but you can always contact Nora Owens, NODPA Field Days Coordinator, at 413-772-0444 or noraowens@comcast.net if you have questions or need assistance to register.

If you haven't registered for this year's 26th NODPA Field Days, there's still time to do so but space if filling quickly, so don't delay! You can register online, (to register online, go to this link: https://nodpa.com/p/142/2026-NODPA-Field-Days), by mail, or by calling NODPA's office at 413-772-0444. **If you register by 9/12th, you will get the Early Bird rate and to make it more convenient, you can pay in person.**

See you in September!

NODPA Field Days Lead Sponsors

FARM CREDIT HORIZON

FARM CREDIT EAST

100% GRASSFED MAPLE HILL Organic

ORGANIC PLUS TRUST CERTIFIED GRASS-FED ORGANIC

NODPA Field Days Sponsors

UPSTATE NIAGARA COOPERATIVE, INC.
FARMER OWNED

ORGANIC VALLEY

NOFA-NY
NORTHEAST ORGANIC FARMING ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK

LAKEVIEW ORGANIC GRAIN

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

HORIZON ORGANIC

80 YEARS Fertrell SINCE 1946 Better Naturally!

BYRNE
SINCE 1933

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*

Maple Hill*

Organic Plus Trust, Inc.*

SPONSORS

Byrne Dairy*

The Fertrell Company*

Horizon Organic

King's AgriSeeds*

Lakeview Organic Grain

NOFA-NY*

Organic Valley/CROPP^

UNC/Upstate Niagara Cooperative

SUPPORTERS

Agri-Dynamics
Albert Lea Seeds
Buffalo Molasses
Global Organic Alliance (GOA)*
Pasa*
PCO Certified Organic
Stonyfield/Lactalis^
Thorvin^
Trees for Graziers*
Where Food Comes From*

** 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

Schedule

Thursday, September 24, 2026

8:30-11:30 am	***Farm Tour: Country Sunrise Creamery, 48 Mountain Road, Meyerstown, PA 17067, hosted by the Nelson Martin Family. PLEASE GO DIRECTLY TO THE FARM***
Noon - 1:00 pm	**NODPA Field Days Registration and Lunch** Berks County Agriculture Center, 1238 County Welfare Road, Leesport, PA 19533
1:00 - 1:30	***Country Sunrise Creamery wrap-up and questions for the Martin Family.***
1:30 - 3:00	***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.*** Presenter: Dr. Robert Van Saun, DVM, Professor of Veterinary Medicine, Penn State University.
3:00– 3:15	**Break**
3:15 - 4:30	***Silvopasture: The Challenges and Benefits of Adding Trees to Pasture: Strategic planning and techniques for effective tree establishment in actively grazed pastures.*** Presenter: Joshua Greene, Director of Education, Trees for Graziers
4:30– 5:00	**Presentations on the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) Program and Updates from the USDA AMS personnel**
5:00– 6:00	**NODPA Field Days Trade Show and Social Hour**
6:00 – 7:00	**Banquet and NODPA Annual Meeting**
7:00 – 8:30	***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.*** Presenter: Ted LeBow, Good Roots (formerly known as Kitchen Table Consultants) and a farmer panel
8:30 pm	**Program ends**

NODPA Field Days Supporters

Celebrating 40 Years of Growing Strong AGRI•DYNAMICS

BUFFALO MOLASSES MOLASSES & LIQUID FEED SUPPLEMENTS

Pasa SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

ALBERT LEA SEED

Global Organic Alliance, Inc.

PCO CERTIFIED ORGANIC

Stonyfield ORGANIC

26th Annual
NODPA Field Days

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.*** Facilitated by Henry Perkins, past NODPA president.

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 Martens, Klaas and Mary-Howell Martens 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**

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 Stricker

Spring Creek Farms is one of the pioneers of organic and grass-based dairy in the US. Forrest and Greg Stricker 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

HaR-Go FARM

PAVILION, NY

continued from page 1

The herd grazes in the field at HaR-Go Farm

pasture, and crops approximately 800 acres each year.

"My grandparents bought the farm in their late 20s… I was in my late 20s not too long ago. It's hard to imagine going out, buying a farm, getting it started, and keeping it going."

Gould speaks about the farm with the familiarity of someone who has spent his entire life there. The buildings, fields, and cattle reflect years of steady investment, adaptation, and hard work. The business feels less like something that was built all at once and more like something shaped gradually: one project, one season, and one decision at a time.

Today, HaR-Go milks 220 cows, with a full-time team of seven. Most of the herd is Holstein, with some crosses with Jersey and Brown Swiss and a few Guernsey recently added to the herd.

The Goulds have operated a closed herd since 2019.

The farm's housing system varies by stage of life. The cows are housed in a freestall barn built in 2016. Calves begin in hutches, and then move to various pens in older barns, while weaned calves are housed in packs before moving into freestalls at approximately five months. Dry cows and maternity cows have separate accommodations, including a calving pen.

Balancing Tradition and Organic Innovation

HaR-Go Farm has evolved in tandem with the progress of farming technology.

Though a lot has changed around the farm, Stephen emphasizes the values of perseverance and hard work as the threads of influence his grandparents wove into the family and their dairy production system that are still present today.

"They were fairly open-minded to doing what they wanted to do. And, they went out and did just that. I think that kind of attitude has lasted."

While Stephen is quick to acknowledge the gusto of his grandparents in starting the farm, he's just as swift in showing the same admiration for his parents.

"My parents showed that same courage when they transitioned the farm to organic pretty early in the organic movement." HaR-Go became certified organic in 2009. At the time, Stephen was still a teenager and his parents, John and Sue Gould, led the farm through the transition.

"That was a big, big jump. It was basically a new way of learning to farm. It wasn't a style that was intuitive to them, but they saw that it would set the farm well and provide a better opportunity than what they could see was the path of conventional farming at 120 cows."

"When they were making the transition, they leaned on the Cornell Cooperative Extension office - especially Nancy Glazier. She helped a lot with the pasture plan." The Goulds also turned to other farmers and producer networks. "We'd go to NYCO (New York Certified Organic) meetings, and we'd talk to the

community." Today, Stephen says conferences remain one of the resources he turns to for keeping the organic operation running smoothly.

Transitioning to organic production meant rethinking fertility programs, weed management, crop rotations, and herd health. One example was a no-till hay establishment system the Goulds developed during the transition.

"You have to develop new systems," Stephen explains. "So my Dad decided to try a no-till hay establishment, but May seedings are tough to get in organically because organic weed control in the spring is a challenge. Take alfalfa seed - you can only plant it so deep, so you can't just go in and blind weed it."

In the spring, when moisture encourages both crops and weeds to germinate, the Goulds found success establishing fall-seeded triticale and then drilling alfalfa into it.

"Late spring, early summer, we come through and harvest the triticale and let the hay seed grow from underneath. It's a practice we're still doing today because it's a good fit. It's expensive to transition ground. On most of the acres, we're able to inter-seed into something we've established in the fall. Even in one situation, we went in and no-tilled after a conventional corn crop, and it looked pretty good."

"You're really just trying to lose as little money as possible," Stephen says.

The comment is delivered with a laugh, but it reflects the practical mindset required during transition periods. Sustainability requires both ecological and economic resilience. A practice can have environmental benefits, but it also has to function within the financial realities of running a business.

Feeding the Herd

Grazing is an important part of HaR-Go's feeding system. During the grazing season, pasture accounts for approximately 35% of dry matter intake for the milking cows. As pasture quality and production change, the Goulds adjust the amount of haylage, soy, and energy fed to the cows. For heifers and dry cows, approximately 50% of dry matter intake comes from pasture. These animals are fed haylage in the barn during the day to balance out their rations.

The grazing system is built around daily movement. All animals receive a new paddock each day. Heifers and dry cows remain outside around the clock as weather allows during the spring and fall, while the milking cows graze from dusk to dawn. During the summer, heifers and dry cows are brought back to the barn daily.

Fall established triticale cover crop

Grazing cows appreciate a cool summer twilight at HaR-Go Farm

FEATURED FARM

The Goulds know that clean, quality milk starts with healthy, stress-free cows. They're in the process of upgrading other barns on the property to better support their herd.

In winter, the farm uses a total mixed ration (TMR), balanced with the help of a dairy nutritionist.

The Goulds have not planted annual forages specifically for their grazing system.

Integrating Technology On the Farm

In 2016, HaR-Go Farm built its first robotic barn and installed four Lely robotic milking robots. At the time, John and Sue Gould were still leading the operation.

The Goulds' legacy has not been defined by preserving the farm exactly as it was, but by embracing change. Each generation has faced a different set of decisions: Harold and Rose starting the business, John and Sue navigating the transition to organic production and investing in robotics, and Stephen and Jill managing a modern dairy operation in an increasingly complex agricultural landscape.

"The transition was definitely a learning curve," Stephen explains.

Today, the robotic system gives Stephen access to more information for managing the herd. He regularly reviews data from the milking program, including milk quality indicators such as somatic cell count, butterfat, and temperature, as well as production measures such as yield, fat, protein, and lactose.

The system provides near real-time information that Stephen can evaluate alongside his own observations of the herd. Changes in milk conductivity, visits to the robot, or rumination behavior can help identify cows that may need additional attention.

Still, Stephen does not view technology as a replacement for stockmanship. Instead, the information gives him another management tool, one that complements daily observation and experience.

That same data also informs the farm's breeding and herd-selection decisions. HaR-Go breeds entirely through artificial insemination, with longevity as a primary breeding goal. All heifers receive sexed semen, while the remainder of the herd receives beef semen.

With continuously collected individual data on milk yield, milking speed, and udder health, Stephen identifies the top 10% of the most efficient, high-producing cows to retain in the dairy herd. The farm has also been able to maintain its own replacements.

The Goulds purchased animals after the new barn was built in 2016, but have not needed to purchase additional animals in recent years. They have not yet sold animals for

the dairy market, although Stephen hopes to sell some heifers in 2027.

Animal Health

The Goulds' preventative herd-health program centers on vaccinations, hygiene in barns and stalls, and managing heat stress with shade and fans.

Their biggest calf-health challenges are coccidiosis and pneumonia. Calves are weaned at three months, with calf starter and hay introduced during the first week of life.

The calf vaccination program includes Inforce3 during the first week, Titanium 5, Vision 20/20, and another dose of Inforce3 at weaning. For scours, the farm uses electrolytes; hygiene and diatomaceous earth are used in managing calf-health challenges.

For certain health problems, Stephen says the farm uses Banamine for pneumonia and severe mastitis and infused povidone iodine for metritis.

The farm works with its veterinarian primarily for pregnancy checks and problem-solving, with an emphasis on pregnancy checks and preventative systems.

Looking back at the transition to organic production, Stephen sees a long-term improvement in the herd. "Over time we have a more resilient and healthier herd with less disease and higher recovery rates."

Biosecurity on the farm includes asking visitors coming from another farm to wear clean clothes and boots.

The Challenges of Staying Organic

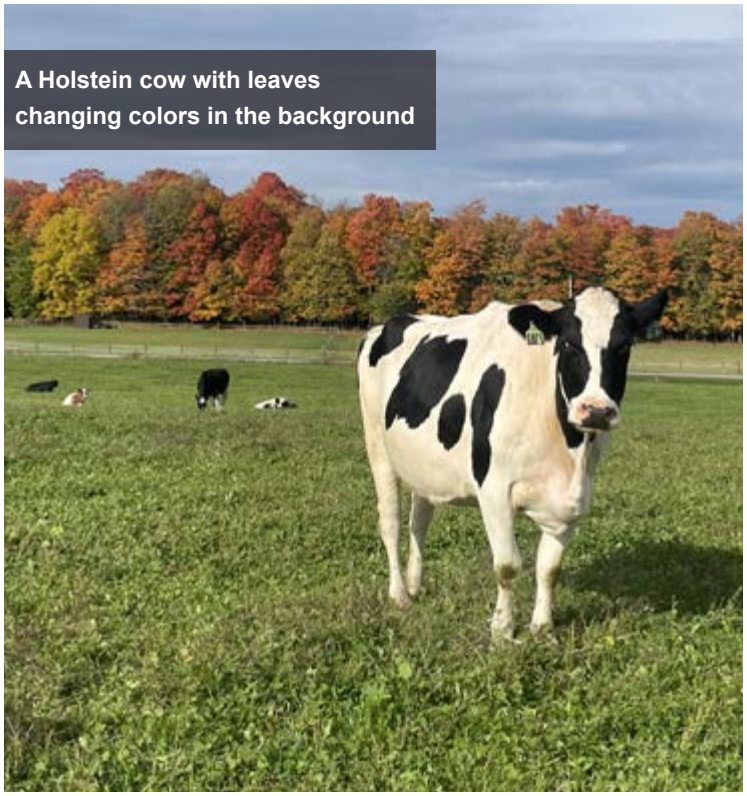
It is notable how quickly Stephen redirects praise away from himself and toward the people who help keep the operation running - Jill, Ron, Jeff, German Sr., German Jr., Monji, Amy, Tim, and Dermot.

"Our farm team is a group of hard working people with shared ideals. We do a good job. I think that's what I'm most proud of. You can see it in our fields; you can see it from the road looking at our farm. We are a competitive business for the neighborhood, which is an excellent farming area."

The farm markets its milk through the farmer-owned Upstate Niagara Cooperative, connecting the milk produced in Pavilion with consumers across the Northeast.

For Stephen, the motivation for transitioning to organic production was straightforward: "Better future for our farm."

HaR-Go is currently certified through PCO, and admits that certification is one of the less glamorous parts of organic farming.



A Holstein cow with leaves changing colors in the background

Still, Stephen sees it as necessary. "It's painful but essential; difficult for a small business to manage and to farm."

The farm's experience with organic certification has reinforced the amount of administrative work required to operate a certified organic farm alongside the day-to-day demands of farming. For Stephen, however, some of the biggest questions facing organic dairy extend beyond certification.

His primary concern is the Northeast's ability to produce enough organic milk to meet demand.

"My biggest concern is the Northeast cannot keep up with the demand and milk continues to move from the west where they operate under variances from the rules every year." He believes the organic dairy industry would be better served by more producers making organic milk, particularly small and midsized farms that could transition to organic production.

But Stephen believes misconceptions about organic farming can make that transition harder.

"I think conventional farms have many misconceptions about organic farming. I think we need better language to promote organic farming that finds more common ground with all the farming community."

For Stephen, organic farming is about more than which inputs are allowed or prohibited. He sees it as a broader philosophy

and a different approach to the way farms function within their communities and economies.

He believes the organic industry needs a less polarizing and more cohesive message—one that can bring more farmers into organic production rather than creating a divide between organic and conventional producers.

Good Things Take Time

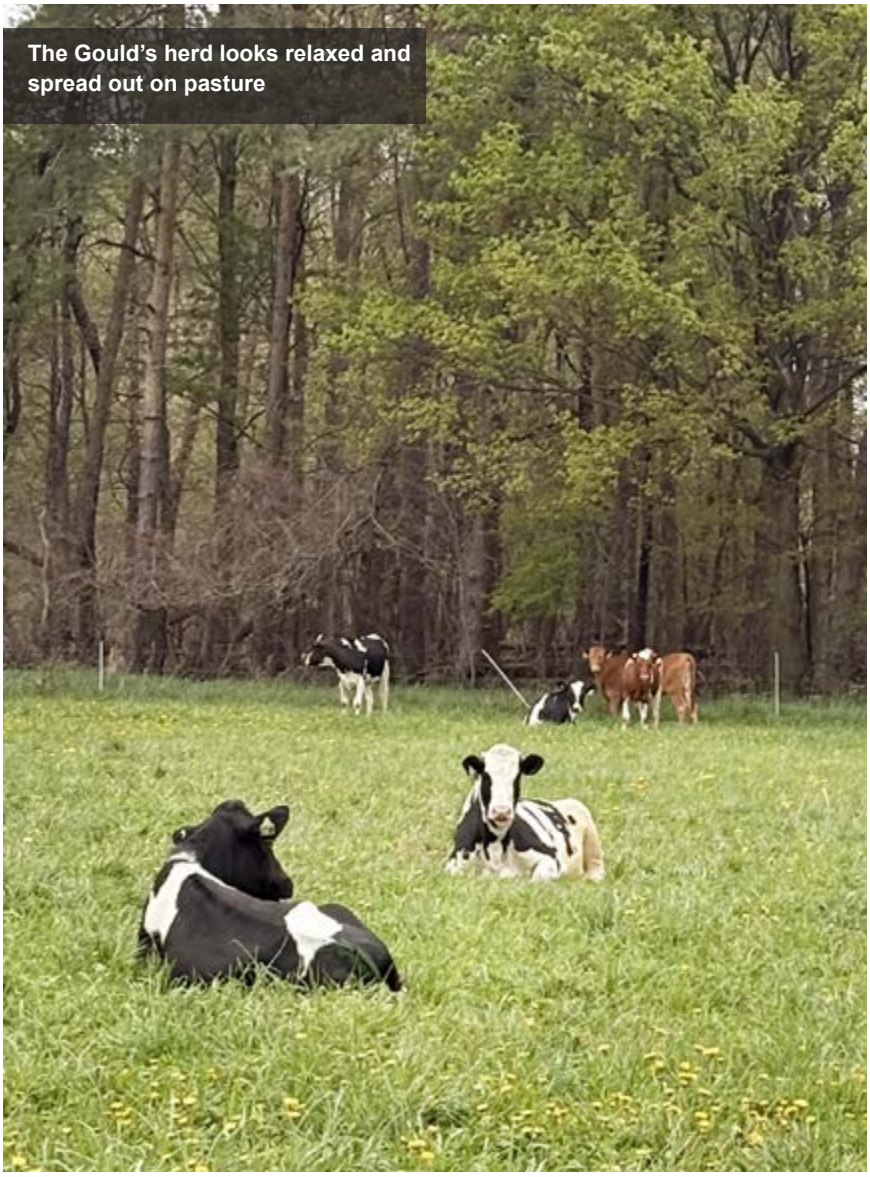
When it comes to dairy farming, Stephen Gould comes across as relentlessly patient and committed. His reflections often return to the satisfaction of making changes whose benefits may not be immediately visible. "You just have to enjoy the incremental improvements."

That mindset seems particularly well suited to dairy farming, where many of the most meaningful changes take years to reveal themselves. Breeding decisions made today may not show their full impact until a future generation of cattle. Improvements to soil, pasture, infrastructure, or herd health can accumulate slowly, with each season providing another opportunity to adjust.

"I think there's something oddly rewarding about slow and steady improvement, whether that's cattle or land."

Stephen points to the farm's experience with organic production as one example. The Goulds had to learn new approaches to fertility, weed management, forage establishment, and herd health when they transitioned to organic production. Some of the systems they developed during that period, like their fall-seeded triticale and no-till alfalfa establishment, are still part of the farm today.

The same long view shapes the way Stephen thinks about the herd. HaR-Go's focus on longevity means breeding decisions are made with years, rather than months, in mind.



The Gould's herd looks relaxed and spread out on pasture

"To improve an animal over a generation, you had to think about that three years ago. And then to see that improvement? That's very motivating."

The farm's evolution reflects that same willingness to make decisions with the future in mind.

Harold and Rose Gould started the dairy from scratch in 1956. John and Sue later transitioned the farm to organic production and invested in robotic milking. Stephen and Jill have continued to refine the operation through changes in technology, grazing, genetics, infrastructure, and herd management.

None of those decisions happened in isolation. Each one built on what came before it, while giving the next generation something new to work with.

For Stephen, that may be the most important lesson of being a third-generation farmer: progress does not necessarily mean abandoning what came before. It can mean understanding what matters, keeping what works, and being willing to change the rest.

"Find joy in slowly moving the needle over multiple years."

When asked what he has learned from the generations before him, Stephen keeps his answer simple. "Think for yourself and do the things that are important to you." ◆

The farm is located at 10965 S Street Rd, Pavilion, NY 14525, and the Gould's can be reached at office@hargofarms.com.

Calendar

Wednesday, September 16, 2026, 9:00 am until 9:00 pm

NORTHEAST GROWING TOGETHER CONFERENCE

Rodale Institute, 611 Siegfriedale Road, Kutztown, Pennsylvania

This free, day-long event will bring farmers and agricultural professionals from across the Northeast together for farmer-led education, hands-on learning and peer-to-peer networking focused on organic agriculture. Registration and additional information about these and other upcoming events is available at www.nofany.org/upcoming-events.

Tuesday, September 22, 2026, 9:30 am until 12:00 pm

PASTURE WALK

Emary Springs Farm

11274 County Road 36, Freedom, NY

NOFA-NY and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Allegany County will host a pasture walk at Emary Springs Farm covering grazing standards, rotational grazing tools, weed control and pasture productivity. Registration and additional information about these and other upcoming events is available at www.nofany.org/upcoming-events.

Tuesday, September 22, 2026, 12:00 pm until 2:00 pm

FUTURE-READY DAIRY FARM TOUR:

Staying Innovative in a Changing Dairy Landscape at Rockbottom Farm

Rockbottom Farm, 53 Rockbottom Rd, Strafford, VT 05072

Join us for a farm tour and discussion at Rockbottom Farm to learn from second- and third-generation farmers Earl and Jackson Ransom about how they are staying innovative in a changing dairy landscape. Learn about the new technologies and pasture management strategies being implemented on the farm, as well as how this family is keeping things sweet with value-added dairy production and their successful Strafford Creamery business. All events in this series are free, but pre-registration is required. For more information and to register, click here: https://na.eventscloud.com/ereg/index.php?eventid=882216&

Wednesday, September 23, 2026, 10:00 am until 3:00 pm

SOIL, PASTURE, AND DAIRY COW HEALTH PASTURE WALK

Triple Creek Farm, 890 Fairfield Road, Candor, NY

NOFA-NY, Organic Valley and Triple Creek Farm will explore the connections between pasture soil nutrients, soil health and dairy cow health, followed by a pasture walk focused on regrowth, species composition and nutrient management. Registration and additional information about these and other upcoming events is available at www.nofany.org/upcoming-events.

Thursday, September 24, 2026, 8:30 am until 8:30 pm and Friday, September 25, 7:00 am until 3:00 pm

26TH ANNUAL NODPA FIELD DAYS:

Hope for the Future: Strategies for Success

Berks County Agricultural Center, 1238 County Welfare Rd., Leesport, PA 19533

The 26th Annual NODPA Field Days will include 2 farm tours and an outstanding educational program. Read more on page 16 of this NODPA News or visit www.NODPA.com and click on Field Days 2026 for all the details and to register.

Thursday, November 12, 2026 and Friday, November 13, 2026

THE ORGANIC FARMING CONFERENCE

Mt. Hope Event Center, Mt. Hope, Ohio

Enjoy two days of informative topics and farmer camaraderie. Visit www.organicfarmingconf.com or call 234-799-0590 for information. Registration fees are $25 for one person for one day or $40 per person for both days. (Organic full-course meal included.) Send to OFC 5119 TR 613 Fredericksburg, Ohio 44627.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

USDA Announces Five New Members to the National Organic Standards Board, the Adoption of a New NOSB Charter and Details of the Fall Meeting

NOSB Charter

On Friday, 8/7/2026, the newly adopted NOSB Charter was posted on the USDA website at: https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/NOSBCharter.pdf . The previous charter ended a few months ago and the NOSB cannot function without a current Charter which runs for 2 years. Although the NOSB was explicitly written into law by the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA), it is governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), and all FACA committees must have a current Charter. It give citizens and diverse stakeholders direct power in shaping the organic certification regulations and process. Unlike typical agency-led federal committees, its public-private structure forces the U.S. government to share standard-setting authority with the diverse stakeholders that make up the organic farming community. The Board holds the distinct power to vote on and decide which specific synthetic and natural substances are allowed or prohibited in organic farming. It is a valuable asset for the organic community from Farm to Table and its status must be supported in all aspects of advising the Secretary on how the certification process functions, regulations are written and the National Lists is regulated. Bypassing the role of the NOSB with legislation undermines the integrity of the Organic Seal for operations and consumers.

New NOSB Members

The USDA announced the appointment of five new members to the National Organic Standards Board on August 17, 2026. This will bring the Board back up to strength after 8 months of only having 10 members. The new members will serve five-year terms, through January 2031.

The new members of the Board are:

Scott Sechler Sr. (Pennsylvania) is appointed to the Farmer seat. Mr. Sechler has spent his entire career in poultry including the past 40 years as Owner & Chairman of Bell & Evans, a premium Raised Without Antibiotics and Organic poultry brand. He launched Bell & Evans' organic-certified program in 2009, and Bell & Evans uses 100% U.S. organic grains in its organic chicken feed. He brings extensive knowledge of worldwide poultry and organic standards.

Jerry Matzner (Minnesota) is appointed to the Farmer seat. Mr. Matzner has operated Century Farm Organics for parts of the past 13 years and previously operated Century Farm Dairy. He has expanded into poultry and equipment sales.
He is a member of Organic Valley Cooperative and the Minnesota Farm Bureau. He holds a BA in Management Information Systems and a BA in Computer Science from Augustana College.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Jed Murray (Texas) is appointed to the Public Interest/ Consumer Interest Group seat. Mr. Murray has 20 years of experience in agriculture, including 13 years in the vegetable industry. He is currently the Director of Government Relations at Texas International Produce Association and Managing Partner at 9 Kids Compost LLC. He is a member of the Texas Department of State Health Services Food Safety and Defense Task Force, Texas Vegetable Association, and the Texas A&M Vegetable & Fruit Program. He holds a BS in Agribusiness and Marketing from California Polytechnic State University.

Dr. Bradley Heins (Minnesota) is appointed to a Public Interest/Consumer Interest Group seat. Dr. Heins is Professor of Organic Dairy Management at the University of Minnesota, has authored or coauthored more than 100 peer-reviewed publications on livestock and has been engaged in certified organic farming since 2010. He is a member of Cooperative Regions of Organic Producer Pools (CROPP, Organic Valley) and the National Farmers Organization. He holds a PhD and MS in Animal Science and a BS in Animal and Plant Systems from the University of Minnesota.

Bryan Buchwald (Oklahoma) is appointed to the Organic Certifying Agent seat. He is Program Administrator for the Poultry, Egg, Organic & Produce Section at the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, and is also the owner of a Registered Angus Cattle operation. Mr. Buchwald is a 4-H & FFA Volunteer Leader, American Angus Association member, Oklahoma Farm Bureau member, and Oklahoma Cattleman's Association member. He brings experience as an organic inspector and certifier. He holds a BS in Animal Sciences with a minor in Chemistry from Cameron University.

Virtual NOSB Fall Public Meeting

Day 1: Tuesday, Oct. 27 from 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm Eastern
Day 2: Wednesday, Oct. 28 from 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm Eastern
Day 3: Thursday, Oct. 29 from 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm Eastern
Watch/Listen to the meeting virtually (use the same link for all three days): Join from a PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone or Android device: https://www.zoomgov.com/s/1658909936
Webinar ID: 165 890 9936
One tap mobile:
+16692545252,,1658909936# US (San Jose)
+16468287666,,1658909936# US (New York)
The meetings are free, open to the public, and no registration is required. Please note time zones listed above and in the meeting agenda.

How to Participate: The deadline to submit written comments is 11:59 p.m. ET Oct. 1, 2026. You can submit written comments via Regulations.gov. (Docket # AMS-NOP-26-0892) or directly to Ms. Michelle Arsenault, Advisory Committee Specialist, National Organic Standards Board, USDA–AMS–NOP, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 2642–S, STOP 0268, Washington, DC 20250–0268; phone: (202) 997–0115; email: nosb@usda.gov.

Oral Comments: Oral comment registration is open. To register click: https://www.ams.usda.gov/form/nosb-virtual-registration .The deadline to register is 11:59 p.m. ET Oct. 1, 2026.
The comments will be presented virtually by zoom on Tuesday, October 20 and Thursday, October 22, 2026, from Noon - 5:00 pm Eastern.
Questions? Contact nosb@usda.gov or 202-997-0115 ◆

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Pay and Feed Prices September 2026

By Ed Maltby, NODPA Executive Director

Total estimated sales of organic packaged fluid milk for May 2026 show a decrease of 1.00% over May 2025 sales, as conventional fluid milk sales in the same month also show a decrease of 2.2% over May 2025. June 2026 is better, with organic estimated sales at 3.4% higher than June 2025, and a 3.3% increase in conventional sales over June 2025.The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Market Information Branch published estimated national organic fluid milk product sales for May and June 2026, compiled with data from the Federal Milk Marketing Orders (FMMO). Total US sales of packaged organic fluid milk products were estimated at 250 million pounds in May 2026, with organic Whole Milk sales at 143 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduced Milk at 106 million pounds. In June 2026, total sales of organic packaged milk were 239 million pounds, with sales of organic packaged Whole Milk at 139 million pounds, and sales of organic Fat Reduced Milk at 99 million pounds.

In May 2026, the data shows an increase in sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged fluid products of 2.00% over May 2025, and the June 2026 data shows an increase in sales of 3.4% over June 2025. There was a 4.6% decrease in Organic Fat Reduced Milk in May 2026 over May 2025, and a 4.8% decrease in June 2026 over June 2025. Year over year, there is a 0.3% decrease in sales between year-to-date June 2026 and year-to-date June 2025.

The average national retail price for organic milk, as recorded by the FMMO in July 2026, decreased to $5.19 per half gallon for Whole Milk and for Organic Reduced Fat 2% milk compared to $5.26 in July 2025 but an increase of $0.40 over July 2024. The average national retail price for August 2026 was $5.18 per half gallon for Whole Milk and $5.19 per half gallon for Organic Reduced Fat 2% milk, compared to $5.84 in August 2025, a decrease of $0.65 year-over-year. The year-to-date, January to August 2026, average retail price for organic half gallon is $5.26, compared to $5.07 in the same period in 2025. There was the usual range in prices for different locations, with a low of $4.04 in Kansas and a high of $6.68 in Pittsburgh, PA. In Syracuse, NY it was $4.52; in New York City, NY it was $5.10; $5.01 in Boston, MA; and $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 $45-55/cwt range for fluid organic milk. Buyers are paying premiums to assist transition nationally, which is becoming attractive for herds that have the land to transition to pasture. 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 across the country. In the West, there is more processing coming back on line both for conventional and for organic product. In the Midwest, there is expansion at several plants catering to organic which, hopefully, will take up any increase in production this fall as demand for processing is high and currently unmet.

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 the Pay Price is ranging from $42/cwt up to $50+/cwt. Grass Fed, A2A2, regenerative, organic certification herds are in the $50 to $60 range.

- continued on page 30

Estimated Fluid Milk Products Sales Reports

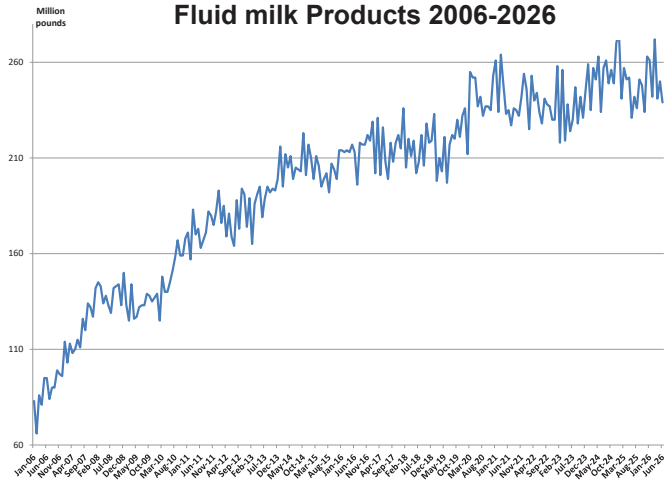
Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	May 2026	2026 Year to date	May 2025	Year to date -2025
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	143	724	2.0%	3.3%
Flavored Whole milk	1	4	1.9%	27.7%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	77	394	-2.0%	-3.6%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	15	76	-8.0%	-12.6%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	10	47	-13.4%	-10.9%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	4	21	-16.1%	-14.5%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	0	-100%	-92.1%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	106	538	-4.6%	-6.1%
Total Organic Milk Products	**250**	**1,266**	**-1.0%**	**-0.9%**

Product Name	Sales of Organic Fluid Milk		Change from	
	June 2026	2026 Year to date	June 2025	Year to date -2025
	Million pounds		Percent	
Organic Whole Milk	139	863	10.0%	4.4%
Flavored Whole milk	1	5	24.5%	27.2%
Organic Reduced-Fat Milk (2%)	73	467	-2.3%	-3.4%
Organic Low-Fat Milk (1%)	13	90	-5.9%	-11.6%
Organic Fat-Free Milk Skim	9	56	-2.0%	-9.6%
Organic Flavored Fat-Reduced Milk	4	25	-34.8%	-18.3%
Other Fluid Organic Milk Products	0	0	-100.0%	-92.9%
Total Fat Reduced Milk	99	637	-4.8%	-5.8%
Total Organic Milk Products	**239**	**1,505**	**3.4%**	**-0.3%**

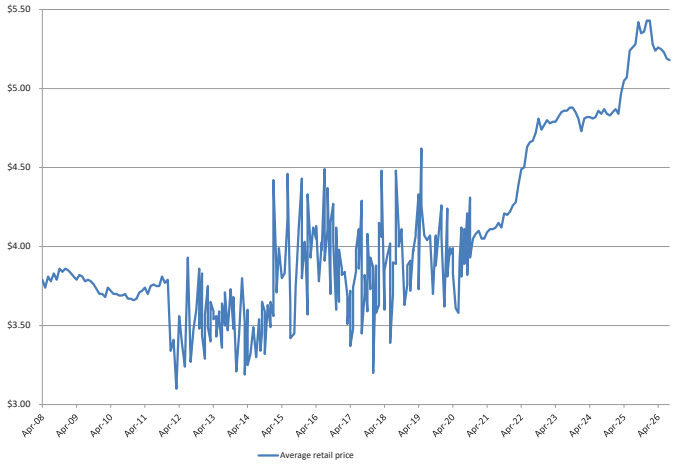
Data may not add due to rounding to the nearest million pounds

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

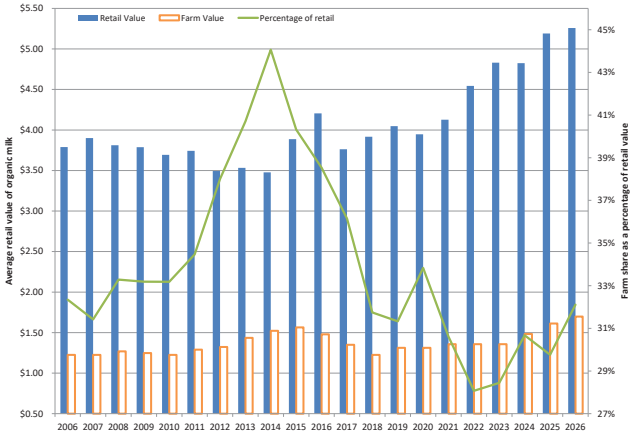
Estimated Total U.S. Sales of Organic Fluid milk Products 2006-2026



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

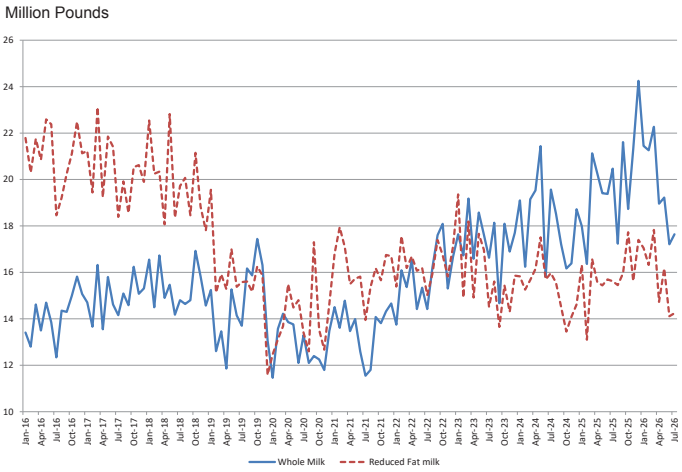


Average retail price, average farm share and percentage for half gallon of organic milk

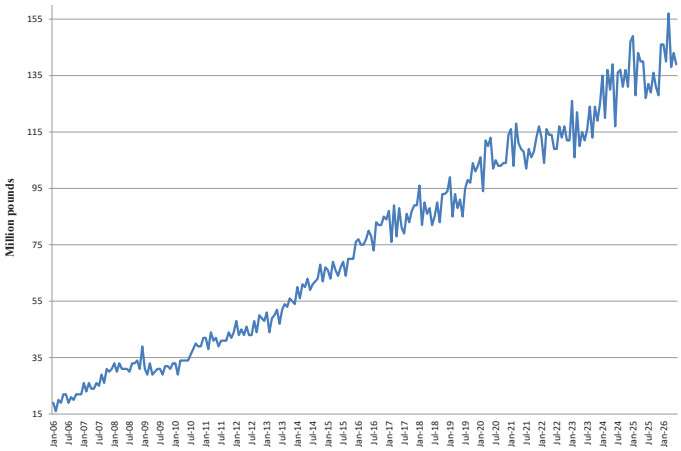


Utilization of Organic Fluid milk in FMMO 1 2016-2026

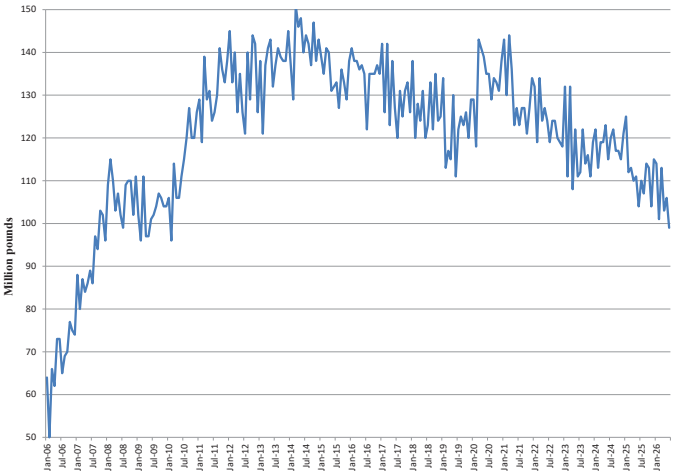
(not including fluid packaged milk processed out of order)



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

Federal Milk Marketing Order 1 (Order) reported that, in June 2026, fluid Organic Milk packaged and utilized within the Order totaled 33.32 million pounds; lower than the June 2025 total of 35.08 million pounds. In June 2026, sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged in the Order were 17.21 million pounds, 2.17 million pounds lower than June 2025. In June 2026, sales of Organic Reduced Fat Milk packaged and utilized in the Order were 14.10 million pounds, 1.59 million pounds lower than June 2025. Total Class 1 milk (both conventional and organic) packaged outside the Order, but sold within the Order, increased by 23.42 million pounds in June 2026 over June 2025 to 150.61 million pounds. Stonyfield/US Lactalis, UNC Dairy (Upstate Niagara) and other plants that process non-Class 1 products are not included in this data.

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

Month	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2026	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2025	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2024	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2023	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2022	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2021	Fluid retail Organic Milk 2020
Jan	38.50	34.31	34.93	37.00	29.14	31.32	23.93
Feb	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	31.32	35.08	31.51	34.59	31.53	28.41	26.90
July	31.88	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

In July 2026, sales of fluid Organic Milk packaged and utilized within the Order totaled 31.88 million pounds; lower than the previous year of 36.09 million pounds, a decrease of 4.21 million pounds. In July 2026, sales of Organic Whole Milk packaged in the Order were 17.64 million pounds, 2.83 million pounds less than the July 2025 of 20.47 million pounds. In July 2026, sales of Organic Reduced Fat Milk, packaged and utilized in the Order, were 14.24 million pounds, 1.38 million pounds lower than in July 2025. Packaged organic and conventional milk coming into the Order in July 2026 decreased by 7.98 million pounds over the same period in 2025. Year to date, July 2026, there has been 72.78 million pounds more of packaged milk coming into the order than in the same period in 2025.

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

Month	2026	2026 sold out of order 32	2025	2025 out of Order	2024	2024 out of order	2023	2023 out of order
January	52.72	46.81	55.36	48.77	56.23	49.82	55.21	48.70
February	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	50.73	44.68	44.98	39.66	52.56	47.04	45.20	39.63
July	49.58	44.43	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

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 June 2026, of the estimated 239 million pounds packaged and sold as Class 1 organic milk in the US, 50.43 million pounds were from Order 32 (Central), of which 44.68 million pounds were utilized in other Orders. FMMO order 1 (Northeast) packaged 31.32 million pounds of organic milk in June 2026. FMMO 51 (California), packaged 49.96 million pounds, of which 10.81 million pounds were sold in other Orders (just under 22% of the total packaged product). Order 33 (Mideast) packages less than Order 1, 32 and 51, with 24.14 million pounds in June 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 239 million pounds of organic packaged milk recorded nationally by FMMO and aggregated by the AMS Dairy Program Market Information Branch, approximately 83.15 million pounds are not accounted for (about 35%) in the individual FMMO's public reports. We have no independent record of how much organic milk is produced that is used in products other than Class 1.

The USDA AMS Market News Vermont Report has published data since November 2023. The reported weighted average Pay Price for the first five months in 2026 was $40.61/cwt, with a monthly range of $36.61/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 five months of 2026 it was 53.06 lbs. The weighted average Pay Price for May 2026 was $36.61/cwt. with daily production of 59.52 lbs.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

The USDA AMS Market News Pennsylvania Report shows a weighted average Pay Price was $43.20/cwt for the first five months of 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 five months of 2026 it was 30.62 pounds. The weighted average Pay Price for May 2026 was $42.40/cwt. with an average daily production of 37.18 lbs.

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 May 2026 shows that organic milk HS-10 exports were 8,146 cwt., an increase of 2,145 cwt. over the same month in 2025. June 2026 data showed exports of 3,684 cwt., a decrease of 5,136 cwt. over June 2025. Year-to-date June 2026 total exported milk was 46,970 cwt, a 13% increase on the same period in 2025. None of this milk is subject to tariffs under the USMCA or more recent tariffs 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 Premier Livestock and Auctions, Withee, WI in July and August. Organic cull cows remained constant at $140-$185/cwt and calf prices remain consistently high. We went to press before the large sale of organic livestock on September 2, 2026.

At Hoskins Livestock Auction, New Berlin, NY in July and August 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 $4,000 each to a low of $2,650 with organic bred heifers at $2,675 and open heifers at $1,875. The Grassfed certified Organic dispersal sale for RRR Farms in New York, of the milking herd and bred heifers was on Monday, August 24, 2026. There were 45 milking-age cows sold with a top price of $5,000, including 15 that were milking and bred back, alongside 5 just-fresh cows. Bred heifers due to calve later in the fall topped $2,150 and 25 head had A2A2 genetics. Also, there was a sale of a smaller certified Organic herd consisting of 7 cows (5 due in the fall, 2 fresh in April), 2 bred heifers, and 3 open heifers (mostly Holsteins).

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 where they can be more closely observed; 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. Under an emergency use provision in organic regulations, non-approved parasiticide (Ivermectin, for example) can be used with a withdrawal time of 1 year, which would be applicable for non-milking young stock which are the most susceptible to attack by New World Screwworm.

Organic Feed

National data from USDA has organic feed corn delivered to the elevator (probably with an added surcharge when it is further trucked to the farm) with the price averaging $14.85 per bushel in July and less in August 2026 at $14.25. Organic feed soybean delivered to the elevator averaged $27.50/bu. in July and less in August 2026 at 25.50/bushel. Soybean meal was trading at $950/ton in July and $920/ton in August 2026, with consistent demand. I have no accurate information on the price of hay, which depends on availability and expensive trucking. Anecdotally, the price has increased by $10-$20 per round bale. Buy regionally as soon as possible. Hay availability in the US is affected by prolonged drought in many areas. ◆

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

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

New World Screwworm (NWS) Dairy Farm Training Flyer

By Lia Seeler, Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance

Why It Matters

New World Screwworm (NWS) is a serious pest that can infect livestock, pets, wildlife, and occasionally people. The larvae feed on living tissue, causing severe wounds, animal suffering, production losses, and potentially death if left untreated.

Since June 3, 2026, when the first case of New World screwworm was identified in the United States, much of the attention has shifted from Mexico to Texas. The U.S. has identified 46 cases, with only three of them still active as of August 16, 2026, 44 in Texas and 1 in New Mexico and all found in domestic animals.

- 22 cattle (including 2 active)
- 3 dogs
- 5 goats
- 16 sheep (including 1 active)

The number of infections of NWS in Mexico have continued to rise dramatically. Since the beginning of June, Mexico's NWS cases have increased by 10,000. As of Aug. 12, 2026, Chihuahua in Mexico has 122 reported cases, of which 99 are active.

The decision to open the southern border ports for livestock trade from Mexico is starting with the Douglas, Arizona port on August 24, 2026. Phase 2 is to reopen 2 ports in New Mexico. USDA is limiting it to cattle originating from Sonora and Chihuahua and all animals must undergo interior checks by Mexican Veterinarians as well as a full inspection at time of crossing by USDA official. Subsequently, the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will evaluate the possibility of reopening Santa Teresa and Columbus, New Mexico, for the entry of live cattle, bison, and horses.

Know the Signs

- Draining, enlarging, or slow-healing wounds
- Maggots or egg masses in wounds
- Unusual discomfort, irritation, restlessness, aggression or showing signs of sickness
- Lesions around the nose, ears, eyes, genitalia, or umbilical area

How NWS Spreads

Female flies lay eggs in wounds or openings on warm-blooded animals. After hatching, larvae burrow into living tissue, enlarging wounds and causing extensive damage. While the sterile insect technique remains the backbone of regional suppression, it cannot treat an already infested animal.

Prevention Checklist

- Inspect livestock regularly for wounds and signs of infestation
- Promptly treat open wounds and newborn umbilical cords (i.e. dip navels, use fly control methods on sites of dehorning, tagging and branding, etc.)
- Remove or repair sharp objects, broken equipment, and barbed wire hazards
- Maintain strong fly and tick control programs
- Work closely with your veterinarian and organic certifier on approved treatments
- Avoid bringing animals from Mexico or Central America into your herd

Organic Producer Considerations

Early detection is the most effective defense. Organic treatment options are limited. Producers should consult their veterinarian and verify product compliance through OMRI and organic certification requirements before treatment.

Organic Treatment Options (as of now)

In a suspected or confirmed New World screwworm case, producers should follow federal and state reporting and response instructions and work with their veterinarian using FDA-authorized or conditionally approved NWS products when applicable. Although moxidectin is a macrocyclic lactone similar to ivermectin, it does have a limited allowance under USDA organic rules for severe parasitism in certain livestock classes, its use for New World Screwworm would be **extra-label** and should not be presented as a routine or preferred organic NWS treatment. Any preventative treatment or actual treatment of NWS should only be done under veterinarian supervision and knowledge of your certifier.

PyGanic Specialty may have a role as an OMRI-listed contact insecticide for labeled adult fly control on or around livestock, but adult fly knockdown should not be confused with New World screwworm wound treatment or eradication. Pyrethrin products require direct contact and provide little residual protection, so they should be viewed only as one possible fly-pressure reduction tool within a broader prevention program. Prevention should focus on wound avoidance, frequent inspection, prompt wound care, reporting suspected cases, and use of FDA-identified products under veterinary direction when NWS is suspected or confirmed.

ORGANIC INDUSTRY NEWS

Important Facts

- USDA continues surveillance, quarantines, and sterile fly release programs. Currently, USDA is releasing 100 million sterile flies (both male and female) per week.
- The eradication target number is 500 million flies per week. Construction of a new facility at Moore Air Force Base in Edinburg, Texas will be completed in April 2027, where 500 million male flies only will be produced.
- Female screwworm flies mate only once, making sterile fly releases highly effective.
- The U.S. food supply remains safe; infected animals would be identified during inspection.

If You Suspect NWS

Report suspected cases immediately to your State Animal Health Official, Extension Office or USDA APHIS office. Rapid reporting is the law and helps prevent establishment and spread.

If NWS Is Detected in Domestic Animals, Wildlife, or Wild Flies

If New World screwworm is confirmed in a domestic animal, wildlife, or wild fertile fly, USDA APHIS and state animal-health officials may establish response zones around the detection. Under the USDA APHIS NWS Response Playbook, this includes a minimum **12.5 miles Infested Zone**, a surrounding **12.5 miles Adjacent Surveillance Zone**, and a broader **Fly Surveillance Area** that may extend outward based on fly habitat, geography, climate, weather, and animal density. These zones allow officials to coordinate animal surveillance, fly surveillance, movement requirements, treatment or prevention measures, and sterile insect release. Zone boundaries may expand, shift, or be released as new detections and surveillance information become available.

Animal Movement May Be Restricted from Infested Zones

When an Infested Zone is established, animal movement may continue, but it will be subject to official movement requirements. The USDA APHIS playbook identifies movement requirements for animals moving within and out of an Infested Zone, with initial activities handled by state or federal personnel and, in larger outbreaks, trained certified inspectors may be used for inspection, administering NWS animal drugs or pesticides, and submitting samples. Producers should contact their state animal-health agency or USDA APHIS before moving livestock or other warm-blooded animals from an affected zone. Texas has established an NWS animal movement certificate process using trained NWS-certified inspectors, and other jurisdictions may use similar or modified procedures based on their own response orders. ◆

Remember:

Detection • Surveillance • Prompt Treatment • Reporting

Physical description of a New World Screwworm:

Adult Fly

Size: Slightly larger than a common housefly.

Coloration: Metallic blue or blue-green.

Eyes: Large and bright reddish-orange.

Thorax: Features three distinct dark vertical stripes along the back.

It is doubtful that you will ever see the adult fly of NWS since they are solitary insects and do not feed on livestock as adults. Males feed on flower nectar and females feed decomposing animals or wound liquid as they lay egg masses.

Larva (Maggot)

Shape: Cylindrical and tapers to a point at one end, blunt at the other.

Color: White to cream-colored.

Distinctive Features: Surrounded by rings of dark, backward-projecting spines (giving it the "screwworm" appearance). Mature larvae can grow up to 2/3 of an inch in length.

Internal Features: The final third of the body features pigmented internal breathing tubes (tracheal trunks) that appear as two dark vertical slits.

Eggs

Appearance: Creamy white to pale yellow.

Placement: Laid in shingle-like, tightly packed batches of 200 to 300 along the edges of open wounds or mucous membranes.

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

I Can't Unsee Them

By Siobhan M. Griffin

You have all seen the textbook drawing that depicts the succession of plants in temperate environments like ours – first lichen and moss colonize new ground and then annual forbs (weeds) appear. Soon newly established perennial grasses get invaded by shrubs and then dwarf trees. Eventually the ecosystem self organizes to closed canopy forest. That is what is supposed to happen, right? Think again.

Back in 2014 my farm gave me clues about what should be covering our hills when I saw five Karner blue butterflies on a cow pie in the laneway of my farm. I knew they were rare and endangered because they had been our poster child when I joined people who were protesting the bulldozing of 175 acres of pinebush habitat near Albany, NY to build the Crossgates Mall in 1984. Thirty years later they had showed up on my farm. I was sure it was a message from God sent to encourage me to continue with the holistic management of my farm. After all, in the story of Noah's Ark, God had wanted every species of animals to go forth and multiply after the flood.

But why had Karner blue butterflies come? After all, they are prairie species just like the ground-nesting bobolinks that had also moved on to Raindance Farm in abundance. This sent me on the inquisitive journey that has resulted in my new book *Sun Cheese: Lessons From Regenerative Farming That Can Help You Rewrite Your Future*. Organic dairy farmers like you already understand the essential symbiotic relationships between your livestock and the plants they fertilize and prune. I wrote *Sun Cheese* for the environmentally concerned friends and relatives you meet at family get-togethers and markets who tell you livestock are bad for the planet.

That scenario of succession is missing something critical – animals. According to The Creator's ingenious design, there is no ecosystem on Earth that evolved without animals. The big ones that weigh over 100 lbs, known as megafauna, evolved on every continent. We are so used to landscapes that are depleted of their megafauna that we think the shift to dense forest on our landscapes is normal. But this is not what our Paleolithic ancestors found thousands of years ago when they arrived to pristine ecosystems on continents around the world outside of Africa.

In the eastern US where we farm, the landscape as recently as 11,000 years ago was kept open by giant ground sloth, some as big as African bull elephants. They, along with their supersized friends the bison, mammoth, American horse, and mastodon were landscapers who pruned and mowed the land in a way that produced incredibly productive open woodlands that teemed with grazers and browsers. Why should we care today? Because the result has been many more wildfires and less productive landscapes.

Wildfire

When humans hunted scores of species of megafauna to functional extinction in North and South America between 22,000 and 11,000 years ago, more charcoal appeared in soil sediment cores from back then. Wildfire had become more frequent. Why? Because the unnatural succession you see in the textbooks occurs only in the absence of the large grazers and browsers that had coevolved with all our native plants. Now, under closed canopy forests, more brush accumulates because the giant ground sloths and 30 other species of sloth were not stripping the leaves for food and trampling the woody material to the ground where fungi could easily recycle it. Bushes create "ladders" that allowed fires to spread to the tops of trees. The closed forest canopy with trees close together creates a superhighway for wildfire. Now, when I see wildfires on the news, I cannot unsee the giant sloths!

There are more reasons you should care about the giant animals called megafauna. One is the fact that you raise them. Livestock like cattle and sheep are technically megafauna and as such can be used to mimic the ecosystem service that wild megafauna once provided when they enjoyed the earth in abundance as God

ORGANIC PRODUCTION

had intended. Silvopasture, where livestock are raised in open woodlands that mimic our pristine ecosystems, can be a useful tool to create agroecosystems that are more resistant to fire.

When my parents were young in the 1940s and 50s, livestock covered the European landscape where they grew up and kept nutrients like carbon cycling and plants fresh, green and growing. Since then, most livestock have been removed from European and American landscapes and put in CAFO's. Crops are grown to feed the animals but in the area that is not in crop, such as on steeper land or abandoned land near towns and cities, the unnatural succession to closed canopy forest has occurred and made bigger and more dangerous wildfires inevitable. These become more likely to occur in the hot dry weather that is becoming more frequent. In Canada, the 2023 fire season was so bad that the forestry sector emitted more greenhouse gases that the entire fossil fuel industry. The blazing forest fires are occurring on land once grazed by three species of bison, including the giant Steppe bison, along with giant elephants.

More Productivity per Unit of Input

The other reason to learn about the ecology of Pleistocene megafauna is the template of exceptional productivity they offer. These can be copied by regenerative organic farmers today to make our farms more profitable. For instance, one acre of silvopasture can produce 40% more food than either one acre of pasture or one acre of orchard alone. If you really want to speed up nutrient cycling on your farm, the logical way to mimic how nature did it is by adding more species of animals, be they wild or domestic.

Poultry are a logical place to start because birds were once far more abundant in the open woodlands of the Eastern US. The naturalist John James Audubon testified in 1813 that one flock of passenger pigeons in Kentucky flew overhead for three days. The flock size was estimated to be over two billion birds. He said in his writing that "the dung fell in spots, not unlike melting flakes of snow." Abundant birds were driving the nitrogen cycle and the land produced more than today without any artificial fertilizer. It looks like nature had abundance all figured out. The farther back you look, the further forward you can see. ◆

Siobhan Griffin was an early adopter of organic dairy farming and a holistic management practitioner. She farmed in Vermont and New York State from 1991 to 2016. She served many years as a New York State Representative with NODPA. Upon selling Raindance Farm, she moved to New Zealand and now lives with her partner of ten years, Rick, on a thousand-acre sheep farm. She coaches regenerative dairy and livestock farmers through her consulting business Next Level Grazing, ltd. Learn more about her new book at www.restoracene.com.

Organic Milk Buyers

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

- **Byrne Dairy:**
  Mike Winkler, Director of Dairy Programs,
  cell phone (315)622-8779, mwinkler@byrne1933.com
  Greg Capozzi, Farm QC Inspector,
  cell phone (315) 632-2981, gcapozzi@Byrne1933.com .
- **CROPP Cooperative - Organic Valley brand:**
  Farmer Hotline at 888-809-9297 or
  farmerhotline@organicvalley.coop or
  Abbie Teeter Abigail.teeter@organicvalley.coop
  representative for western NY;
  Ethan Garrison ethan.garrison@organicvalley.coop
  rep for south central and eastern NY.
- **Family Farmstead Dairy, NY:**
  Thomas McGrath, tom@familyfarmsteaddairy.com,
  607-397-4044; www.familyfarmmsteaddairy.com ;
- **Horizon Organic LLC**:
  Amber Brown (Producer Relations Manager, Western NY)
  607-749-9185, amber.brown@horizon.com ;
  Michelle O'Brien (Producer Relations Manager, Eastern NY) 315-832-5293, michelle.obrien@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
  Phil Forbes (Producer Relations Manager, MN, WI, MI, Western OH, IN, KY), 319-430-1942
- **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 .
- **Stonyfield/Lactalis USA:**
  Jeremy Russo: Manager, Farm Relationship and Procurement – NY/VT – jeremy.russo@us.lactalis.com (802)236-1920
  Erin Marlowe: Manager, Farm Relationship and Procurement – NH/VT – erin.marlowe@us.lactalis.com (603)496-9499
  Michael Brown: Manager, Farm Relationship and Procurement – Maine – michael.brown1@us.lactalis.com (207)944-8277
  Pam Riesgraf: Manager, Farm Relationship and Procurement – MidWest – pamela.riesgraf@us.lactalis.com (612) 670-9417
- **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

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

Classified Ads

ANIMALS

Cows Wanted: We are reconstructing our herd after a long period of rebuilding our Dairy Barn after a weather related barn collapse in 2023. Looking for a group, 12 to 15 to start, of certified organic Holstein Dairy Cows in milk, preferably from farm with robotic milking. Contact Shaw Farm, Warren@shawfarm.com, 978-835-7423.
Location: Dracut, Massachusetts

FOR SALE: Twenty five Organic Dairy Cows, Holstein Friesian and Holstein/Jersey crosses, New Zealand genetics. Fourteen are A2/A2. Freshened in April and May. OEFFA certified. Philip Witmer, grazelandinc@gmail.com 540-820-9228.
Location: Dayton, Virginia

HAY/FEED

FOR SALE: 1st Cutting small square bales Mixed Grass, clover mix. Different poundage's for everyone's need! 30-50lb bales and plenty of 50-70 lb bales. Asking $6/bale, $5 for the lighter bales. 2nd cut will be available soon as well. Young beginning farmer made, Organic! Non GMO, no pesticides. Please call or text Gerard Herrala at any hour. 607-744-7439.
Location: Nichols, NY

FOR SALE: Organic Rye and Wheat Straw small square bales. #40-50 bales, Asking $6.25 per + $40 loadout fee (waived over 40 bales) Organic Clover Wrapped Balage. Dry Matter 34.7, Average Weight #1538 (#520 DM) CP 16.9 TDN 59.2 RFQ 163, Milk Per ton 2920, NEL .60 Approx. 200 available; Asking $80. Dry Matter 29.6 Average Weight #1650 (#488 DM) CP 24 TDN 64 RFQ 218, Milk per ton 3347, NEL .66 Approximately 160 Available, Asking $100 or make offer Possibility of fall cuttings by request. Oechsner Farms- Please Text 315-945-7184.
Location: Newfield, NY

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Help Wanted: Dairy Farm Milker / Dairy Farm Worker
We are seeking a reliable Dairy Farm Milker to join our farm. The successful candidate will help with daily milking operations, care for milking cows, and support general farm tasks. This role requires physical stamina, attention to cleanliness and animal welfare, and the ability to work early morning shifts. Full-time, Experience with dairy cows or livestock preferred; willingness to learn on-the-job; ability to stand for long periods; lift and carry up to 50 pounds; comfortable with animals and farm equipment; willingness to work outdoors in all seasons. For more information and to apply contact Cindy Dunphy, Seven Stars Farm, by phone, 610-935-1949, or email, and send your resume to sevenstarsfarm@verizon.net
Location: Phoenixville, PA