

# TAD News...\_Oct 2004

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## Managers Update

By John Cowan



*John Cowan, executive director of the Texas Association of Dairymen, speaks at a demonstration of the Environmental Monitoring and Response System (ERMS) Water Pilot Project in Clifton as TCEQ Commissioner Larry Soward (seated left) and Gov. Rick Perry look on.*

Cowan was an invited speaker Tuesday October 12<sup>th</sup>, at a press conference in Clifton held by the TCEQ and Gov. Rick Perry to demonstrate the new Environmental Monitoring and Response System (ERMS) Water Pilot Project. The project will monitor nutrients at four sites in the Leon / Bosque River watersheds and relay data to TCEQ computers in Austin. If specified amounts of certain nutrients are exceeded, electronic notification will be sent to TCEQ's regional office in Stephenville and other interested parties. TCEQ staff then can review the information and decide if an investigation is needed.

## TAD Happenings

From time to time I get questions asking what is TAD doing? In this space, I will try to discuss some of the key issues we are working on in behalf of Texas Dairy Producers. Currently, items we are working on include intervening with the TCEQ on the status of the new CAFO Rules and how the TCEQ Field Staff inspectors are applying those rules. I have made appeals to the TCEQ this last month on the behalf of 5 different farms. TAD is also actively engaged with the Texas Legislative Process. The 79 Texas Legislature will convene in January 2005 and with the November elections around the corner, we are supporting candidates for office who understand and

support agriculture. Also the TAD board of directors is very involved to the extent they can with dairymen who have been sued by the City of Waco. TAD views this suit as a very serious threat for the Dairy Industry, not only in Central Texas, but also for all dairymen across the state and country. We read about lawsuits being filed in other states, such as Idaho and realize the way of life rural America has enjoyed is being challenged. TAD has been instrumental in offering help to these dairymen, including providing means for financial assistance supported by dairymen throughout the Southwest. In addition TAD has joined with Tarleton State University this past summer to develop a Vocational Agriculture Teachers Curriculum project containing 11 lesson plans FFA teachers can utilize in the classroom. TAD continues to work with DMI, Dairy Max and the Southwest Dairy Museum on positive public awareness.



*Keith Broumley and John Cowan stand in front of a methane digester under construction on the Broumley Dairy in Hamilton County Texas. Targeted for completion in the spring of 2005, the digester's production of methane gas will be converted into electrical energy. The digester is a joint project between the Broumley Dairy, Brazos River Authority and the TCEQ.*

## Texas Animal Health Commission

STATE LOOKING AT STRICTER RULES TO CONTROL TB. Testing of almost every dairy cow in Texas for tuberculosis over the past few years has not turned up

any new infected dairies, and the Texas Animal Health Commission is considering new state entry requirements to keep the state's dairy herds free of the disease.

Dr. Dee Ellis of the TAHC briefed the Texas Association of Dairymen's board of directors at its October meeting on the progress of the statewide TB testing implemented in 2002, when two infected herds diagnosed in Hamilton and El Paso counties caused Texas to lose its "free" status.

The testing – partially funded by the USDA – has screened 806 dairies, all but three of the total operating in Texas. Those dairies were newly permitted this fall and will be tested soon, Ellis said. In all, more than 336,000 head have been tested.

Even if Texas recovers its "free" status, that is not a foolproof defense against the reintroduction of TB, Ellis warned. Therefore, TAHC is considering implementing new entry regulations to govern dairy cows entering Texas and is asking for input from Texas dairymen.

Currently, dairy cows are allowed into Texas if they test negative for TB within 60 days of entry or are from an accredited "free" herd or state. However, Ellis said, some cows from "free" states have been found to have TB.

Many states have recently increased their entry requirements, he said. He said 33 states require tests prior to entry, even if the cow is from an accredited "free" state.

Ellis is asking Texas dairymen whether they favor testing all incoming dairy cows, even if they are from a "free" state and, if so, what age should be required to be tested.

Twenty-four states require testing of all incoming weaned calves, while 18 states test only if the animal is at least six months old. Other states' test range is from four months to 18 months.

Ellis is urging Texas dairymen to think about the proposals and let him know which they would prefer. He said the TAHC staff would probably follow national standard proposed and suggesting testing at 6 months and up, but that the decision is not finalized.

Ellis said any change adopted by TAHC will be put out for public comment through publication in the Texas Register and then must be passed twice by the Commission.

If you would like to register your opinion with the Texas Animal Health Commission, please contact the Texas Association of Dairymen. kv

### **AFO Virtual Information Center Online**

Animal Feeding Operations Virtual Information Center On-line EPA has developed a comprehensive Internet guide to provide quick access to livestock agricultural information in the US. This site is intended to be a single point of reference to obtain links to state regulations, web sites, permits and policies, nutrient management information, livestock and trade associations, federal web sites, best management practices and controls, cooperative extension and land grant universities, research, funding, and information on environmental issues. Go to [www.epa.gov/npdes/afovirtualcenter](http://www.epa.gov/npdes/afovirtualcenter) and learn more.

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