



Dairy Cares Report

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Good animal care practices the rule, not the exception for California dairy families

Over the last year, activists have been increasingly successful at generating negative media attention on issues related to on-farm animal welfare. Unfortunately, hard-working dairy families are not immune to these attempts to create distrust between consumers and farmers.

Last month, ABC World News and “Nightline” featured a story about animal husbandry and care issues in the dairy industry. The segment, “*Disturbing Reality of Dairy Land: Do you know where your milk really comes from?*” was largely based on video from a dairy farm in New York. Recorded by an undercover operative working for the animal rights group Mercy for Animals (MFA), the video showed senseless animal cruelty and unnecessary handling practices. In one scene, a worker is shown hitting a calf on the head with a wrench. In another, a worker is seen dragging a calf along the ground.

It’s crucial that consumers know, and dairy families affirm, that ***these scenes are the exception, not the rule.*** Dairy farm families do not support or condone this type of cruelty, and share the concerns of other decent people. These activities simply do not reflect the values of our state’s dairy families, which include providing proper and responsible animal care and treatment on a daily basis.

Regrettably, images like those from the “Nightline” segment are sometimes used in an attempt to paint all dairy families in a negative light. What’s more, they live in virtual perpetuity on the internet along with other isolated incidences activist groups have stockpiled over the years.

What doesn’t seem to get headlines is the daily routine of caring for animals by California dairy families. Yet California families have a good story to tell about animal care. Among their regular, routine efforts:

- Dairy farmers work closely with licensed veterinarians to assess, maintain and enhance individual cow and herd health. Vaccinations are administered for disease prevention, and health records are maintained for each animal to assist in care and management decision-making.

- Dairy farmers make sure their animals always have access to fresh, clean drinking water, and work with licensed nutritionists to formulate calf and cow feed to provide the nutrients and minerals necessary for optimum health.
- Dairy farmers take steps to minimize the impact of heat and cold stress by providing sunshades, sprinklers, misting fans, dietary alterations and windbreaks.
- Dairy farmers clean manure from barns on a regular basis, often several times daily.
- Dairy farmers refresh individual bedding materials on a routine basis so cows have a clean, dry and comfortable place to rest.
- Dairy farmers take a host of other steps to provide for their cows health, safety and well-being. ***They take these steps because they care.***

At the national level, progress continues to be made on a voluntary program to demonstrate to food marketers, and ultimately consumers, that dairies everywhere are committed to sound animal care and treatment practices. The National Dairy FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) Program puts forth a set of animal care best practices developed cooperatively by dairy farmers, veterinarians and animal scientists. The program is a powerful tool to assist dairy families in documenting the many efforts made daily to properly provide for health, comfort and care of dairy animals. The Dairy Cares coalition continues on a plan to develop the FARM Program into a workable program for California dairies.

Dairy Cares coalition members will continue to strive to ensure that the millions of consumers who depend on California's dairy families for affordable, nutritious dairy products can enjoy those products with confidence. A key part of that will be demonstrating the many steps dairy families take, every day, to care for the land, their animals and the water and air resources we all share.

Dairy Cares is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability and responsible animal care and treatment within the California dairy industry. Our members include the Alliance of Western Milk Producers, Bank of the West, Bar 20 Dairy Farms, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, California Farm Bureau Federation, Dairy Farmers of America-Western Area Council, Dairy Institute of California, Hilmar Cheese Co., HP Hood, Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O'Lakes, Milk Producers Council, Ruan Transport Corp., Western United Dairymen, and others. For information about Dairy Cares, visit our web site at www.dairycares.com, or call 916-441-3318.