

Raw Milk

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an approved bottling and capping facility, and there's "a lot more cost involved," Malik said.

However, marketing potential grows considerably with a pre-filled container permit because the milk can be sold in stores and farmers' markets anywhere in the state.

Raymond Fisher, of Centre County, was one of many Plain dairy farmers attending the meeting. He milks about 35 cows in partnership with his wife near Rebersburg. Two weeks ago, they began bottling milk under a pre-filled container permit. Their raw milk sales are already increasing, according to Fisher.

"We knew the demand was there," he said.

Either kind of permit holder must test the herd annually for TB and brucellosis, have their water tested two times a year, and conduct monthly milk tests for standard plate count for bacteria and somatic cell count. The PDA checks each step of the production and milk-handling process.

The state doesn't charge a fee for permitting, but requires the tests on a regular basis. Total testing fees for a herd of 40 cows add up to roughly \$100 a month, according to Malik.



Panel members handling raw milk questions are, from left, Mark McAfee, California dairyman; Roy Malik, state milk inspector; Tim Wightman, Wisconsin dairyman; Jerry Brunetti, ag consultant; Carlton Busko, medical doctor; and Bobby McLean, director of Pennsylvania's Bureau of Food Safety and Laboratory Services.

Malik also recommended farmers implement the state's Johne's program to make sure their herd is free of this chronic, intestinal disease.

Studies in recent years have shown possible links between Johne's and Crohn's disease, a chronic intestinal disorder in humans.

At the same time, there is controversy about whether or not normal pasteurization actually kills the Johne's organism, according to Malik.

Malik said he talks to the state veterinarian regularly for updates

on the Johne's issue.

For farmers who sell both raw milk and milk that will be pasteurized, Malik said a common way to help assure high quality of the raw milk is to keep two separate bulk tanks for storing milk. The first number of cows can be milked with extra care and cleanliness for the raw milk. Then the farmers "can let their hair down" and milk the rest of the herd like a normal dairy farmer would.

"Our raw milk history is phenomenal," Malik said, noting that he is aware of just one raw milk-related illness ever having occurred in Pennsylvania. Complaints about short-term digestive problems tend to come from first-time drinkers, he said.

In his region, which in-

cludes the southeast and central parts of the state, Malik said he has been making three or more "raw milk visits" most weeks in recent months — visits to farmers who are considering applying for a raw milk permit. Although not nearly all those dairies follow through, there is "absolutely" an increasing interest in selling raw milk, he said.

Malik also pointed that people owning just one cow are allowed to sell raw milk products.

Jerry Brunetti of Agri-Dynamics Consulting, and Carlton Busko, MD, a general practice doctor with offices in Lancaster and Halifax, joined a panel discussion following the individual speakers.

In his medical practice, Busko focuses on metabolic restoration and disease therapy that includes

raw milk and raw milk products in the diet. Brunetti is a leader in the eastern Pennsylvania chapter of Weston Price Foundation, an international group that promotes nutrient-dense foods, including raw milk and meat from grass-fed livestock. Panel members addressed a wide variety of questions from the audience, from health effects to the permitting process.

Brian Snyder, PASA executive director, moderated the meeting.

"Raw milk is an issue that is increasingly important to farmers and consumers," Snyder said. "Folks at the PDA are just waking up to the demand for raw milk."

Dan Fisher, ag consultant and natural food advocate from Blue Ball, called the event "an historic meeting."



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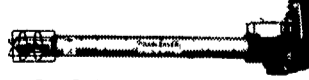
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Project Grass Conference Set Oct. 27-28

STATE COLLEGE (Centre Co.) — Pennsylvania Project Grass will conduct its Second Annual Statewide Conference and Grazing Farm Field Day on Oct. 27-28 at Days Inn, State College.

The two-day event will feature a grazing farm tour, an awards banquet, and a number of presentations on grazing and the work of Project Grass, a statewide grazing partnership organization.

Topics and speakers for Monday, Oct. 27, include:


- How to Form a Cooperative, Tanya Turner of Keystone Development Center.
- Animal Grazing Nutrition, Kathy Soder, ARS Pasture Research Lab, University Park.
- Carbon Sequestration: What is it and Why is it Important?, Curtis Dell, ARS Pasture Research Lab, University Park.

The five regional Project Grass chapters will also report on their accomplishments and there will be an overview of the Project Grass strategic plan.

The grazing tour bus to Huntingdon County will leave Days Inn at 8 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 28.

For more information, call (814) 445-8979 ext. 101.

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