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Water Quality
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All About Organics

With the price of conventional milk hovering around \$10 per CWT, and organic milk around \$25 per CWT, many dairy farmers are considering “going organic”. As part of our ongoing series in cooperation with Glenn County RCD, in this newsletter we will touch on some topics related to organic dairying and provide you with some resources.

Medical Treatment

People who aren't well informed think that cows, calves or heifers on an organic dairy will never receive medical treatment if it is needed, especially if it involves antibiotics. According to the National Organic Program standards, an organic dairy producer cannot *withhold medical treatment from a sick animal in an effort to preserve its organic status. All appropriate medications must be used to restore an animal to health when methods acceptable to organic production fail.*

However, if an animal is treated with an antibiotic or other prohibited material, the animal cannot remain in the organic herd. In California, there are plenty of dairies willing to buy otherwise productive and healthy replacement stock, so there is a place for these animals. For more detail on the specific allowed materials for organic dairy production, you can go to the National Organic Program website materials list page <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/NationalList/ListHome.html>

Pasture

The current organic rule requires pasture to be offered to grazing animals. The USDA is in the process of reviewing that portion of the rule right now. As the definition of the grazing requirement is refined, significant access to forage via grazing will go far beyond having an exercise yard with grass. Unless you have irrigated pasture as part of your farming operation, can lease pasture adjacent to your dairy, or plan to convert crop ground into pasture, you should forget about converting to organic. Along with good pasture you will need adequate lanes and fencing to make the most of your pasture system year-round. Most organic producers are focused on optimizing returns, not maximizing production. So pasture fits well into a system where gallons per cow is not the only goal.



The Cornell Farm Business Summary has shown that from 1996 to 2003 good grazing farms are equal to or better off financially than conventional farms of the same size. Most of the advantages of pasture are on cow comfort, labor, energy, and feed cost during the grazing season. The down side to the pasture-based farm is a mindset change from conventional (confinement) practices and a lack of support from the long-lived industries that would have to change also. There will be a keen need for support services for the successful transition to grass farming.

Support Systems

First Annual Conference for Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance: a conference for growers, handlers, allied industries, and retailers. Oct 10 and 11, Ramada Inn, Santa Nella

A conference will be held in Santa Nella to formally organize a Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance. On the North Coast and in the Central Valley around Oakdale, there are organic dairy producers who have been doing this a while. As always, your peers are one of your most valuable resources available to you.

The meetings will feature:

- Organizational Session – Officer Elections
- Policy Updates – Resolution development
- Processor Panel – Protecting the Organic Market
- Consumer Panel – Organic Industry Perceptions
- National Animal I.D. – Impact on the Organic Industry
- Trade Show – Allied Industry Sponsors
- Farm Tour – Pasture Walks

For more information on the conference, contact Ward Burroughs at 209-874-4958 or Sharon Sinko at 541-396-2409. You will need to register for the conference by September 25th.

REMINDER: If you cannot attend the Santa Nella conference, Ward will be a speaker at our dairy meeting, Improving Air and Water Quality through Sustainable Agricultural Practices on Dairies, coming up on October 24th at the Kountry Kitchen.

RCD/Cooperative Extension WORKSHOP October 24th, at the Kountry Kitchen in Orland Save the Date

The workshop will include topics such as manure nutrient utilization and irrigation, no-till cropping, steps in transferring to an organic dairy, and NRCS programs available to the dairy industry. Cooperative Extension Irrigation Specialist Larry Schwankle, Forages Farm Advisors Carol Frate and Marsha Campbell-Matthews will be among the speakers on the program. They have all worked extensively with manure water application and metering, nutrient monitoring and irrigation management. We will have a representative from Horizon Organic Milk on the program to talk about their need for organic dairy operators.

California Organic Certification Cost Share

The State of California Organic program has been able to extend the USDA Organic Certification Cost Share Program. The new dates available for reimbursement are for operations that were certified or renewed certification on or after October 1, 2005 thru Sept 30, 2006. They only have about \$140,000 available. It will be distributed on a first come, first served basis.

Time is of importance in this situation, please review your application very clearly and sign it and complete each necessary part. If your application is not complete and accurate, you may not have enough time to resubmit it before funds are committed.

The application is being mailed to all CDFA organic registrants, has been provided to all County Agriculture Commissioner Offices and is posted at the following website.

<http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/fveqc/organic.htm> .



California Organic Grant Program

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) is resuming its grants program after taking time off from to evaluate the impact of its grants on organic agriculture.

The deadline for proposals is Dec. 15, 2006.

The OFRF is releasing an open request for proposals in all subject areas, but particularly encourages proposals in the following topic areas:

Organic livestock systems;

Economic constraints and opportunities relevant to the viability of small- and medium-scale organic farms and ranches;

Projects that investigate the interactions between components of organic systems and that take a systems-management (rather than an input-substitution) approach to solving production problems.

Projects must involve farmers in both design and implementation and take place on working organic farms whenever possible.

To apply, eight copies of a proposal must be submitted to the OFRF office by Dec. 15, 2006. For more details, please refer to the updated request for proposals on the OFRF website at

<http://www.ofrf.org/research/application.html> or

contact Jane Sooby, technical program coordinator, at 831-426-6606, email jane@ofrf.org.

Organic Registration/Certification

Independent, third party certification of organic food systems is mandatory as part of the National Organic Program. So although you need to REGISTER with CDFA, by way of the local Agricultural Commissioner, your CERTIFICATION is done through one of three companies that provide third-

party audits. I am providing information for the Agricultural Commissioner, the CDFA Organic Program and the 3 auditing companies here for your information only. Please see our disclaimer regarding the endorsement of any company or product.

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Improving Air and Water Quality through Sustainable Agricultural Practices on Dairies

October 24, 2006
Kountry Kitchen - Orland

Agenda

- 10:00 **Welcome** - *Barbara Reed, UCCE Dairy Advisor*
- 10:10 **Going Organic-What Does It Take, Is It For Me?** Panel
Barbara Reed, UCCE Dairy Advisor-moderator
Greg Dabney, Horizon Organic Dairies
Ward Burroughs, California Cloverleaf Farms, Denair, CA Organic Dairy Producer
John Foster, Inspector/Reviewer, Oregon Tilth
- 11:00 **Implementing Nutrient Management Plans, Estimating Crop Nutrient Applications**
Marsha Campbell-Mathews, UCCE Agronomy Advisor, Stanislaus County
Carol Frate, UCCE Agronomy Advisor, Tulare County
- 12:00 **Irrigation Management To Improve Water and Manure Nutrient Utilization**
Larry Schwankl, UCCE Irrigation Specialist, Kearney Agricultural Center
- 12:30 Lunch
- 1:15 **An Update On Dairy Air Quality Regulations**
Frank Mitloehner, UCCE Air Quality Specialist, UC Davis
- 1:45 **EQIP Programs For Dairies**
Robert Vlach, Glenn County NRCS
- 2:15 Adjourn

This meeting is sponsored by University of California Cooperative Extension and Glenn County Resource Conservation District.

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