

# Insights on calcium research revealed at Dairy Council meeting

**BY WENDY WEHR**  
**SOUTHAMPTON** — At the Annual Meeting of Dairy Council, Inc., on Tuesday, Jan 8, guests were deluged with the latest research on calcium and hypertension. Dr. Lawrence Resnick outlined the preliminary research being undertaken at the Cardiovascular - Hypertension Center, The New York Hospital - Cornell Medical Center.

In his technical presentation, Resnick brought the calcium and hypertension controversy to the forefront, and then delivered the results of his research group's initial investigations. He made the Dairy Council audience privy to information that will not be accepted knowledge within the general medical community for some time. And while direct consequences for the dairy industry may be several years down the road as well, members of the industry will closely monitor the results of this and other research efforts as they plow more and more money into promotion and research.

Resnick began with one provocative case study of a woman who came to their clinic with a history of hypertension problems. Over a period of years, she had taken diuretics and other high blood pressure medicines without relief. At the clinic, the doctors placed her on two grams of calcium carbonate per day, and within five days her diastolic blood pressure had dropped 10 points. After three weeks on oral calcium — and taking none of her former medications — her blood pressure had returned to normal.

Although this is one isolated case, said Resnick, it did suggest to the researchers that there was some link between calcium and high blood pressure. But defining that link was still a mystery.

About half of the scientific literature on calcium, continued Resnick, describes calcium as bad for hypertensives, while the other half purports the opposite conclusion. Resnick and his associates set out to determine why this

contradictory and controversial information exists.

The upshot of the research findings is that there are different kinds of hypertension. While their research is only in the preliminary stages, the Cornell investigators have discovered that there is something different about the way the body handles calcium in people with high blood pressure, said Resnick. Different people react to calcium — as well as salt — in different ways.

Hypertension, explained Resnick, may be related to vasoconstriction (constriction of the blood vessels) or blood volume, and levels of dietary salt merely affects volume. Finding out what kind of hypertension a person has — whether he or she is "calcium-sensitive" or "salt-sensitive" — is critical to diagnosis.

"Salt is not relevant to everyone's blood pressure, and in some cases (those with vasoconstrictive problems) may act in the opposite way. In only one-third to one-half of hypertensive people will decreasing salt help. We don't give people advice on sodium until we find out what kind of hypertension they have," said Resnick.

Similarly, increasing levels of dietary calcium, may or may not be beneficial in treating high blood pressure. But by measuring calcium levels in the body, said Resnick, they are developing some intriguing hypotheses about the connection between salt and calcium.

The research suggests that hypertensive people with low initial calcium levels will have a good response to increased calcium intake. In addition, for people who are what Resnick termed "salt-sensitive hypertensives," the more salt they eat the more calcium will lower their blood pressure.

"It raises a question. Rather than tell a person who is salt-sensitive to go on a low salt diet, maybe we can say if you just take a little more calcium, you can still eat that pizza or some of those high sodium foods that you enjoy,"

remarked Resnick.

In a more general summation of his complex explanation of the research, Resnick said he expected a more balanced perspective to result, one that recognizes that sodium is not bad for everyone and calcium is good for some people.

Also commenting on research at the annual meeting was Dr. M.F. Brink, president of National Dairy Council. He reminded the group that the endeavors of Resnick and other researchers at universities around the country are being funded in part by the dairy industry's contributions.

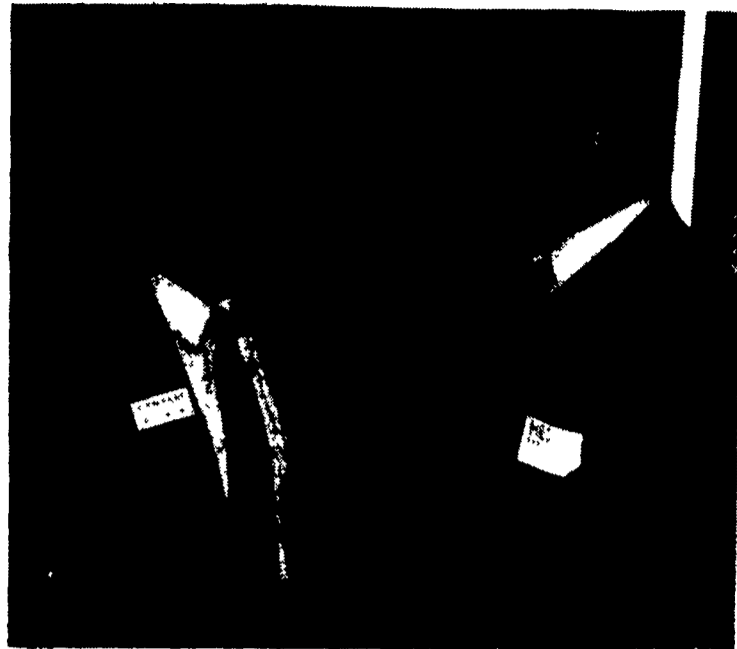
In the area of nutrition research, national dairy monies are funding 13 projects on calcium and hypertension and 28 projects focusing on calcium and bone health at a price tag of \$2.1 million.

"This (the connection between calcium and hypertension) is an emerging hypothesis that we want to see tested at several medical centers and universities," said Brink. "If there is something there, we want to know what that can mean for the dairy industry."

And then, he added, it will be the dairy industry's responsibility to increase efforts to promote their product. National Dairy Council, added Brink, has been active in all aspects of nutrition education since 1950.

The most recent innovative, nationwide project is a planned

that will be beamed to members of the medical profession and the allied health community at 50 sites. The teleconference will concentrate on both areas of



Ray Weber (left), executive director of Dairy Council, Inc., Southampton, talks with Dr. Lawrence Resnick, researcher investigating the connection between calcium and hypertension.

calcium health — bone health and hypertension.

In addition to the presentation by Dr. Resnick and remarks by Dr. Brink, the day's agenda included viewing a new film, "Calcium and Osteoporosis," and conducting the annual meeting.

Robert B. McSparran, president of Dairy Council, Inc., conducted the meeting and Ray Weber, Dairy Council executive director, introduced the organization's dedicated staff and reviewed the group's accomplishments during 1984, the 65th year of operation for Dairy Council, Inc.

## Now is the Time

(Continued from Page A10)

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## \$34,095 distributed to Berks Co. farmers

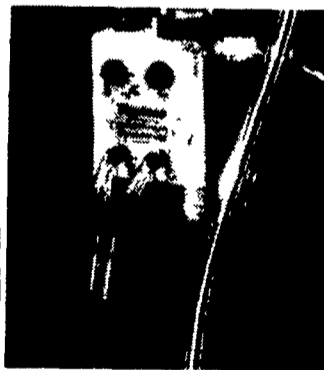
Farmers who reported their 1984 crop acreage and filed a deficiency payment application have received federal payments for their wheat and barley, according to Donald Lutz, chairman of the Berks County ASC Committee. Checks totaling an estimated \$34,096 will have been issued to 54

farmers in Berks County.

The 1984 farm program participants became eligible for deficiency payments when the national average market price for the first five months of the marketing year fell below the government-established target price of \$4.38 per bushel for wheat, and \$2.60 per bushel for barley.

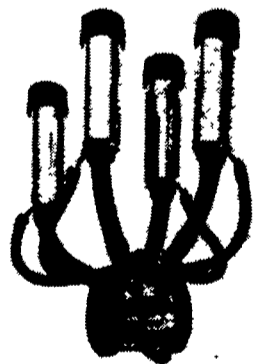
In Berks County, wheat payments will total about \$33,871 and barley payments \$225.

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