

# Component milk pricing discussed

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**VIRGINVILLE**—The time may be arriving to update the current milk pricing policies by which farmers are now being paid, say two men who favor the idea.

This sentiment was voiced to area dairymen during a recent meeting specially conducted to explain equity or component pricing of milk. Addressing the in-

terested dairymen were Robert Dreisbach, veterinarian from Hamburg, and Calvin Covington of the American Jersey Cattle Club, Columbus, Ohio. The meeting, held March 21 at the Virginville Fire Hall, here, was intended to introduce any interested dairyman or milk processor towards component milk pricing.

Under the present milk

pricing structure the only incentive in milk production is volume with little or no regard to the quality of the product. But, as Dreisbach explained, the more solids-non-fat (SNF) in the milk, such as protein, lactose, and minerals, the more that can be produced from it, be it cheese, butter, yogurt, etc.

This statement was evidenced through a set of charts which demonstrated

that milk testing at 3.8 per cent protein will yield approximately one pound more cheese per hundredweight than milk testing 3.3 per cent protein.

"Why," asked Covington, "should a producer marketing a lower quality product be paid the same amount as a producer marketing a more valuable higher protein product?" It is the same principle as paying a farmer the same price per pound for a steer grading choice as one grading prime.

Also noted, for the fluid milk producers, were studies which consistently showed consumers prefer milk with higher solids-non-fat, of which protein makes up a significant portion.

The dairymen were also reminded how consumers have been regarding fat with a very negative attitude and have become more protein minded. "Changing the pricing policies of milk would reduce that 'fat image' and at the same time

would encourage milk producers to produce a product containing a higher level of SNF," Covington explained.

As Dreisbach remarked, if being paid for protein, farmers would hopefully pay more attention to the quality of the product they are producing. Also, he continued, by component pricing, there would be far less reason to add water to milk to increase volume, through breeding, feeding, or otherwise. "We should be producing a product consumers want," he stated, which is milk containing a higher level of SNF than found in the average milk produced today.

Alarming many of those in attendance, Dreisbach showed the area dairymen the results of tests where he took samples of milk from several retail markets and had them analyzed. The results of these tests proved that none of the eleven samples taken had eight grams of protein (3.5 per

cent) per eight ounce serving which was stated on the labels. Several of these samples also tested under the recommended fat content for whole milk of 3.25 per cent.

"There is too much milk with low test on the market," Covington said on the same note.

Fat used to represent two-thirds of the value of milk 10 years ago but today it only represents about 40 per cent of the value. A new pricing system has to be implemented to more truly reflect the real market value of the product. By pricing the components of milk there would be no incentive for adulterating the product, which in turn, the advocates feel, would cause the production of a more flavorful product.

Citing two areas where some form of component pricing has already been established, Covington outlined the following: California which went to

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Berks County dairy farmer-veterinarian Robert Dreisbach, left, and Calvin Covington of the American Jersey Cattle Club advocate that the farmer's milk prices be based on nutrients contained in the product.

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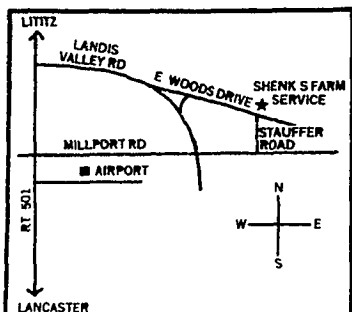
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