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Dairy

Cheese prices still climbing

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For the Capital Press

Dairy Markets
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Cash block Cheddar cheese closed Valentine week at a slightly more romantic \$1.54 per pound, up 3 cents on the week but 4 cents below a year ago. The barrels closed at \$1.48, up 12 cents on the week and 14 cents below a year ago, with 13 cars of block trading places and 38 of barrel.

The markets were closed Monday for President's Day and, after traders absorbed Tuesday morning's Global Dairy Trade auction and anticipated Wednesday afternoon's January Milk Production report, took the blocks up a half-cent, to \$1.5450, while the barrels inched a quarter-cent higher, to \$1.4825, 6 1/4-cents below the blocks.

Midwest cheese makers are reporting some positive trends in cheese demand, according to Dairy Market News. "Barrel sellers have reported that inventories are limited, and buyers searching for loads produced as recently as early 2018 are out of luck." Cheddar demand, along with Cheddar inventories, vary from plant to plant. Spot milk into cheese production was widely available, as it has

been most of the year and spot milk prices ranged from flat to \$3 under Class III.

Cheese makers in the West report relatively steady domestic demand. Although a few manufacturers have seen the typical seasonal slowdown of orders for finished goods, overall, cheese is moving without a lot of discounting. Higher cheese prices in the EU and Oceania are helping generate good sales opportunities in some international markets. Cheese production is active while there is an abundance of milk. Cheese inventories are generally heavy.

Butter had a better week after dipping to the lowest price since November 2016 the previous week. It climbed to \$2.15 per pound Thursday but lost a nickel Friday to close at \$2.10, still up 7 1/4-cents on the week but 5 3/4-cents below a year ago, with a whopping 72 cars unloaded last week, 32 on Friday alone.

The butter jumped 4 cents Tuesday on 14 trades and hit \$2.14 per pound.

Senate bill would exempt ag from Superfund reporting

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

A bipartisan bill introduced in the Senate would exempt agricultural operations from having to report manure emissions under laws that govern toxic Superfund sites.

The bill clarifies that farmers and ranchers are exempt from reporting animal waste emissions under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) and the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA).

Introduced last week by Sen. Deb Fischer, R-Neb., and Sen. Joe Donnelly, D-Ind., the Fair Agricultural Reporting Method (FARM) Act, S. 2421, has the support of 10 Democratic and 10 Republican senators.

The bill would fix a problem the federal D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals created for agriculture last April when it rejected the 2008 rule by EPA exempting farmers from reporting emissions.

That decision set a Nov. 15, 2017, compliance deadline. After petitions from EPA, the court twice delayed the deadline, which now stands at May 1.

Under the current law, an estimated 200,000 farms and ranches would have to report emissions to the U.S. Coast Guard's National Response Center and EPA.

The senators said the emission requirements were not intended to affect



Capital Press File

A bill introduced in the U.S. Senate would restore a 10-year-old EPA exemption for agriculture on reporting animal waste emissions that was vacated by a federal court last year.

animal agriculture and were instead meant to address dangerous industrial pollution, chemical plant explosions and the release of hazardous materials into the environment.

A host of agricultural groups agree, releasing statements following the bill's introduction.

"Farming and ranching are challenging enough without having to report, under threat of law, something that is a routine part of raising animals but is nearly impossible to predict or measure," said Zippy Duvall, American Farm Bureau Federation president.

National Milk Producers Federation said the bill would prevent farms from having to generate meaningless air emissions data that regulatory agencies don't want and won't use.

"Congress needs to stipulate that this burdensome regulatory overreach serves no legitimate health or safety purpose and needs to stop," said Jim Mulhern, the federation's president and CEO.

Kevin Kester, president of National Cattlemen's Association, said there's not a lot of truly bipartisan legislation in Washington, D.C., these days.

"But one thing that pretty much everyone can agree on is that a responsibly run cattle ranch isn't a toxic Superfund site," he said.

Ken Maschhoff, president of National Pork Producers Council, said "routine emissions from hog manure do not constitute a hazardous emergency that requires the Coast Guard to activate a national cleanup response."

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture said the reporting would not advance environmental protection and serves no useful purpose to the Coast Guard.

"The farms and ranches producing our food and fiber should not be regulated as toxic Superfund sites," said Barbara Glen, the association's CEO.

Scott Yager, chief environmental counsel for National Cattlemen's Beef Association, said it's going to take some "heavy lifting" to get the bill through Congress before the May 1 compliance deadline.

NCBA will be meeting with other senators to get them on board, and producers should contact their senators to support the bill, he said.

USDA, dairy industry team up on environmental stewardship

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USDA and the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy have entered into a memorandum of understanding to jointly promote and enhance environmental sustainability in the dairy industry.

The pact extends and builds upon an MOU originally signed in 2009, according to a joint press release from USDA and Dairy Management Inc. — which manages checkoff funding along with state and national pro-

motion groups and founded the Innovation Center.

USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue signed the MOU with Arizona dairy farmer Paul Rovey, chairman of Dairy Management Inc. and an Innovation Center board member, at DeGroot Dairies in Hanford, Calif., on Feb. 14.

"USDA and the Innovation Center will continue to work together to accelerate the adoption of innovative technologies and increase energy efficiency improvements on U.S. dairy farms,"

Perdue said in the press release.

USDA has resources that can help the dairy industry be successful, but in many cases they are difficult to find because they are spread out through various agencies, he said.

"This MOU hopefully will be a potential navigator to the Innovation Center and give a 'green light' to interact with our various research and voluntary conservation efforts to reach their goals," he said.

USDA will continue to work on enhancing the application and approval process for Natural Resource Conservation Service programs to make the process more efficient and tailored for producer convenience.

The agency will also continue to examine ways to expand the award of conservation grants for sustainability initiatives proposed by producers, cooperatives, non-governmental organizations and state and local governments.



Courtesy Dairy Management Inc.

Arizona dairy farmer Paul Rovey, chairman of Dairy Management Inc. and an Innovation Center board member, signs a Memorandum of Understanding with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, right, on Feb. 14.

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