

The Dairy Business

By
Newton Bair

The business of farming usually presents us with some alternatives when a decision must be made. A choice of sires and AI studs, several veterinarians on call, feed mills, dealers, and even banks, all clutter up the farm driveway competing for our attention and business. Some of us are even lucky enough to have more than one dairy co-op after our milk, usually at the price set by Federal Orders.

Well, choices are not so hard to make when the range is from excellent to pretty good. But when the choices range from risky to downright disaster, they are not so easy. The really tough choice is when it is an all-or-nothing one.

The one that is facing every dairy farmer right now is whether to go along with the Regional Cooperative Marketing movement that is gaining momentum in New England, New York, and eastern Pennsylvania.

For nearly a year now, producers from Maryland to Maine have been whipping together a plan for what is called 'over-order pricing' of milk. The movement has recently gained momentum in the northeast, with the advent of the Mid-Atlantic Milk Marketing Agency, comprised of Order 4 cooperatives. When the merger is complete, it will have the power and impact of the entire Federal Order system in the Northeast, from Order 1 in New England, Order 2 in New York, and Order 4 in Pennsylvania and nearby sections. Some sections of Order 2 producers have yet to make up their mind to cooperate.

This movement is not merely an attempt to out-guess or out-fox the Federal pricing system. It can be a legal and united effort to gain a more equitable price for our valuable product when the demand for the product increases, rather than accept whatever is offered by an arbitrary formula for pricing.

With an all-or-nothing approach, meaning that all the producers are

represented on the negotiating board, not just some of the more aggressive leaders, negotiations are bound to bring results. I believe that it is one case where the only choice may be between hanging together, or hanging separately.

We may be seeing a perfect example of what should be cooperation between Cooperatives in the Northeast. The Grange, Pennsylvania Farmers Association, and The Pennsylvania Farmers Union have all endorsed the idea and are appointing representatives to the state steering committee.

County committees will be appointed to share representation and ideas. The very survival and continuation of a prosperous and viable industry may be at stake. The era of complete independence for an individual dairyman is nearly over. Single-minded self-reliance is a blessed attribute for the one who can afford it, but when we are all competing against our neighbor, it can bring disaster for all of us.

The basic idea of over-order pricing is to promote the orderly control of milk supplies in times of peak demand. Milk handlers are highly in favor of balancing the supply of milk between peaks and valleys of supply and demand. It's the only way they can justify the extra expense of maintaining full processing capacity. Closed plants or unused equipment and labor do not make money for either the independent processors or farmer owned cooperatives.

This may be one time that you as an independent farmer can become an important link in the solid chain of events that will weld the dairy industry together into a prosperous whole. Read the "Milk Market News" column in last week's Lancaster Farming. Check the details with your milk handler or farm organization and then help to make it an ALL for one choice. The only alternative may be an all-for-nothing choice.

HPI Seeks Aid For Cameroon Farmers

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. - Dr. James DeVries, African Director for Heifer Project International, the U.S. based, nonprofit development organization, has announced that he is studying ways to provide assistance to displaced farmers from the Cameroon Lake Nyos tragedy in restocking badly needed livestock. HPI's base of operations in Cameroon is located at Bamenda, only 40 minutes from the disaster site.

Reports coming out of Cameroon from HPI representatives estimated that as many as 1,700 people and 10,000 cattle, goats and sheep died when poisonous gases poured from the volcanic lake and enveloped the pastoral countryside. HPI's Cameroon representative, Charles Talbott is

currently working with the Cameroon Ministry of Livestock and the Provincial Governor's Office to conduct a census of animal losses by people who survived the disaster.

According to Talbott, "Right now it looks as if 2,000 to 3,000 farmers and pastoralists, people who totally live off grazing livestock, will be displaced from the Nyos area because of the danger of recurrent gas releases. For most farmers, their livestock represent their life savings and these farmers have lost all of their livestock."

With an average annual income of only \$720 per family, the majority of farmers would never have the resources to replace their livestock, but without them they have no hope of being self sup-

porting. A native cow in Cameroon costs the equivalent of about \$200 U.S. while sheep and goats cost \$50 each. Farmers usually tend herds which have been perpetually handed down through family lines for generations. When disaster strikes a single farmer, relatives and friends usually help by providing seed stock. In the Lake Nyos situation, this kind of help is impossible.

Heifer Project International has worked in Cameroon for 10 years setting up small animal livestock programs with poor farmers. Working with local organizations, HPI has also been instrumental in establishing an animal research station near Bamenda and distributing livestock to poor farmers in that area.

Cut Feed Costs

The time to ensile corn will soon be here, and this is a good time to focus on cutting feed costs. One way to do this is to add anhydrous ammonia to corn silage at time of ensiling.

In addition to being an excellent preservative, ammonia is also one of the most economical sources of protein for the cow. Applied at the rate of seven pounds per ton, it can elevate the protein content of 65 percent moist silage from 8 percent up to a level of about 13 percent.

Anhydrous ammonia is a non-protein nitrogen which cows can convert to protein. Corn silage and hay crop forages normally contain some NPN, and the rumen microflora need a source of readily available nitrogen such as NPN or highly soluble protein. However, excess levels can be toxic to the cow.

Thus, ammonia must be applied uniformly and at the proper rate. Moisture content of the silage should be between 60 percent and 70 percent. Cows should be acclimated to treated silage gradually over a period of two to three weeks. Rations must be balanced properly.

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