

## Lanco Dairy Cooperative Hosts Meeting About Proposed Pricing System

**JAYNE SEBRIGHT**  
Lancaster Farming Staff  
LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — On Monday, Lanco Dairy Cooperative hosted a meeting in Lancaster to rally support for a new milk pricing system it claims will benefit smaller farmer.

About 25 people attended the meeting, where board members from Lanco Cooperative reviewed a new plan they are proposing to replace the newly-adapted federal milk pricing system.

Area legislators and industry representatives, along with local farmers, attended the meeting to discuss the advantages and challenges of the plan.

Called "Option USA," the proposed plan uses a 36-member committee with three from each of the 11 federal orders plus California to determine the milk price.

"The committee would meet quarterly to collect USDA data on consumption, exports, imports, and production cost, then use that information to determine the farmer's milk price for the next three months," said Ken Marshall, president of Lanco Cooperative and a 75-cow dairy farmer in northern Maryland.

According to Marshall, the plan would eliminate surplus by using farmer-generated funds to subsidize exports to poorer countries. The plan also calls for the farmer's milk check to be priced on a sliding scale, paying more for the first 100,000 pounds of milk a farmer ships and decreasing the price per hundredweight for each additional 100,000 pounds of milk produced.

Lanco Dairy Cooperative is a new cooperative that began in 1998 with 32 members and has grown to an expected 400 members by the end of April. The cooperative is made up of mostly Amish farmers in Lancaster and Chester Counties with herds averaging around 50 cows.

The cooperative is backboned by Allied Federated Cooperative in Canton, N.Y. According to Marshall, Allied is a non-profit cooperative with 35 other cooperatives under them.

A volunteer Board of Directors representing Lanco Cooperative operate the cooperative from the dairy farmer's standpoint, while Allied is hired to market Lanco's milk and return the highest price possible to the dairy farmer.

Critics of "Option USA" claim it discriminates against the large farmer and creates legal challenges due to the Free Trade Agreement. While "Option USA" has officially received little support from other dairy cooperatives and farm industry organizations, Lanco Cooperative is optimistic.

"It's not Lanco's plan -- we're just carrying the ball," said Marshall. "A lot of other farmers are supporting the plan. Area legislators have also agreed to support the plan if they see enough dairy farmers truly supporting the measure."

According to Marshall, the Sierra Club is supporting this plan to aid small farmers. For more information about the "Option USA" plan, contact Ken Marshall at (410) 658-7532.

## Pennsylvania Cattle Herds Get Help To Control Johne's Disease

**JAYNE SEBRIGHT**  
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HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — A national study conducted several years ago indicated that at least 20 percent of all dairy herd owners have some degree of Johne's disease in their herd.

This chronic disease can mean big economic losses to the farmer through lost milk production and forced cullings. Although the study indicated that a lower percentage of beef herds are affected with the disease, it is still prevalent in some herds.

That's why the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA), in cooperation with the Pennsylvania State University and the University of Pennsylvania College of Veterinary Medicine, have worked with producer and ag industry representatives to develop a new Johne's program.

This program is a composite of three separate but mutually supportive programs that help farmers identify Johne's in their herd, manage any problems, and receive certification for a Johne's free herd.

The first program is the "30 Free" Test Program. This is ideal for herd owners that have no idea whether or not they have Johne's in their herd. PDA will provide ELISA tests of 30 animals in the herd at no lab fee. The farmer has to pay for the

veterinarian to take the blood sample and ship the samples, but the laboratory fees are covered by PDA.

"The "30 Free" Program is a good way for farmers to find out in a non-threatening way whether their herd has a Johne's problem," said Dr. Larry Hutchinson, extension veterinarian for Penn State.

"The advantage to the state is that we can find out how serious this problem is in Pennsylvania — is it in all of the herds or how many of the herds."

The "30 Free" Program is a preliminary indicator of Johne's in a herd. If all 30 blood tests come back negative, the herd owner can make the conclusion that Johne's is not that prevalent in the herd. If many of the tests come back positive, then it is likely that Johne's is widespread in the herd.

"The reason the number 30 was selected was because the National Johne's Working Group (representing several universities and regulatory organizations across the country) identified 30 as a statistically significant number that indicates a herd's status with a high degree of accuracy," said Hutchinson. "That's only when the 30 animals are selected randomly from the herd."

In Pennsylvania, the herd owners are not required to randomly pick their animals. So the accuracy of the test depends on the randomness of the herd

sample selection.

The "30 Free" Program is available to all beef and dairy herds in Pennsylvania. If a farmer wants to have the tests completed, they should contact their local veterinarian to begin the process.

Participating in the "30 Free" Test Program does not obligate the farmer to do anything to control Johne's in their herd. However, it is strongly encouraged.

"Since the farmer does have to pay to have the blood tests taken, they may want to combine the Johne's blood tests with other tests, such as testing for brucellosis," said Hutchinson.

Once the herd's status is identified through the "30 Free" Program, that status helps guide the herd into the other two programs that PDA offers.

If a herd's results come back all negative (with no indications of Johne's disease in the samples), that herd can register for the "Voluntary Johne's Disease Status Program."

"The Voluntary Status Program provides a means of recognizing herds that are Johne's free through different levels of testing," said Hutchinson.

The program attempts to move herds from level one certification, which includes herds with the lowest degree of certainty in being Johne's free, to level four certification, which includes herds that have the high-

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