



The Role of Organic Pasture in Animal Welfare

Dr. Juan Velez, M.V., M.S., D.A.C.T.
Vice President, Farm Operations
Aurora Organic Dairy

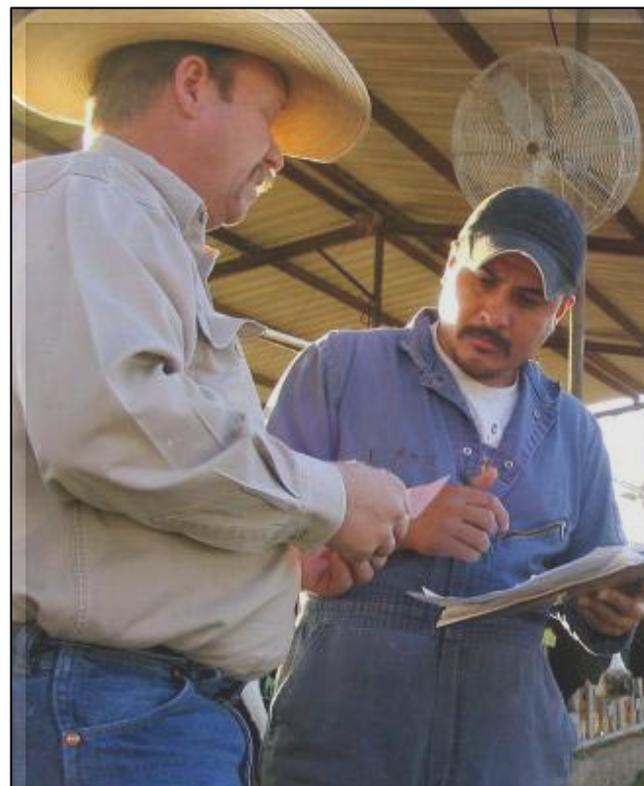
April 19, 2006



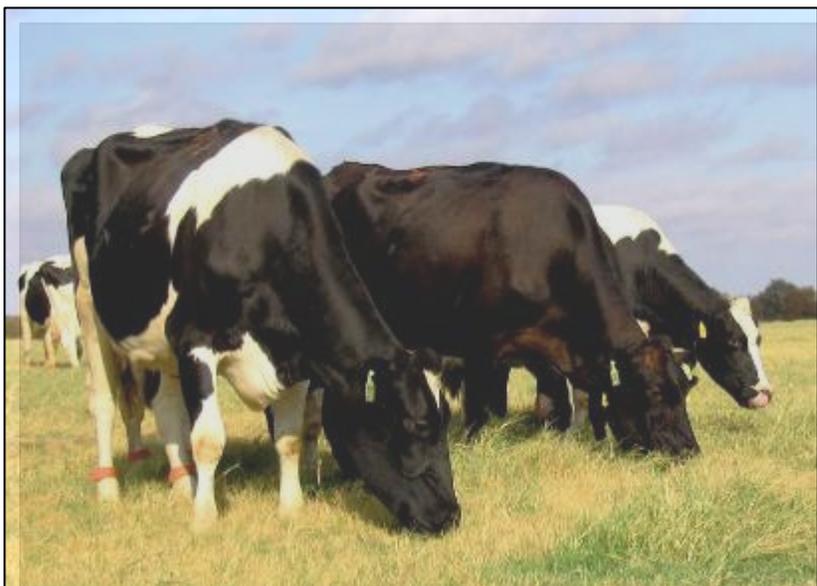
Focus on the Animal - - What Creates Animal Welfare ?

Animal Welfare is created by the holistic management of the dairy herd across 5 key areas:

- **Diet & Nutrition.**
- **Cow Comfort.**
- **Prevention of Disease.**
- **Management Skills and Animal Husbandry.**
- **Beneficial interaction between humans and animals.**

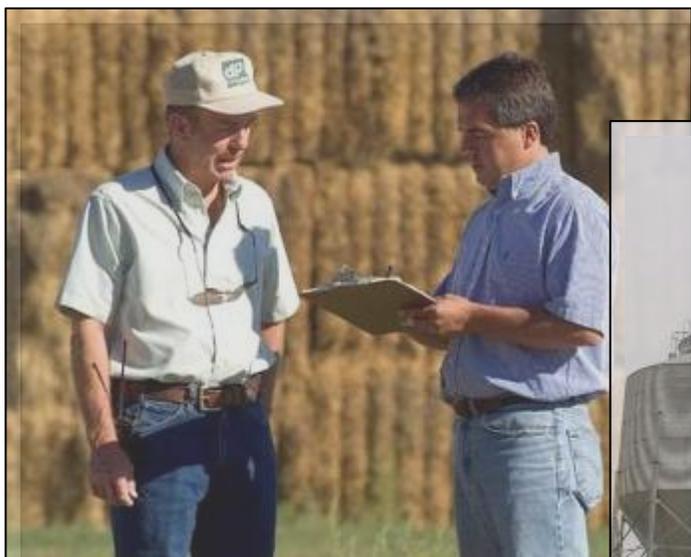


- ❖ **Balanced nutrition comes from several types of forage.**
- ❖ **Pasture is one of several important sources of forage in the diet:**
 - Pasture.
 - Alfalfa hay, grass hay, etc.
 - Silages.
 - Other sources of forage.



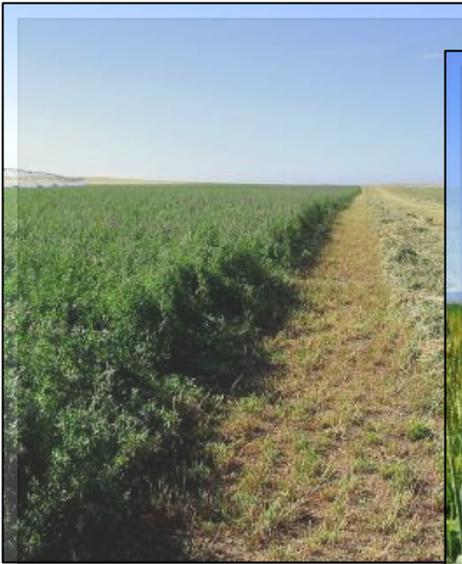
Animal Welfare: Diet & Nutrition

- ❖ **Healthy cows also need sources of proteins, total energy, total fiber, minerals and vitamins to create a balanced diet.**



Animal Welfare: Diet & Nutrition

- ❖ **Total Dry Matter Intake comes from many sources, including pasture, to optimize animal nutrition. Key factors in DMI include:**
 - Type of feed ration.
 - Variability in sources of DMI, season, species, geography.
 - Percent moisture.
 - Palatability.



How is Animal Welfare Measured?

The parameters of animal welfare are well-developed; and are defined by 10 or more separate measures.

- ❖ **4 key measures have the greatest direct correlation to overall animal welfare (per Dr. Temple Grandin):**
 - Body Condition Score (1.0 – 5.0)
 - Locomotion Score (1.0 – 5.0)
 - Cow Comfort.
 - Somatic Cell Count (SCC).



How is Animal Welfare Measured?

- ❖ **Measures of animal welfare are readily quantified and measured over time, leading to clear, enforceable organic production standards.**





How AOD Demonstrates and Improves Animal Welfare.

- ❖ AOD relies on 3rd party independent audits of animal welfare measures for our farms, using an USDA process-verified, ISO 9001 approved auditor.
- ❖ AOD supports similar metrics and audits for the NOP animal welfare standards.





How AOD Demonstrates and Improves Animal Welfare.



1. A producer receives numerical scores in every key area of animal welfare, and uses the results of the ongoing audits to improve the operation.

2. The NOP should conduct similar fact-based audits of animal welfare to ensure certifiability, verification of ongoing compliance and the enforceability of its rules.

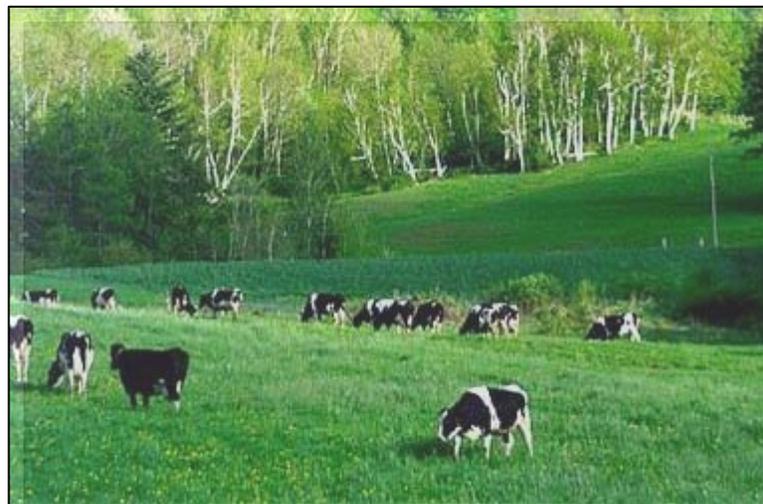
	<u>Measure</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Current</u>	<u>Plan</u>
1	Body Condition			
2	Locomotion			
3	SCC			
4	% lying down			
5	% chewing cud			
6	Integrity of skin			
7	% with Teat injuries			
8	Rumen health			
9	Calving Interval			
10	% animals with pathogenic bacteria			
11	% animals with parasites			



The Specific Role of Organic Pasture in Animal Welfare

Pasture can have a positive impact on animal welfare, if managed properly within an overall holistic system of care and management.

- ❖ **Pasture is one of many important elements contributing to animal welfare.**
- ❖ **A federal production standard must accommodate:**
 - Variability between farms, climates, geographies, facilities, etc.
 - Variability in pasture composition and quality.



Effectively Implementing Organic Pasture

- ❖ **The role of the Organic Systems Plan is unique to each organic operation.**
- ❖ **The need for critical decisions about pasture and animal welfare to be made at the farm level by the farmer and the certifier, within the organic system plan for that farm.**



Key Conclusions

- ❖ **Pasture helps create good animal welfare as one part of the holistic management plan.**
- ❖ **Pasture must be managed for long-term sustainability in each geography and climate.**



Summary

- ❖ AOD supports an NOP pasture rule in which animal welfare is the highest priority.
- ❖ Measurable indicators are needed to improve verification, enforceability and ensure continual improvement.
- ❖ What consumers expect is to know that organic operations raise our animals with high standards of animal care & welfare, with pasture as one of several contributors.





Muchas Gracias !

Dr. Juan Velez, M.V., M.S., D.A.C.T.

juanv@auroraorganic.com

720-564-6296

