



Dairy Cares Report

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www.dairycares.com

Dairy FARM program helps dairy families tell animal care story to customers, consumers

This month, Dairy Cares coalition members announced the launch of a statewide program to promote and verify responsible animal care on the state's 1,750 family dairy farms. The National Dairy FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) Program is designed to assist dairy families in demonstrating their ethical treatment of dairy livestock animals.

It's no secret to the dairy farming community that responsible care and treatment of animals is a core value. Yet there is more discussion today than ever before about how animals are raised and cared for on farms throughout the nation. Dairy families need to be part of this discussion, and share their values with customers and consumers, who are asking questions about how animals are treated on contemporary dairy farms.

Dairy FARM provides a credible, verifiable way for dairy farmers to demonstrate how their core values are carried out in daily management. Through FARM, dairy families can assure customers and consumers they are committed to doing what's right when it comes to animal care and treatment.

Dairy Cares coalition members spent the last year working together on a five-point plan to promote and implement Dairy FARM throughout California. Throughout the plan's development, the mission was to make certain it would be credible to customers and consumers, *while remaining practical and cost effective for producers.* The five-point plan includes:

- 1 – Adoption of the National Dairy FARM animal care best practices;
- 2 – Orientation of dairy farmers to National Dairy FARM guidelines through workshops and educational materials from the University of California and California Dairy Quality Assurance Program (CDQAP);
- 3 – On-farm evaluation of each dairy farm to provide a benchmark to measure improvement;
- 4 – Producer support and assistance to continuously improve animal care practices; and
- 5 – Independent third-party verification to demonstrate program integrity and credibility.

With step 1 – animal care best practices – in place, Dairy Cares coalition members are now moving forward with initial outreach and education classes. Because this is a new effort in California, the coalition recognized the need for additional support and assistance for dairy families, and requested that CDQAP provide free classes to help dairy farmers understand and prepare to take part in the FARM program.

CDQAP classes offered in April

Two workshops, presented in multiple locations throughout the state, will help dairy families transition into the FARM program. Workshop I is slated for the last two weeks in April, with Workshop II scheduled for the first two weeks of May. [Dairy families should keep an eye on their mailboxes for more information about the upcoming classes.](#)

In conjunction with National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), which is administering the program at the national level, Dairy Cares conducted a test of the on-farm evaluation on two California dairies earlier this month. This walk-through provided a firsthand look at what dairy farmers can expect during their initial on-farm evaluation.

Riverdale dairyman Jamie Bledsoe volunteered to be the first California dairy farmer to have his farm evaluated under the Dairy FARM guidelines. Dr. Jim Reynolds, a veterinarian and faculty at the UC Davis Veterinary Medicine Teaching and Research Center in Tulare, conducted the evaluation.

“Dairy FARM is a critical step in maintaining and building trust with our consumers,” Bledsoe said. “I believe in the value of the program, and wanted to see for myself how an evaluation would work on my open-lot dairy. Overall, the process was a good experience and achieved the number one goal of the program – to get an accurate picture of the care we provide our animals, so our customers can be assured we’re committed to high standards.”

Bledsoe continued: “I strongly recommend that my fellow dairy farmers attend the upcoming CDQAP classes on the Dairy FARM Program. If they’re interested in uncomplicated and successful participation in Dairy FARM, the CDQAP classes will be the easiest, most efficient way to get there.”

More information about the National Dairy FARM Program can be found at www.NationalDairyFARM.com. For more information about the California implementation of Dairy FARM, please visit www.DairyCares.com.

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.