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Dairy

Transparency, education focus of dairy tour

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

John Brubaker, left, owner/operator of Knott Run Dairy in Buhl, Idaho, talks with veterinarian Todd Wells during a media tour on Sept. 3. Joining in the discussion are Brubaker's sons and partners, Mike and Eric, holding their young children.

BUHL, Idaho — Like virtually every other dairyman, John Brubaker is proud of his family operation and the lengths he, his sons and their employees go to care for their animals and bring a wholesome product to the table.

But also like virtually every other dairyman, he's an independent thinker and until recently just wanted to be left alone to run his dairy and produce quality milk.

During a media tour of the family's Knott Run Dairy on Sept. 3., Brubaker said dairymen think the quality of their product should speak for itself, but we're seeing that doesn't work when it comes to consumer confidence.

Embracing the idea that transparency is a better route to consumer trust has been a learning curve for the fourth-generation dairyman.

He now operates with a different mind-set — "Open up the facility; we've got nothing to hide," he said.

He led the tour through

every aspect of his operation, explaining everything from animal health, nutrition and reproductive cycles to milking, refrigeration and monitoring technology.

He invited members of the media to go wherever they wanted and photograph whatever they wanted.

His intention, he said, was to show people who might not have an ag background how his operation produces a wholesome product that's as fresh as you can get anywhere in the world.

His milk is picked up every morning, year round, maybe an hour after the milking is

finished, trucked to Glanbia Foods and is a block of cheese by afternoon, he said.

"You can't get any fresher than that," he said.

He and his sons, their veterinarian and nutritionist all responded comfortably to a battery of questions, including those on genetically mod-

ified feed and rBST.

Cindy Miller, senior director of consumer confidence for United Dairywomen of Idaho, said the dairy industry wants people to come out to the farm to understand the quality measures dairymen have in place and dispel some of the myths about milk production and animal care.

"A lot of people are really interested in where their food comes from. We can't invite whole cities," but UDI holds media and group tours "to help people understand the products on the shelf start on family farms," she said.

There are 514 dairy farms in Idaho, and all of them are family farms, some smaller, some larger than Brubaker's operation, which milks about 300 cows. The same holds true across the U.S., where 97 percent of the nation's dairy farms are family owned, according to USDA.

UDI encourages people to learn more about dairy production. Tours of farms happen all the time, especially with school groups, and people can request tours through

UDI or their local dairywomen, Miller said.

Personal contact and hands-on experience are powerful tools for educating consumers and promoting the wholesomeness of U.S. dairy, Brubaker said.

Active in industry groups, Brubaker recently went on a trade mission to Vietnam with U.S. Dairy Export Council. USDEC had made videos of his dairy operation as well as three other dairywomen on the trade mission.

Traders from Southeast Asia had the perception that American dairies were industrialized operations that didn't take care of the cows. But they learned through that personal contact that U.S. dairies are far different than their perception and they were eager for U.S. product, Brubaker said.

That one day accounted for sales of 65 million metric tons of U.S. dairy product, he said.

"It's all about telling your story. We really need to be more transparent so people know where cheese (and other dairy products) comes from," he said.

New WUD chief hits ground running

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press



Raudabaugh,

sionate about bringing the organization into the technology and global age through social media and an overhaul of WUD's website.

Western United Dairywomen, whose members represent 60 percent of milk production in California, was looking for an administrator to re-energize its members and take the organization in a new direction.

Just six weeks on the job as the new CEO, Anja Raudabaugh is already shaking things up, bringing new energy and fresh perspective to the 31-year-old producer group.

She's been busy taking care of housekeeping items needed to transition the organization to being more inclusive and more responsive to members, she said.

She's also been busy keeping an eye on dairy-relevant legislation as the state Legislature winds up this year's session in an erratic manner. And she's gearing up for the USDA hearing to consider a federal milk marketing order for the state.

Raudabaugh has big plans to advance the organization and the industry, but her first priority has been to reorganize WUD delegate bodies to facilitate discussion on the way in which the organization should move forward, she said.

"Member input is extremely valuable. I want to reignite their passion for having a voice in the organization," she said.

And she's been meeting with members, who she said are so kind and genuinely excited about a change in the organization's direction.

Some of the changes ahead are directed at closing the huge gap between the dairy industry and the urban community and the gap in the dairy industry itself, she said.

Raudabaugh said the industry needs a social and urban platform to provide unbiased information and better connect with consumers and the urban community.

Raudabaugh said she is pas-

She will also be focused on energizing the next generation of dairy farmers by building a confident outlook with solid victories for the industry. That includes mitigating regulatory and labor challenges, working for a consistent milk price structure, and gaining new markets and better market access to Pacific Rim countries, she said.

WUD President Frank Mendonsa is happy with Raudabaugh's work.

"I think we needed a fresh perspective, and we got one in Anja," he said. "She's all we hoped for."

He said Raudabaugh has a quality background in environmental and legislative issues, a lot of good ideas and high energy.

One of the goals of WUD's board is to unify the industry in California toward common goals, and she has the experience to accomplish that and lead the organization in a new direction, he said.

"She is exactly what we wanted and is performing outstandingly," said Tom Barcellos, WUD board member and immediate past president.

She brings a lot of experience to the job, has a broad knowledge of agriculture, politics and environmental issues and is both intelligent and energetic, he said.

"I am very blessed and excited to be in this position," Raudabaugh said.

Raudabaugh came to WUD from the Madera County Farm Bureau, where she served as executive director for five years. There she implemented and developed local action committees and several joint powers authorities.

Dairy expansion proposals stir controversy

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

SALEM — Expansion plans at several Oregon dairies have caused a backlash among vegans and animal rights activists, but farm regulators lack the authority to consider many of their objections.

Likewise, the Oregon Department of Agriculture can't do much about dairy industry concerns that publicly disclosed regulatory filings will expose farms to trespassing and vandalism.

As mandated by the federal Clean Water Act, the agency issued a public notice in June that five dairies are seeking to change their animal waste management plans.

Wym Matthews, manager of ODA's Confined Animal Feeding Operation program, said such notices are fairly routine, but this one was somewhat unusual because four of the five dairies want to expand their herds.

After an article in Salem's Statesman Journal described these plans, the agency received enough requests for a public hearing that one was scheduled for Sept. 2.

Previously, such hearing requests were rare, Matthews said. "I think the interest is new."

Several of the people requesting a hearing identified themselves as vegan, he said.

The ODA can only consider comments that relate directly to whether the waste management changes conform with the Clean Water Act, not overall opposition to animal agriculture or CAFOs as being abusive, he said.

"The permit doesn't regulate animal cruelty," Matthews said.

The ODA also can't consider comments that endorse particular management systems, such as organic or pasture-raised, he said.

Many of the comments made during the Sept. 2 hearing appeared to fall outside of the ODA's purview, as they

opposed CAFO expansion generally without identifying specific problems with the proposed waste management plans.

Some commenters mentioned antibiotics, which the agency does not regulate as a pollutant.

"They end up in the meat, in the manure and in the waterways," said Niko Morozov, a college student.

Others objected to the amount of water used to produce milk, which also isn't regulated under the Clean Water Act.

Nic Shipley, another college student, claimed dairy water use is excessive.

"Is milk really worth it?" he said.

The issue of animal welfare was also brought up.

"In an ideal world, we

wouldn't treat animals the way we do and have massive mega-farms," said Laurel Hines. "My opposition is to the large farms, the farms that aren't organic."

Gavin Curtis expressed dismay with the practice of culling young calves for "bob veal."

"These two- to three-day-old babies are torn from their mothers and then slaughtered," he said.

U.S. dairy prices defy global reality

By LEE MIELKE
For the Capital Press

U.S. dairy prices continued to defy global reality going into the Labor Day weekend.

CME block Cheddar got up to \$1.75 per pound Tuesday but relapsed and closed the first Friday of September at \$1.6950 per pound, down a half-cent on the week and 65 1/2-cents below a year ago, but a more typical price spread with the barrels was restored.

The markets were closed Monday for the Labor Day holiday and Tuesday the blocks remained at Friday's close. The barrels rolled out the week at \$1.67, up 7 cents

to restore the typical spread, but also 65 1/2-cents below a year ago. They were also unchanged Tuesday. Nine cars of block traded hands last week and three of barrel.

Global Dairy Trade Cheddar was at \$1.3215 per pound U.S. on Sept. 1.

Midwest milk production is in a slow, late summer decline, says Dairy Market News. The current heat wave and bottling demand are pushing milk intakes slightly lower but manufacturers report

available milk is adequate. Western milk intakes are reduced, due to increases in bottling demand and the seasonal decline in milk production but manufacturers report cheese production has remained active.

Export opportunities for cheese are down but domestic demand is good and is keeping inventories from getting out of control.

Cash butter finished Friday at \$2.4525, up 11 1/4-cents on the week but 39 1/4-cents below a year ago when it was trading at \$2.8450 and on its way to set a record high that eventually topped \$3 a pound. The spot butter was steady Tuesday.

Dairy Markets

Lee Mielke



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