



TAD News

February 2008

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Next TAD Board Meeting:
1 p.m., Feb. 27
Grapevine, Texas

Save water now, save us from restrictions later

Do you know how much water your farm uses? You should, and, if you are not measuring water usage, you may find it very beneficial to consider installing groundwater usage and monitoring equipment.

Manager's Update
John Cowan

The Texas Legislature sets state water resource policy and charges the Texas Water Development Board with oversight. Chapter 36 of the Texas Water Code is "to provide for conserving, preserving, protecting and recharging the underground water and prevention of waste of underground water.

The issue is – how do we in agriculture, specifically dairy farming, ensure we are not unfairly targeted as an abusive user of water?

As the Texas population continues to grow and competition increases for public water supplies, the Legislature may adopt more restrictive controls on water users. Groundwater districts authorized by the state can enact rules and regulations, including water well placement, pumping rates and quantity pumped from an aquifer.

We must work to ensure regulators, both in the Legislature and with local or regional water development districts, know that the dairy industry is proactively working to conserve water resources.

If you are monitoring your farm, either by metering your wells, keeping good records or using best management practices, you are in better position to defend your farm's water usage as opposed to operators who do not know how much water they are using.

Water conservation practices are an essential component to your overall farm management program.

It is recommended that you install automatic equipment to control or prevent water overuse or waste in areas where you have a discretionary usage of water, such as in the milking parlor, free choice water equipment and cow comfort areas.

Just a small drip or a leak in a line can amount to a lot of water down the drain over time. ▪

Dairymen must stay united to overcome industry challenges

As my term as president of the TAD Board of Directors ends, I've found myself reflecting more about the current state of the dairy industry.

Today – on top of the actual farming – it seems we spend more and more time figuring out how to satisfy environmental activists, state regulators and city officials so that we can stay in business and out of the courthouse.

My service on the TAD Board has made me realize just how complex our industry has become, and how tenuous our survival.

And I've seen, from the inside, how valuable TAD's work is in making sure that the next generation of dairymen will be in business to feed our state.

Sometimes it seems like the obstacles to our profession are insurmountable. For example, it seems we will never be free of

Message from the Board
Gordon McCool, President

the legal challenges from the City of Waco. But we are making progress, however slowly.

Dealing with our enemies is like dealing with mastitis.

We must be vigilant as long as we milk cows. We must be as determined and as diligent as our opponents as we continue to fight for our right to produce milk and earn a living on the farm.

Otherwise, we leave the door open for others to prevail. We don't want to lose because we have grown weary of the battle.

The late noted architect Frank Lloyd Wright once said, "I know the price of success: dedication, hard work and an unremitting devotion to the things you want to see happen."

As outgoing TAD president, I urge you to keep these words in mind as we, as dairymen, work through TAD as a team to protect and nurture our livelihood. ▪

TAD speaks out in support of dairies undergoing CAFO permit challenges

CAFO permits continue to move slowly through the system at the Texas Commission for Environmental Quality, and TAD is making its voice heard in the process.

TAD filed amicus briefs – a “friend of the court” document – in support of permit applications by the O’Kee Dairy in Hamilton County and Hidden View Dairy in Erath County. Opposition to both permits forced the applications to go before the three TCEQ commissioners.

Hidden View Dairy will be considered at a March 19 TCEQ meeting. It is being contested by the Sierra Club.

O’Kee won approval of its permit from commissioners at a hearing on Jan. 30, which was attended by TAD representatives.

O’Kee’s permit was only the fifth permit approved by the TCEQ since it adopted more stringent operating requirements for North Bosque River Watershed dairies in July 2004, and the first permit to be approved for a dairy expansion.

By approving the permit, the TCEQ denied the City of Waco’s request for a contested case hearing.

TAD hopes the ruling will accelerate approval of pending permits so that the stronger environmental protections can finally be implemented by Central Texas dairies. TAD will continue to monitor the issuance of CAFO permits and become active in the process where appropriate.

Meanwhile, TAD encourages dairymen submitting CAFO permit applications to make sure technical requirements are complete and farm practices are environmentally sound. ▪

Make Your Voice Heard – Vote !

Primary election date: March 4
Early voting through Feb. 29

Questions? Visit the Secretary of State’s Web site at www.sos.state.tx.us.

TAD is taking a leadership role in supporting candidates who will represent our industry.

USDA ID Tags Available from TAHC

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, on a trial basis, has supplied the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) with alpha-numeric, silver-colored metal ear tags at no cost to distribute to the Texas dairy cattle owners.

Producers have through March 31 to begin tagging dairy cattle with an approved ID device prior to movement.

The tags, up to a six-month supply, will be issued through the TAHC's eight area offices. For area office locations and phone numbers, contact TAHC at (800) 550-8242.

Recipients of the USDA ear tags must maintain a log, to include the date a tag is applied, the tag number, and the animal's breed, sex and age. Producers who do not wish to use the USDA tags can select from several other forms of ID. ▪

Undocumented workers heading to Texas?

Tough new anti-illegal immigrant laws enacted in Oklahoma and Arizona could spur more illegal workers to come to Texas. The two states imposed harsher penalties for employers who hire undocumented workers and set out new methods to verify employment eligibility.

TAD reminds its members considering hiring workers to comply with the labor requirements of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and other federal agencies

If you have questions about what is required, visit the “Labor Resources” section on TAD’s Web site, www.milk4texas.org.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is still considering new “no-match letter” proposals. As the issue remains unsettled, the associate counsel for the California Farm Bureau Federation offered this advice at a World Ag Expo seminar:

- Follow form I-9 verification procedures.
- Don’t ignore no-match letters.
- If you decide to follow the rule’s safe harbor steps upon receiving a no-match letter, follow them precisely.
- Take action that is reasonably intended to resolve any discrepancies between the wage information you have reported for a worker and the information recorded by the Social Security Administration.
- Thoroughly document all your steps. ▪



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