

Dairy Farmers Can Get More For Milk

GEORGE F.W. HAENLEIN
Extension Dairy Specialist
University of Delaware
NEWARK, Del. — The debate raging in this region and in neighboring states about the so-called Dairy Compact brings home the realization that dairy farmers really have only two ways to improve the income from their milk production.

One way is political and dependent on another organization or agency to set the price you will get for your milk.

They base their calculation on prevailing market forces, including lobbying, export, health regulations, labor rules and keeping certain factories steaming at full capacity regardless of the low price to the farmer. And whether you like it or not, this price is what you will receive.

The other way is "going your own way."

It used to be this was a risky course. In fact, that is why, at the turn of this century, the formation of producer and marketing cooperatives was viewed as a safer route for the future of family farms.

This plan worked well here and in other countries. But times move on, conditions change. Even farmer cooperatives now find themselves dwarfed by powerful industry conglomerates.

Can individual dairy farmers still go their own way? Is this how the family farm survives?

Entrepreneurs will make it and do well, but the less aggressive dairy farmers will do better under the umbrella of an organization, conforming to the incentives that should make them the most milk money.

Does this mean that a Dairy Compact is comparable to efforts of unionization and demanding

minimum prices for milk? Maybe.

Perhaps that is why food store chains are lobbying so strongly against it.

Is this a wake-up call to farmers?

Maybe now they will see who their enemies are — the people preventing them from making a decent milk income.

Who wins?

The squeaky wheel, of course. But are dairy farmers squeaking loudly enough?

If you opt for the umbrella-group approach, find out what their incentives are for buying your milk, assuming that an incentive encourages you to do something favorable for the organization and for you, too, in the long run.

Milk buying organizations use, among others, two incentives in calculating the price they will pay you for your milk — butterfat price per pound, and nonfat milk solids price per pound.

Some dairy farmers are taking these incentives under consideration and others aren't. What's the difference to your pocketbook?

Last month, the University of Delaware herd tested 3.78 percent butterfat (F) and 8.79 percent nonfat milk solids (NFMS).

Another herd (let's call it B), with the same number of 150 cows and same milk yield, tested 4.1 percent F and 8.9 percent NFMS. At current prices of \$1.2332/pound F and \$1.02/pound NFMS, herd B had an income advantage of \$1,497 per month.

Not far from here, another herd (C), with the same number of cows and same milk yield, tested 3.3 percent F and 8.5 percent NFMS. At current prices, that herd made \$2,644 less than the University's herd per month, and \$4,142 less than herd B.

This kind of income difference for your milk is not magic.

Herd B's genetic selection for higher butterfat contents in the milk and higher nonfat milk solids is working to the farmer's financial advantage.

The progress by genetic selection for milk contents can be achieved even easier than for milk yield, because heritability of milk contents is double that of milk yield.

Progress for more milk yield has, for the most part, been well managed in recent years.

Progress for milk contents should be equally well managed, even while recognizing that milk yield tends to drop if you are not selecting for both.

In addition to genetic selection, you can influence (mostly in a negative way) fat and nonfat milk solids contents through variations in management of feeding, room temperature, labor's milking management, and subclinical mastitis.

There have been many studies on how to improve nonfat milk solids contents, because it is of economic importance to cheese-making and to the taste of skim milk.

The consensus is that milk contents are more easily decreased than increased by most efforts other than genetics.

The best advice is to increase the energy content of the dairy feed ration, especially the concentrate, without changing its fat content.

Often, this will increase the milk protein and, thereby, the nonfat milk solids contents.

In addition, the feed supply of two often-limiting amino acids — lysine and methionine — also must be optimal.

How do you do this? It takes a computer program and a nutrition consultant to calculate this, while genetic selection is as easy as read-

ing the bull proof charts.

However, what can you do when your genetics, feeding, environmental temperatures and subclinical mastitis are under good control?

Use your monthly fat tests on each cow, when you participate in a DHIA program, so you can select which cow to keep.

But you do not have monthly nonfat milk solids tests on each of your cows in this region; this figure is only on your milk tank when you sell your milk, which is a real handicap because you do not know which cow to keep for NFMS and which one to cull because of low tests!

For the last three to five years in this region, dairy farmers have been paid a NFMS incentive, yet

these same farmers are not provided a program by which they can select for better cow NFMS genetics to improve their milk and milk income.

These farmers are handicapped by uncertainty about their cows' NFMS and the information they need, to achieve better milk income.

Of course, none of this interferes with the policies or philosophies of the food store chains.

Whether you decide to join a Dairy Compact or not and without affecting store milk prices, your farm already can make \$4,142 more than another farm with the same number of cows and pounds of milk per month.

Just pay attention to the incentives paid for milk contents listed on your monthly milk check.

National Dairy Shrine Preserves History

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Any industry as dynamic as dairying in the United States needs its history recorded and its future celebrated.

The National Dairy Shrine, an organization made up of producers, business people, retirees and students, has been committed to that end for almost 50 years.

The National Dairy Shrine annually gives more than \$20,000 in scholarships to students in dairy-related fields. It also recognizes the lifelong achievements of industry leaders, educators, breeders and show people.

For a hands-on historical perspective on dairying in the United

States, the National Dairy Shrine maintains its popular Visitors' Center next to the Hoard's Museum in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin.

Along with support of these causes, members enjoy receptions at dairy events across the country, a national newsletter and an internship directory for post-secondary students.

For more information on joining the National Dairy Shrine at a one-time fee of \$50, please write Maurice Core at National Dairy Shrine, 1224 Alton-Darby Creek Road, Columbus, OH 43228-9792 or call (614) 878-5333.

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