



SOUTH CENTRAL NY DAIRY & FIELD CROPS PROGRAM

1ST QUARTER REPORT, JANUARY- MAR 2015

NEIGHBORS EXPRESS OPPOSITION TO MANURE STORAGE IN TWO LOCAL TOWNS!

Town law, farmers and neighbor's perspectives on siting and permitting manure storages are at odds.

Although NYS does not prohibit winter manure spreading there are strong guidelines and recommendations to avoid runoff losses to stream and lakes. NYS DEC expects farms to have adequate storage to reduce need for winter spreading. Strategic applications under best case conditions in winter are allowed.

The siting and development of manure pits for CAFO regulated farms are developed by licensed engineers, following the standards of the Natural Resources Conservation Services of the USDA.

NYS DEC and Ag agencies like NRCS and SWCD's strongly encourage and financially support the development of manure storages on dairy farms so that farms have enough storage capacity. Adequate storage prevents spreading during bad winter weather or when conditions are risky for runoff from thaws or snowmelt.

This past year, residents in the communities of Dryden and Homer have protested the building of manure storages in their neighborhoods.

To develop farmer's perspectives about a wide breadth of issues from engineering aspects, to public funding and potential neighbor concerns, *the Development and Siting of Manure Storages* was the featured topic at the 2015 Winter Crop Meeting.

Mid-Winter, I received a letter from a visiting academic at Cornell who expressed concern about manure being spread by "Cornell" near her apartment complex. Doing some detective work I contacted the Manager of the Farm Services Group at Cornell. He was aware of the neighbor's concerns but was in between a rock and a hard place regarding the situation with manure management. He told me, "I wished I could put your panelists at the Winter Crop Meeting in my pocket."

We organized this presentation with the intention of supporting behavior changes through knowledge gains and changes in attitude. The audience would leave with a different perspective of their CAFO plan, representing the minimum standard, not the ideal and that timing and conditions matter when spreading!



Planning a Manure Storage — featured panel discussion

- **Moderated** by Karl Czymmek, *Environmental Management Specialist with NYS PRO-DAIRY*
- **Consideration for Siting and Farmstead Needs** — types of storage, technical complications, manure transfer, O&M, and emergency planning by *Jessica Skinner, Environmental Engineer*
- **A Planner's Perspective** — winter manure spreading guidelines and risk, current CAFO permit language and proposed language for the Clean Water Act permit as well as planning manure needs with expansion plans by *Brian Boerman, CNMP Planner*
- **Navigating Public Assistance** — navigating the labyrinth of agencies and services for public money to help with the cost and technical aspects of manure storage by *Amanda Barber, Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District Director*
- **Fostering Positive Neighbor Relations** — shared experiences for developing an action plan for fostering positive neighbor relations by *Mike McMahon, EZ Acres Dairy and Chair of the Town of Homer Planning Board* Ω

FARMER TO FARMER DISCUSSION GROUPS

Facilitated Peer TO Peer Learning

Discussion groups provide farmers with the opportunity to:

- *Discuss and Exchange ideas with farmers they respect*
- *Draw on the strong base of knowledge & experience of their peers*
- *Learn from the substantial real world experience of the other farmers*
- *Interact with industry professionals and other invited resource people in a manner directed by the farmers*
- *Build professional relationships and networks with other farmers*

- Facilitator's Guide by Kathy Barrett

"Lunch With Jerry"

Organic Dairy Discussion Group Meetings:

Jerry Brunetti was a much sought after speaker for organic dairy farmers. He passed away from cancer in December of 2014. In honor of his work we held 5 meetings across the state hosted by local organic dairy farmers. At the meetings we had a selection of 4 previously recorded webinars that Jerry presented in 2009 for the NYCO meetings. Total attendance at the meetings was about 80. The smaller groups allowed for much networking for the farmers. Tim Demeere of Little Falls told how after attending the discussion group in 2014 where we showed a recording of Tom Kilcer's talk on "Hay in a Day" He described the impact of the meetings on his farm:

Tim Demeere farms 1000 acres in Little Falls. He grows small grain and forages for his dairy and also sells excess forage to neighboring organic dairies. Tim decided to put the practice of mowing and harvesting hay in a day on his farm. This required him to trade in his two hay conditioning mowers for two new mowers with lifters to help spread the mowed hay out evenly and allow for quicker drying. He related the following results to the group:

- He was afraid that the hay might be wetter and would come out of his Harveststore silos much harder. In fact the hay came out easier.
- Since the hay came out easier the silo unloaders ran only half the amount saving him considerable amount of electricity. He also had less maintenance on the silos.
- He did not have records of the quality difference he achieved by adopting the practice but the cows made more milk than in previous years. Since he ships to

Organic Valley Milk Coop he is paid \$2/cwt more for any milk increases over the previous year's production which added to his bottom line.

• In addition to the hay harvesting, Tim planted 60 acres of sorghum-sudan grass last summer. He followed Kilcer's advice to wide swath for faster harvest. He added a silage inoculant before it was put in the silo, and was very happy with the result, enough so that his plan for next year is to double acres planted to 120.

• Last year he fertilized the sorghum sudan using 8 ton/acre of his own manure. For the 120 acres he planting this year he will apply ¼ ton/acre of poultry compost to help supply the nitrogen required for successful double cropping.

Tim said that after hearing the Jerry Brunetti recording at our meeting this year he plans on working with Agri-Dynamic (Jerry's company) to apply foliar spray to help unlock the calcium from his soil. In the recording Jerry said that calcium is often a limiting nutrient to forage crops and since so much is required for milk production it should be addressed by farmers. Tim's comments are just one example of what comes out at discussion groups. The other farmers can ask questions and follow up one-on-one at the breaks.



Winter Workshops



Calf Care Workshops

Dairy farms can always make improvements to their calf raising programs, whether by lowering treatment costs, improving average daily gains or by gaining or improving skills required by calf managers. Along with Pro-Dairy, a series of webinar based meetings was given to help calf managers and dairy producers with the basics of calf care, the impact of environmental factors, nutrition, and common calf management issues. The workshops culminated with on-farm demonstrations at McMahon's E-Z Acres where participants learned to correctly administer treatments, tube calves, put in ear tags and track information. Participants surveyed said that they were very likely to use the information presented at the workshops on their own farm and the information received during the on-farm portion was invaluable. One participant commented that, "Calf raising is more complex than it appears. Training like this improves the success of calf raising programs and as we learned, the profitability of this future cow, the future of any operation starts here".

Milk Quality Workshops

With the price of milk projected to fall throughout 2015, the need for dairy producers to supplement their milk check in any way possible is an important one. Because of this, a series of webinar-based workshops was given, along with Pro-Dairy and Quality Milk Production Services, to help producers improve their milk check through quality milk. Both organic and conventional based producers attended the workshops, which focused on mastitis and the associated costs, the importance of cow comfort, environment and equipment maintenance, and the importance of record keeping for mastitis control. Producers were also able to send in a bulk tank sample and a bedding sample for culturing to identify what organisms their farms may be dealing with. Locally, about 900 cows were represented by attendees of the workshops. If these producers

used the information provided to improve their milk quality, an additional \$4500 per month could be generated by a 1.5% increase in milk, and any additional milk quality premiums that their processor may provide with lower somatic cell count milk would be added to that figure.

Feed Dealers Meeting and Winter Dairy Management

Providing local producers and agribusiness personnel with current information is an on-going effort that the team strives to spend time on. Fortunately, Pro-Dairy and Cornell University provide ample opportunities to the team to speak at gatherings within the region. Two meetings were held: Feed Dealers Meeting, aimed at informing local nutritionists, and Winter Dairy Management, aimed at both producers and agriservice personnel. Both conferences focused on farm profitability and how management in certain areas can positively impact net income. Feed Dealers Meeting updated attendees on current research in milk fever and fresh cow energy metabolism, as well as touching on current field studies in transition cows, shredlage and feeding for milk protein. Winter Dairy Management focused on improving profitability through the milk check, mainly through the impact of milk components on the milk check. This seminar also featured a local farmer who increased their farm's profitability by raising milk components and applying nutritional and environmental changes. These meetings serve to provide a platform for producers, local agriservice people, Cornell faculty and graduate students, as well as Extension staff, to meet together on common ground and talk about profitability and current topics in an informal setting. The discussion around these topics with the range of people present is invaluable to many producers.



Our Mission:

- Enhance profitability of farms to maintain a strong regional dairy industry.
- Create greater awareness of trends and options to help producers achieve family and business goals.
- Maintain environmentally responsible ag practices.
- Encourage a better understanding of agriculture by the general community.

Statewide Plan of Work: 1.1 Agricultural and Horticultural Business Vitality Ultimate Goal(s) of the program

Support the long-term viability and well being of the agricultural/horticulture industry and rural communities in NYS.

- Promote Economically and environmentally sound products and practices and safer and healthier products.

SCNY Dairy & Field Crops Team Stakeholder Defined Priorities:

| Field Crop Production & Environment | Dairy Modernization | Small Dairy Technologies & Market Opportunities | Farm Business Management |
|---|---|--|------------------------------|
| 1. Water Quality & Environmental Compatibility w/ Crops | 1. Dairy Enterprise Performance & Management | 1. Small farm technologies | 1. Financial Records & Mgt |
| 2. Forage Quality | 2. Dairy Feeds and Feeding | 2. Organic transition consultation | 2. Financial Decision Making |
| 3. Integrated Crop Management | 3. Dairy Replacement Enterprise | 3. Direct marketing & on-farm dairy processing | 3. Business Planning |
|  | 4. Animal Welfare: Cow Comfort & Housing | 4. Intensive Management Grazing | 4. Transition Planning |
| |  |  | 5. Human Resource Management |
| 6. Risk Management | | | |

Meetings & Workshops Fall/Winter 2014/2015

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| Winter Crop Meeting (1) 120p | Milk Quality Workshop #1 Physiology (1) 4p | Farmtek Fodder Production (1) 35p | BTC Discussion Group-Tax Planning (1) 13p |
| Cover Crops & Soil Health (1) 18p | BTC Discussion Group (1) 18p | NYCO Quality-Forage Management & Rotations (1) 42p | Annie's Project-Quickbooks (1) 6p |
| Soil Health at NY Beef Producers Mtg. (3) 110p | Winter Dairy Management-Impact Profitability via Milk Components (1) | "Lunch with Jerry"-Alfred (1) 15p- Mohawk (1) 18p-Memphis (1) 7p-St. Hammond (1) 10p- Malone (1) 4p | Cortland Discussion Group-Economic Decision Making (2) 14p |
| Crop Protection meeting, Crop Production Services (3) 21p | Milk Quality Workshop #3: Importance of Record Keeping for Mastitis Control (1) 6p | NYCO Soil Health (2) 65p | Organic Dairy Discussion-New Facility Tour (3) 25p |
| Pesticide Applicator Training (3) 24p | Annual Feed Dealer's Meeting (2) 13p | NYCO Meeting-Plow down CC & No-till soybeans (2) 16p | Annie's Project-Insurance for the Farm&Bus. Structures (3) 6p |
|  | BTC Discussion Group-Calf Housing (3) 16p | Organic Dairy & Crop Discussion Group (2) 14p | Annie's Project-Retirement (4) 6p |
| | Calf Care Workshop- 5 Sessions (3) 33p | Mozzarella Cheese Making Workshop (3) 11p | Cortland/Tompkins Farm Managers Disc. Group-Employee Mgmt. (5) 6p |
| | Milk Quality Workshop #2 Cow Comfort (4) 5p | Cheese Curd Class (3) 16p | Cortland/Tompkins Farm Managers-Conflict Mgmt (5) 5p |
|  | E-Organic Webinar (4) 90p | | BTC Discussion Group-Working w/ Families, Managing Conflict (5) 6p |
| | Catskill Dairy Day (4) 115p | | New Farm Bill-FSA Programs for Dairy & Crops Explained (6) 8p |
| | NE Pasture Consortium (4) 33p | | Green-Up Conference-Crop Insurance for Grazers (6) 115p |
| | | | NOFA Winter Conference-Organic Crop Insurance (6) 95p |