

## Dump The NDB Movement Nearing Goal

BARABOO, Wis. — An error by the USDA and a new wave of signed petitions combined to bring the "Dump the National Dairy Board Campaign" 8,000 signatures closer to the number needed to force a binding national referendum on the future of the National Dairy Board (NDB), according to a news release from the Wisconsin Family Farm Defense Fund, headquartered in Baraboo, Wis.

The movement to eliminate the National Dairy Board resulted both out of dissatisfaction by producers opposed to the possible use of bovine somatotropin (BST) to stimulate cows to make more milk.

The NDB had allocated producer funds toward a BST-education program to prevent possible consumer distrust of milk produced under the influence of BST injections.

A natural milk-production hormone in the cow, additional levels of BST over a lactation can make the cow produce about 10 extra pounds of milk a day. Percentages vary, depending on the amount of milk already being produced.

In addition, additional producer dissatisfaction with milk prices has prompted some producers to complain that raw milk processors and retailers should pay more to promote dairy consumption, or ensure that profits realized from the producer-funded milk promotions get back to the producer.

On April 22, eight volunteers for NDB gathered in a Madison office building and counted 10,668 signed petitions. About 3,000 of these had arrived during the previous week via tear-out petition cards in the April issue of Dairy Herd Management magazine.

Some dairy farmers in almost every state responded to the petition request.

Just as the count was being completed, a faxed letter from USDA official Richard McKee arrived, acknowledging that the previous number of 193,000 U.S. dairy farmers was inflated by 48,000.

McKee had been challenged to verify the 193,000 figure by attorney Ruth Simpson and Baraboo dairy farmer Mike O'Connell.

USDA's new official estimate is 145,000, which means that 14,500 signatures is all that is need to force a referendum on keeping the NDB.

Organizers of the movement said 73 percent of the need signatures have been collected.

With petition cards still coming in, and the recent publication of the

petition in the National Farmers Union and National Farmers Organization newsletters, Dump the NDB backers said they are confident they can round up the needed 3,832 signatures.

While there is no prescribed timetable for completing the campaign, organizers said they anticipate the petitions will be submitted to the USDA this fall. That would set up a referendum in the winter.

"The response to the mail-in

cards would have been even greater were it not for my mistake of listing an April 15 deadline," said O'Connell.

"Many parts for the country did not even receive the magazine until after April 15. Because of this mishap the card format may be repeated later. We want every dairy farmer to have the opportunity to participate in the petition drive."

Besides garnering 3,000-plus signatures, the petition cards

helped bring a new national awareness of farmers' many-faceted opposition to the structure and agenda of the NDB.

Francis Goodman, the Wonewoc dairyman who helped finance the card in Dairy Herd Management, said, "Producers everywhere are starting to see the NDB for what it really is — an organization funded solely by farmers to line the pockets of everyone except farmers."

## Consumers Union Says Milk Safe

Consumers Union, publisher of Consumer Reports, spent the past year analyzing 160 samples of milk for residues of animal medications.

Based on their tests, Consumer Reports found residues in only about 2 percent of the samples.

The magazine also reported: "The few antibiotic residues we found were all within limits considered safe by the FDA."

Concurrently, FDA reported the results of a year-long (February 11, 1991-December 31, 1991), milk-quality monitoring program that analyzed 243 samples. Only one sample tested positive, with residues at 2 ppb., well below

FDA's safe level of 10 ppb. The samples were taken as part of FDA's National Milk Monitoring Program.

There are several reasons why the milk supply is safer than ever. Enhancements in milk-production, industry medication-management, monitoring of milk received by processing plants, and regulatory safeguards include:

- Stronger federal regulations (effective January 1992) supported by the dairy industry, that expand the government's animal medication residue-monitoring system. Every incoming tanker of raw milk is screened for residues prior to processing. In addition, new reg-

ulations provide for unannounced on-site inspections and significantly stiffer penalties for the improper use of animal medications.

- Industry funding and support for more comprehensive, sensitive and accurate testing technologies that producers, processors and veterinarians can use to identify and prevent residues from entering the food processing plants. A Virginia Polytechnic State and University (VPI) analysis of more than 50 tests identified the correct tests to be used to identify particular medications and provided a measure of accuracy for each test. Some of these tests have been included in

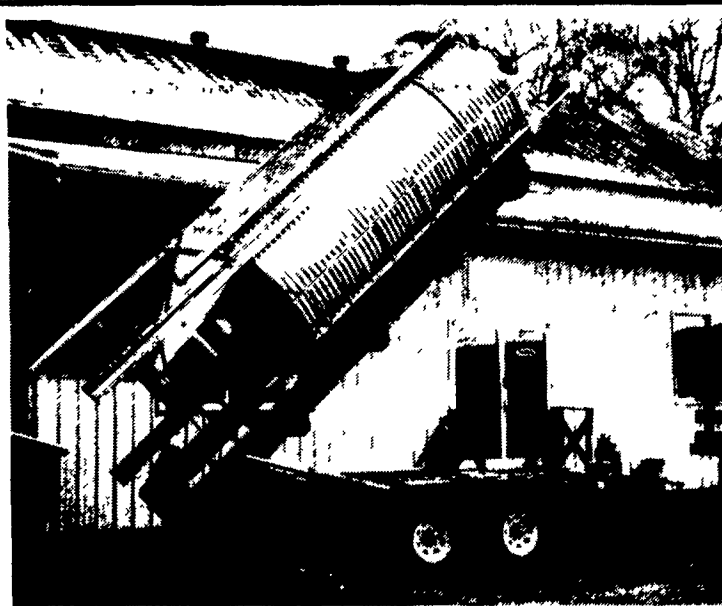
the newly revised regulations that govern milk safety.

- The development and promotion of the "Milk and Dairy Beef Quality Assurance Program." This program, is a 10-step grassroots educational program that provides farmers and veterinarians with guidelines to implement additional on-farm controls to reduce and better manage animal medication use.

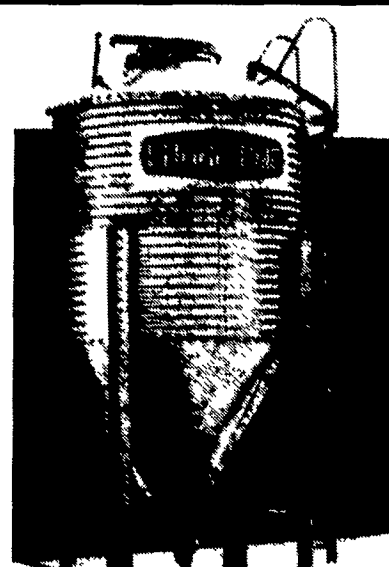
As an industry, we will continue to strive to reduce animal-medication residues, to maintain monitoring systems at the plant, and encourage every partner of the dairy-production chain to remain dedicated to producing wholesome products.

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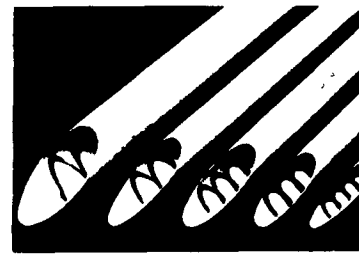
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