



(Continued from Page A10)

Congressman Don Sherwood (R-PA), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), and Dave Obey (D-WI) are pursuing different avenues to correct the inequities facing dairy farmers.

Sen. Specter, Sen. Pat Leahy, and Sen. Snow have made repeated efforts to bring attention to the disparity between dairy farmer's prices and the retail prices of dairy products in many stores. I'm very aware of the strong competitiveness in the retail business, but I want to point out a few things I continue to find.

This past winter, Giant Food Mart store in Wellsville, N.Y. was selling Land-O-Lakes butter for \$4.95 per pound (wholesale price in Chicago was \$1.05 per pound). We continually see Land-O-Lakes butter selling for more than \$3 a pound in many stores. The same USDA Grade AA butter sells for \$1.67 per pound in all Redners stores. Why the difference? These gouging prices are going on while processors are paying the lowest price for milk for butter since 1976.

Walmart stores in Dickson City, Tunkhannock, Pittston, and Wilkes-Bare are selling Walmart brand name milk (G.V.) at the Pennsylvania milk marketing board's minimum price of \$2.52 per gallon (April 2003). The large Dean Food Company bottles a large amount of Walmart's G.V. milk. However, Dickson City Walmart also sells Lehigh Valley milk for around \$3.18 per gallon. Guess who owns Lehigh Valley? Dean Foods! The bottling plant number is the same on the G.V. milk as the Lehigh Valley milk (provably Lansdale). Why the two prices of \$2.52 and \$3.18?

Even more confusing, Dickson City Walmart also handles Swiss brand milk from Lebanon County. Guess who owns the Swiss Company? You're right — Deans Foods! Dickson City Walmart sells the Swiss milk for about \$3.13 per gallon.

So, Deans Foods is involved in all the milk at Dickson City Walmart, but look at what consumers are being charged.

Boyers Market in Berwick, handles only Swiss milk. Guess what Boyers sells the same Swiss milk for? \$2.52 per gallon.

Everywhere you travel you see Schwann's trucks making home deliveries of various frozen foods. I understand the products are good. However, on their price list they list 2 1/2 gallons of vanilla ice cream for more than \$20. This equates to about \$4.20 per half gallon. you can buy good ice cream at Redners Market for \$1.79 per half gallon. I realize there is a difference in cream content in various ice creams, but not to that degree.

Some companies are slipping in the 1/4-quart containers in the freezers (a half gallon is 2 quarts). The companies say the ingredients are costing more. However, the milk and cream used for ice cream command the same 1977 price to dairy farmers.

Schwann's also belongs to the International Dairy Foods Association, better known as IDFA. IDFA shows up at many milk hearings and opposes increases to dairy farmers. They fought vigorously against dairy compacts. Two of their strongest allies against dairy compacts in the U.S. Senate were Sen. Kuhl (D-WI) and Senator Santorum (R-PA).

Recently IDFA awarded Schwann's Food Company their second annual Grand Pioneer Award for Schwann's outstanding efforts in implementing a company grass-roots program, geared for Schwann's officials and employees to communicate with elected officials. There isn't anything wrong with the grass-roots program except the Schwann's are helping to maintain dairy farmer's prices at the 1976-1977 level. Several calls we made to Schwann's officials were not returned.

Breakstone butter sells for more than \$3 per pound in many stores. We're not sure who owns Breakstone, but their butter wrappers make reference to Kraft Foods. Remember Kraft? They are the company that is using imported MPCs in many of their cheeses and cheese products. The FDA says Mr. Kraft, you should not use MPCs but their packages still carry MPC on the labels. Oh, that's right — Kraft says we will rename our cheeses to comply with the FDA ruling.

Restaurants, like retail stores, are highly competitive and must be able to charge a fair price or else they are gone. I like to stop at Denny's for their Slam Bang Pancake Special. As I glazed down their menu, they listed a small glass of milk at \$1.33 per glass. Of course, they need a markup, but their price comes to more than \$20 per gallon, or \$240 per cwt. Local dairy farmers receive \$12.74 per cwt for milk that is bottled (\$1.10 per gallon).

Hershey Foods opposed the Dairy Compact at the Williamsport hearing. It was the dairy farmer's good friend Pennsylvania Sen. Roger Madigan that cross-examined the Hershey officials and revealed some of their milk was coming from the Atlanta area.

It's time for our elected officials to step in and see that the USDA prices milk fairly to our dairy farmers. This can be done without gouging consumers.

Consumers — please do not

buy milk for \$3.18 per gallon when you can buy the same milk for \$2.52 per gallon. Please do not pay \$3 or \$4 for a pound of butter when many stores sell the same grade of butter for less than \$2 per pound. And, please do not buy cheeses that contain MPCs. Contact your elected officials and tell them you want your milk and milk products produced in the good old USA.

Pro Ag can be reached at (570) 833-5776.

Arden Tewksbury
Manager, ProAg
Meshoppen

Editor:

We are writing this letter to you in hopes that perhaps we are not the only ones who are against "The New Milk Program." We are referring to Cooperatives Working Together, also known as "Leadership Taking Advantage."

We are against this program!! The East is in a milk deficit area. Why should we pay to help to get rid of a surplus that is not in the east? Besides the fact that we can't afford to lose \$.18 from our milk check. Where was our great cooperative leadership and their thinking two years ago when we were making a profit milking cows? Did they not have the foresight to see that unchecked expansion out west was going to destroy our milk market nationwide?

Yes, our dairy industry is at a terrible crossroads and we are not arguing that something needs to be done. However, having said that, we do not believe this farmer-funded program is the right way to do it. How about asking the financial institutes for some help? They were the ones that had all the money to loan for all these new huge facilities. Or maybe, just maybe, they are behind this program? Our largest milk cooperatives are in serious financial trouble, also. Why? This is the same leadership that thinks getting bigger is the answer.

I'm sure this letter, if printed, will generate much discussion. That's the idea, if you are a member of one of *The Cooperatives*.

Now is the time to ask some hard questions.

Jeff and Michele Reasner
Jemi Jerseys
Newburg

June Beef Management Calendar

John B. Hall
Extension Animal Scientist
Virginia Tech

BLACKSBURG, Va. — Here are a few key items to remember for the month of June.

For spring calving herds:

- Finish AI; turnout cleanup bulls

- Check bulls regularly for performance and injury

- Feed 1st calf heifers separately; give them best forage and supplement

- Use 48 hour calf removal for thin cows and 1st calf heifers at beginning of breeding season

- Begin fly control program

- Begin creep grazing

- Continue feeding high magnesium minerals to prevent grass tetany; may be able to switch to high Se trace salt late in month

- Do mid-summer deworming and implanting late in month or early next month

- Finish making first cutting hay early in month

- Start grazing warm season grasses

For fall calving herds:

- Body condition score cows; plan nutrition/grazing program based on BCS

- Begin fly control program

- Do mid-summer deworming on replacement heifers and preg heifers (2-year-olds)

- Plan marketing program for calves

- Vaccinate calves for VQA programs; line up certification

- Wean calves if selling in VQA weaned program in July (weaned for 30 days)

- Switch to high Se trace mineral salt

- Start grazing warm season grasses.

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