



WESTERN ORGANIC DAIRY PRODUCERS ALLIANCE

A Re-cap of the 2024 WODPA Conference & Trade Show

The annual WODPA Conference & Trade Show was held this year at the Peppermill in Reno, Nevada! Attendees enjoyed a relaxing and fun time away from the farm and everyday stress. We had a great lineup of speakers, trade show vendors and hot topics as well as a time for socializing, a profitable live auction and finally, our highly anticipated Maui Vacation opportunity drawing. We were encouraged to share our ideas and thoughts as well as learn from the experiences of others in our industry. We shared our year in review and showed how we have been representing the organic dairy industry because of our farmers and stakeholders supporting us, both financially and otherwise.

Tuesday evening, we kicked things off with a welcome reception and the grand opening of our trade show featuring over 30 different vendors! We feasted on delicious, donated cheeses from various organic vendors and enjoyed wine, beer and soda with new and old friends. This was a great opportunity to catch a glimpse of the upcoming conference agenda and get our feet wet with vast array of different vendors representing companies and industry professionals from across the US.

Tuesday was the formalized start to the conference with a catered breakfast (sponsored by Sierra Organics), welcome by Zach Cahill (out-going WODPA President) and the WODPA Business meeting where Executive Director, Lia Sieler, provided a full recap of the year and all that WODPA has been working on including the increased benefits to farmers and stakeholders, allocated funds we have advocated for (YAY ODMAP!!), farm and advocacy trips, Mercaris/ Argus Media's milk statement survey results, Lunchtime Learning opportunities made available for all WODPA members, and reminders of new NOP rules coming into effect in the upcoming year as well as many other important details of the year. We also announced that we are collecting surveys on organic inspections as well as the implementation of the Origin of Livestock Rule and the Strengthening Organic Enforcement Rule to help with advocacy conversations and larger conversations with the NOP. Dean Wesen (current treasurer and Nominating Committee Chair) and Zach Cahill (now holding the office of Ex-Officio) wrapped up the WODPA business meeting with elections. We had quite a bit of movement on our Board, including three new Board Members joining our team and two previous Board members not accepting nominations for re-election. Their information and bios can soon be found on the WODPA website at wodpa.com. From there, we had a chance to hear a quick introduction from each of our tradeshow vendors before opening the Trade Show for the first time during our coffee break sponsored by Alexandre Family Farm.

We re-convened to hear from Dr. Larry Tranel from the Iowa State University Extension where he does a lot of work with and for farmers in both mental health and economics in the dairy industry. He first facilitated a conversation on *Understanding Farm Personalities*. He provided an in depth look at difference styles of personalities and how we can effectively work together, bringing our strengths and balancing out each other's weaknesses. We then transitioned to a presentation given by one of our Platinum Sponsors – Alltech. Dr. Luke Miller spoke on the benefits of onboarding and early employee training and retention. We wrapped up the morning and headed into a delicious lunch and trade show visit, sponsored by AL Gilbert & Best Agri-Marketing, Inc.

The afternoon kicked off with another presentation by Dr. Tranel focused on farm level cost analysis where he helped us understand how to figure out our bottom-line finances at the farm. We then moved into *Forage- fueled Component Production: From Pasture to Pail* presented by Dr. Luise Koch from another of our platinum sponsors – Agri- King. We had a quick ice cream break sponsored by Straus Family Creamery before transitioning into American AgCredit (another of our Platinum sponsors) providing a talk on *Beef Markets to Dairies: Side Hustle to Supply Driver*. We then headed into our shorter educational sessions featuring Dr. Hammon from Zoetis (Gold level sponsor) speaking on Protivity, Dr. Chigerwe from UC Davis discussing colostrum impacts in organic dairies, and Betsy Karle presenting on the highly pathogenic avian influenza and biosecurity at our farms.

We transitioned directly from our formalized afternoon to Happy Hour sponsored by Hunt & Behrens and the opportunity to enjoy our trade show and chat with vendors again. Happy Hour was filled with delicious cheeses donated by stakeholders in our industry. We finished the evening with dinner, a live auction of bull semen donated by ABS, LIC, Alta Genetics, Select Sires, Semex and Genex. A beautiful basket was also donated by CMAB (along with a donation for cheese). We also had two baskets donated to fundraise for the Dairy Science and Industry Club at Chico State. The evening ended with the highly anticipated Maui Opportunity drawing. Congratulations to Lena from Petaluma for winning a resort stay (6 days, 5 nights) in Maui!!

All in all, this was a great conference! WODPA would like to send a big thank you to Stakeholder Members, Sponsors and Vendors. Without your support, it would be very difficult to continue effectively advocating for our industry. We would also like to thank the organic dairy farmers who work day in and day out. We know how difficult this season of dairying has been and we admire those that have continued to fight and remain in business – supplying safe, quality milk to our world all while maintaining the integrity of the organic seal.

We do want to ask that you fill out a brief feedback form if you attended the conference so we can improve for 2025. Please find the survey attached.

We can't wait to see everyone again next year – in Sonoma County, CA!!