



## *California Dairy Producers and Processors Initiate Comprehensive Animal Welfare Program*

*California's leading dairy cooperatives and processors have developed and will be implementing a comprehensive animal care and well-being program. The program is built around best animal care practices recently developed as part of the National Dairy FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) Program at the national level. The comprehensive program is based on cow comfort, treatment, care and nutrition and includes the following components:*



***Animal Care Best Practices*** – National Dairy FARM provides a comprehensive list of animal care best practices in the FARM Animal Care Manual and Quick Reference User Guide. Both are available at [www.NationalDairyFARM.com](http://www.NationalDairyFARM.com). The manual details animal care best practices for animal health, environment and facilities, animal nutrition, transportation and handling, and proper treatment of sick and injured animals. Developed jointly by veterinarians, animal care experts and dairy producers, the best practices bring uniformity and consistency to on-farm care and provide assurance to customers that dairy producers are committed to high standards.



***Producer Outreach and Education*** – Beginning April 2010, the California Dairy Quality Assurance Program (CDQAP), in cooperation with University of California animal welfare experts, will offer workshops to dairy producers and their employees to address important issues in animal welfare. The workshops will educate producers about Animal Care Essentials (ACE) and best management practices outlined in the FARM program. Workshops will also deliver the necessary tools (facility checklists, standard operating procedures and sample forms) to help producers participate successfully in an upcoming on-farm evaluation.



***On-farm Evaluation*** – With a June 2010 target date, Dairy Cares cooperative and processor members will begin conducting on-farm evaluations of all their dairy producers. Evaluations will be based on the animal care best practices detailed in the FARM Animal Care Manual. Results of the initial evaluation will provide producers and processors with an animal care status report, enabling the producer and processor to develop an action plan for ongoing improvement of animal well-being performance. On-farm evaluations are to occur at least once every three years, allowing the producer and processor to track progress of on-farm care, and make improvements where needed.



***Producer Support and Assistance*** – Support and resources will be available to help producers improve animal care and well-being performance where needed as indicated by the results of the on-farm evaluation. Resources available under the program include additional CDQAP classes focused on specific animal care topics, online informational materials, and consultation with producer trade association field staff and animal care experts.



***Third-party Verification*** – An appropriate number of dairy farms participating in the FARM program will be randomly selected for third-party verification beginning in 2011. Third-party verifiers will use the same on-farm evaluation conducted by cooperative and processor field staff. An independent, properly credentialed third-party verifier will conduct this step.