

the Integrity

Newsletter of the Western Organic Dairy Producers Alliance (WODPA)

FALL 2019

President's Message

Greetings from the hot Northern San Joaquin Valley of California! The 2019 summer is in the dog days of August. Still hot, but with fall about 30 days away, the transition to shorter days and longer nights is starting. We are still only night grazing, to handle the heat stress on our dairies. This works very well in our climate to help with our cows' dry matter intakes.

The organic dairy industry is still struggling to stay afloat. Hopefully, there is some light at the end of the tunnel for all of us. WODPA continues to work on relevant issues for our producers. There appears to be movement on the Origin of Livestock (OOL) issue, as noted in the following article. The folks in Washington, D.C. are finally realizing that the organic dairy industry is in dire straits. The House passed a bill with verbiage charging the NOP with releasing an OOL rule within 180 days of passage. We are now waiting for the recessing Senate to return to D.C. and are asking them to move the bill forward with the same language passed by the House. We had hoped for it to be addressed prior to recess. But in the meantime, we have reached out to our Senators asking them to support this bill. This is long overdue, given the state of the organic dairy industry. It is a result of 15 years of work and pressure from WODPA, NODPA, National Organic Coalition (NOC), OFA, Organic Trade Association (OTA) and many others. **We cannot weaken.**

To that end, WODPA, is pleased and proud to welcome two consultants to our management team, Jill Smith and Kathryn Walker. Both will work with Darby Heffner to help WODPA support western organic dairy producers. Jill has laid out an action plan to engage all WODPA producers and allied members, so they can contact their legislators about OOL and pasture policy enforcement by NOP. Kathryn will be working with Darby on WODPA communication and the upcoming 2019 conference this November in Sparks, NV. Both Jill and Kathryn are passionate, personable, effective, connected and powerful communicators ready to get things done at many levels. We miss Richard Mathews but are thankful we can turn to these capable individuals.

A big thank you to George McClelland, Jen Berretta and Richard Hughes for their leadership and organization of the well-attended WODPA Petaluma Regional Field Day. It was

held this past June 11th in Tomales, CA, hosted by Spring Hill Estate and Larry Peter.

The 2019 WODPA Annual Conference will be held the evening of November 19th and the day of November 20th, 2019 at the Nugget in Sparks NV. We have shortened the conference this year to better fit tight working schedules and save money in these extremely tight times. Please check the agenda to see that there will be no producer only meeting. Two larger, more powerful organizations supporting organic dairy, NOC and OTA, will be presenting. Our business meeting will be on Wednesday morning. We have no silver bullet answers. But you will learn from the very relevant presentations, while connecting and sharing knowledge and experiences with other producers. This is a place we can share frustration, discuss what is coming down the road and be there to support one another.

In these frustrating times, this group (and upcoming conference time) will be a place you can look to for support. We are finalizing details on a Wellness Committee to be available to all producers. We always want you to be able to call someone in challenging times. We want you to know someone is there to listen. We are starting to hear more about mental health, yet it can still be challenging to know where to turn. In the meantime, I think I speak for most of us when I say never hesitate to call a fellow producer.

Finally, I want to say something about this journey we call life. Most, if not all of us are in the organic dairy business because we love our cows, our land and the fact that we are making a difference. As tough as the economic situation is with our dairies, it is so important that we live each day to its fullest. To make sure that our glasses are always *half full* and that we take time to count our blessings, especially our families. Recently, I lost a friend and good cowman. He drowned in the Merced River. In an instant life changed forever for his family, as well as all of us who knew and loved him. May God Bless you Aires.

Sincerely,



Ward Burroughs, President

WODPA Board of Directors 2018-2019

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Origin of Livestock Update

WODPA has long fought for a change to the existing Origin of Livestock Rule. The existing cattle transition rules were written at a time when many dairies were transitioning to organic production to meet consumer dairy demands. This was also a time that allowed for many smaller scale operations to survive while larger conventional operations continued to scale up in size.

As it stands, some certifying agencies are allowing dairies to use a loophole in the regulation to continually transition conventional dairy animals to organic. It has allowed for dairies to take organic calves out of organic production to be raised conventionally and to buy conventional heifers to transition. This lends itself to an economic advantage of raising animals much cheaper than those dairies who stick to an organic program throughout the life of their animals. The rule has been interpreted differently by certifying agencies across the country, creating a lack of fairness.

Over the years, WODPA has fought to amend the Origin of Livestock regulation and close the loopholes used by some dairies and certifiers. Closing these loopholes will help restore fairness to organic dairy and maintain the integrity of the organic program. The proposed rule would specify that a producer can transition dairy animals into organic production once rather than continuously. It would also clarify that after completion of this one-time transition, any new dairy animals a producer adds to their operation would need to be managed organically from the last third of gestation or sourced from dairy animals that already completed their transition into organic production. Clarification on the management of breeder stock would also be in the proposal.

Finally, we felt there had been progress. On June 25th, the House of Representatives passed a Fiscal Year 2020 agriculture spending bill that included a provision to level the playing field for organic dairy producers. It would require USDA to issue a final regulation on Origin of Livestock within 180 days.

This regulation still has hurdles to cross. We need the Senate to include this provision in the Fiscal Year 2020 Senate appropriations bill. We're asking the Senate to use the same language as was passed by the House, requiring USDA to issue the final regulation within 180 days. We are also hearing about the possibility of opening the Origin of Livestock rules up for public comment again. A public comment period took place when the regulation was addressed in 2015. However, NOP has said there are new operations in place since 2015 and they should be given the ability to make comment, as well. We are hoping this will be a short comment period and will not slow down the adoption of the proposed regulation.

WODPA has collaborated with groups such as the National Organic Coalition (NOC) and the Organic Trade Association (OTA) to reach out to our Senators. We have asked for their support on Origin of Livestock via phone calls, emails and letters. We received positive responses from Senators on the letter sent by President Ward Burroughs on behalf of WODPA.

We urge you to contact your Senator, especially if they are on the Senate appropriations committee. Let them know how this regulation has negatively

impacted organic dairy and the struggles we are facing as organic producers. All phone calls, emails or letters asking for their help are appreciated and strengthen the collective voice of organic producers.

WODPA will continue to share updates on the regulation as we learn more.

Don't leave money on the table!

The deadline for enrollment for the dairy margin coverage (DMC) program is fast approaching, **September 20, 2019**. DMC replaces the previous MPP program to help manage market changes. So far, DMC payments have been triggered in January, February, March and April, 2019. Though the previous MPP program didn't always seem beneficial, the 2018 program revisions generated payments outweighing many premiums paid. The DMC program is modeled after the 2018 MPP program.

DMC is retroactive to January 1, 2019. With payments already triggered in 2019, you may not have any out-of-pocket expenses for premiums. Contact your local FSA office to enroll in the program. They'll help select a coverage level based on your production history. A [decision tool](#) is available on FSA's website to determine what fits your operation. In addition, you can set-up an auto-pay for future payments. Ask about your eligibility for any 2018 premium repayments while there.

Don't leave money on the table! It's important to connect with your local FSA office and explain your operation. Additional programs have triggered payments for dairy, as well as for alfalfa and other non-specialty crops (based on location and type of operation.)

What's New with WODPA

WODPA welcomes two new consultants this fall, Jill Smith and Kathryn Walker. Both of these individuals will be joining Darby Heffner in fulfilling WODPA's mission. Learn more about the new WODPA staff below.

Jill Smith

Jill is a fourth-generation farmer. She owns and operates Pure Eire Dairy in Othello, WA with her husband and two children. Together, they produce a line of dairy products marketed in the State of Washington. Jill and her family farm to grow feed for their animals, milk cows and process and market their own milk.

Jill serves on the National Small Business Association Leadership Council, is an advisor for the Washington State University's Center for Sustainable and Natural Resources, and plays a leadership role with 4-H. Jill is an ambassador for dairy products, representing dairy with the Specialty Coffee Association of America and speaking at universities and food program events on behalf of dairy.

Jill has also worked in finance, animal nutrition and was a livestock product sales manager covering the Pacific Northwest territory.

Jill graduated from Washington State University with a Bachelor degree in Agribusiness.

Kathryn Walker

Kathryn was born and raised on her family's century dairy farm in British Columbia, Canada. Kathryn travelled to the US for her post-secondary education where she completed both her Bachelor and Master of Science from Oregon State University (OSU).

Following college, Kathryn worked at the Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) in the Confined Animal Feeding Operation Program. She also held the position of Policy and Operations Analyst in the Director's Office at ODA. In addition, Kathryn spent six years with the Oregon Dairy Farmers Association where she worked as the Program Director.

Kathryn moved to Western Michigan last fall where she resides with her husband and two young daughters.

NEW! WODPA Email Newsletter

WODPA has added an email newsletter to increase the frequency of communication with its members and associate members.

The email newsletter is an added membership service. WODPA will continue to print and mail quarterly newsletters.

If you would like to receive this email newsletter, contact wodpa@outlook.com to be added to the email list.

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WESTERN ORGANIC DAIRY PRODUCERS ALLIANCE 14th Annual Conference & Trade Show

WODPA's 14th Annual Conference and Trade Show is around the corner. Please make plans to join us November 19 and 20 at the Nugget Casino Resort in Sparks, NV.



The agenda includes something for everyone such as:

- National Organic Coalition and the Organic Trade Association will be on hand to discuss their advocacy work on behalf of organic farmers,
- Discussion of satellite imaging for pasture management,
- Tips for working with your banker,
- WODPA Business Meeting,
- Plenty of time to visit with vendors to check out products for your farm and
- Much more.

A full agenda for the conference is available on the next page.

This meeting is a great opportunity to get up-to-date on the latest regarding the organic dairy industry, connect with your fellow dairy farmers and build a stronger western organic dairy community.

To Register: Registration can be made online at wodpa.com under the "Conference and Trade Show" tab. If you cannot register online, please feel free to contact WODPA directly at (707) 696-5154.

Sponsors and Vendors Make It Happen

WODPA would like to thank the following companies for their support of the upcoming Conference and Trade Show (as of September 6, 2019). Without sponsors and vendors, this event would not be possible.

Sponsors



Vendors



Sponsorship and vendor opportunities are still available.

Contact WODPA to find out how you and your company can increase your presence with the western organic dairy industry. See you in Sparks, NV.

WESTERN ORGANIC DAIRY PRODUCERS ALLIANCE

14th Annual Conference & Trade Show Draft Agenda

Tuesday, November 19, 2019

- 1:00 - 5:00 PM Trade Show Move - In
- 4:00 - 5:30 PM Trade Show Open
- 5:30 - 6:30 PM Vendor Appreciation *Happy Hour and hors d'oeuvres plus Vendor Introductions*

Wednesday, November 20, 2019

- 7:30 - 8:15 AM Breakfast *Sponsored by NovaVive Inc., Registration and Trade Show Visit*
- 8:15 - 9:15 AM NovaVive Inc. presentation
- 9:15 - 9:30 AM Welcome: *Ward Burroughs, President*
- Conference Overview: *Ryan Mensonides, Vice President & Jennifer Beretta 2nd Vice President*
 - Policy Update: *Accomplishments for the year: Ward Burroughs, Ryan Mensonides and Jennifer Beretta*
- 9:30- 10:30 AM WODPA Business Meeting
- WODPA Board Elections
 - Discussion of Hot Topics
 - Origin of Livestock
 - Organic Check-Off Program
 - Transitional Certification
 - Open Floor Hot Topic Discussion
 - Voting on Initiatives
- 10:30 - 11:30 AM Trade Show Visit, *Trade Show Venue*
- 11:30 AM - 12:45PM Organic Dairy Advocate Panel a discussion with WODPA, National Organic Coalition and the Organic Trade Association
- 12:45 - 1:15 PM Lunch, *Trade Show Venue*
- 1:15 - 2:15 PM Improving your banker relationship: Discussion on liquidity, solvency, and repayment capacity (what they include and how to improve them); the credit making process and what the banker wants to know; reasons for and benefits of bankers making site visits; what the banker needs to know to effectively and successfully sell approval of your loan request to the lending institution, *Mr. John M. Blanchfield, Agricultural Banking Advisory Services*
- 2:15 - 3:15 PM What we know about the nutritional differences between whole milk and alternative beverages” and New research on milk as a functional food demonstrates the importance of milk to bone and lean muscle development in adolescents and children; and how fermented dairy foods may aid in chronic disease prevention. *Maria Giovanni, MBA, PhD, CFS Associate Professor of Food Science CSU, Chico*
- 3:15 - 4:00 PM Coffee Break and Trade Show Visit, *Trade Show Venue*
- 4:00 - 4:45 PM Can satellite imaging provide our industry with support for pasture rule enforcement? *Pasture Satellite Imaging Panel*
- 4:45 - 5:30 PM Session (TBD)
- 5:30 - 6:30 PM Happy Hour and Trade Show Visit, *Trade Show Venue*
- 6:30 PM Dinner, *Trade Show Venue*

Thursday, November 21, 2019

- 8:00am - 10:00 AM: Trade Show Takedown

WODPA Wellness Committee

WODPA is based on coming together to collectively support one another in the organic dairy world. But, it's not always about the business. It's about YOU too. We need to start talking about mental health. Organic dairy farmers are in a position like none we've ever been in before, leading to added stress and heartache.

We hear much greater information now about mental health as a society. However, farmers and dairymen haven't always been known for discussing their feelings. Farmers are known for handling a crisis as it comes their way and getting the job done. But mental health is hugely different from any other crisis faced on a dairy.

Talking about our feelings is hard to do. But, it's ok to feel the way you feel. It's okay to be upset with the current situation. It's also ok to let those feelings be known and seek help to deal with them.

Sharing your story may lead to another person opening up to share theirs. You may be a lifeline to another person. There's a chance they'll see how you're dealing with a problem and realize they can deal with theirs. It's also okay to talk about these feelings and to seek help when life seems overwhelming.

Any one of us WODPA members would rather talk on the phone and be there for you instead of hearing about a struggle after the fact. We've ALL struggled in one way or another with our feelings and mental health while we've tried to navigate this crazy dairy world.

An excerpt from Liz Bawden, NODPA President, shared in the NODPA Newsletter:

"There has always been a sign on the milk house from our organic milk processor. It has been a different sign over the years, as we shipped to a few different processors, but it has always been there. I guess we were proud to be an organic dairy; we felt we were part of something that was moving farmers ahead. We felt part of a movement towards better health for consumers, better care of the land, better care of the animals and a better livelihood for farmers. We felt like we were helping to make a difference. Today the sign came down. Not out of anger, but out of sadness. A giant corporation will not read this rant of mine; will not ever notice our milk house wall, and will not worry about how we will cope with a smaller milk check and rising costs."

There is YOU and there is the DAIRY. In the dairy business, there isn't always much differentiation between them it seems. As we're facing obstacles like we've never seen before, let's come together to support the YOU part. You are not alone!

The following WODPA members are available to offer their support to anyone needing it, any time.

Rosie Burroughs

209-874-1309 (Home)
209-988-0664 (Cell)
vista@fire2wire.com

Richard Hughes

707-876-3434 (Home)
707-695-2291 (Cell)

Albert Straus

albert@strausmilk.com

If you would like to have your name added to this list and join the WODPA Wellness Committee, please contact WODPA at wodpa@outlook.com or (707) 696-5154.

Thank you, Associate Members!

WODPA thanks its Associate Members for their support of WODPA and its mission to preserve, protect, and ensure the sustainability and integrity of organic dairy farming across the west.

If you and/or your company would like to become an Associate Member, please visit wodpa.com. Associate Members as of August 30, 2019:

A.L. Gilbert	Clover Sonoma	K-N-R Farms	Spalding Labs
Alltech	Crystal Creek Natural, LLC.	Modesto Milling	Straus Family Creamery
Associated Feed & Grain Co.	Ernst Irrigation	Park Farming	Thorvin, Inc.
Blue River Organic Seed	Idaho Milk Transport, Inc.	Redmond Minerals, Inc.	WeFARM Organics

Fall National Organic Standards Board Meeting

This is your chance to let the National Organic Standards Board know your thoughts on agenda topics and moving forward on regulations.

Commonly used dairy and farming substances will also be reviewed for organic usage.

The docket for the Fall 2019 NOSB meeting is now open. NOSB invites public comment on agenda topics in writing, in-person at the Fall 2019 business meeting in Pittsburgh, PA or during one of the webinars leading up to the meeting.

For details on how to submit written comments or participate in the webinar or in-person meeting, please visit the WODPA website.

The comment period closes October 3, 2019.

WODPA will be monitoring this matter, however your participation is also encouraged.

Strengthening Organic Standards Conference Call

A big thanks to Albert Straus, Straus Family Creamery, for hosting a conference call on August 16th, 2019, inviting guests from the California area, as well as Jenny Tucker, Deputy Administrator of the National Organic Program. Albert laid out four key points to address in regard to ensuring equal compliance and common understanding of the organic dairy program.

Origin of Livestock (OOL): Quality Assurance International and Oregon Tilth have will not allow continuous conversion of animals from conventional to organic. Organic milk buyers are beginning to ask for contracts confirming milk will not come from continuously transitioned herds. *This underscores the need for clarification of the OOL regulations as soon as possible.*

Tracking antibiotic use in organic dairy animals and removal from herds: Greater tracking/cross-checking with veterinarians, medicines purchased, treatment records and verification of removal from the herd is of importance. Ms. Tucker felt most operators have been responsible with this, though split operations remain a concern. The conversation led back to OOL (see previous article in newsletter for more on OOL). *WODPA has been working to get letters, phone calls and emails to members of the Senate appropriations committee to keep this moving forward.*

Verifying Supplemental Feed: Metrics and calculations are necessary to better monitor the rule. Ms. Tucker reiterated the importance of oversight and importance of certifiers understanding dairy and pasture rules. This is especially important for “high risk” operations and be able to understand what is really happening on the farm. Certifiers must use critical thinking as dairies are complex with many variables. *Cindy Daley, WODPA Board Member, spoke about current training programs. She brought up looking at the entire pasture program, ensuring all classes of cattle are grazing and if that balances with the pasture quality. She discussed certifier training with real dairy examples, looking at dairy certifier qualifications, some dairies needing more inspections and the review of stocking rates, etc. during the certification process. WODPA, Cindy Daley, on behalf of Chico State, and Straus may be good resources to assist with training.*

Meeting Pasture Requirements: Actual certified crop/land dedicated to pasture usage was discussed, with methods to look harder at operations and the ground truly dedicated to grazing for pasture requirements. Ms. Tucker mentioned that NOP is working with certifiers on this issue. NOP is looking at separate locations on organic certificates, using risk-based calculations and identifying higher risk operations. Regulations will need to change to strengthen enforcement provisions in coming rules. NOP is very interested in new technology to track cows, such as GPS, mapping and other tools to conduct “unannounced inspections.” Pasture variances were mentioned (for operations unable to meet pasture requirements), though Ms. Tucker said there have not been many requested. Currently there are no regulations on how many years an operation may receive a variance. This is a potential policy question.

In conclusion, final regulations, greater enforcement, certifier consistency, as well as proper dairy training are needed. Fortunately, NOP has received additional funding to train certifiers and develop curriculum for future training. NOP is open to collaboration in developing their curriculum.

Rosie Burroughs reminded NOP of the crisis farmers are facing on their dairies, oversupplies in the market and the need for regulatory changes ASAP.

This speaks for all of us in the organic dairy sector. It’s critical that NOP hears what is happening to our dairies. The more we speak up about our real-world dairy struggles, the more we gain their attention and focus on addressing these issues.

Thank you, Albert, for hosting this call.

Thank you, Dairy Producers!

Thank you to all the dairy producer sponsors for their much-valued financial contributions to the execution of WODPA's mission.

If you would like to contribute, please visit wodpa.com. Our Dairy Producer sponsors for the period of January 1st 2019 to present:

1.50 per Milking Cow Participants

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