



TAD News

July 2008

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Next TAD Board Meeting:
1 p.m., Aug. 28
Grapevine, Texas

Dairy industry facing tough public scrutiny

There's no feeling like watching the evening news on television where the lead story is showing a black-and-white dairy cow, clearly in distress, at a livestock facility, and you know the images you are seeing and the report being given is pointing an accusatory finger at the dairy industry.

It doesn't matter whether the images portrayed might be an isolated incident; the images are now ingrained in the viewer's memory. It doesn't matter that you never have had a situation with your operation like the one portrayed on television, the "train has already left the station."

This article is a reminder to all dairymen that you are subject to public scrutiny for your actions, operations and management practices, regardless of where you farm. You are in the food business, and the consuming public is more aware and more concerned about where their food comes from, how it is produced, and how safe it is for their families to eat.

Milk, as you know well, is one of the food chain's most tested and regulated food products. Consumers have grown accustomed to expecting high levels of safety. But now – with black-and-white cows showing up on the evening news – the presumptive association of milk to the "downer cows" is not the image you can accept.

What can you do?

My answer to this short question is simply, "manage your farm responsibly." TAD will continue to work with groups such as the National Milk Producers Federation, the dairy promotion organizations, other livestock producer organizations and livestock marketing associations to assist our dairy farm families.

Keep in mind, at any time you may have a camera lens or a microphone pointed in your directions. Don't dairy in fear, dairy the way you know how, and you won't be the next segment on the evening news. ▪

Manager's Update

John Cowan

Capitol Report:

Legislative committees hear testimony on biofuel, other ag issues

By Shayne Woodard

Summer isn't a break at the Capitol, where legislative committees are meeting in preparation for the legislative session in January.

Recently, the Senate Natural Resources Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Affairs and Coastal Resources and the House Committee on Agriculture and Livestock held hearings on their interim charges.

One of the Senate subcommittee's charges is to study the impact of fuel ethanol and biodiesel.

Recall back in April, Gov. Rick Perry formally requested a waiver from the federal renewable fuel standard mandate for ethanol produced from grain. The governor originally had requested the EPA make a decision by July 24, but EPA administrator Stephen Johnson recently said a decision should

be forthcoming in early August.

Because of increasing demand, the U. S. Department of Agriculture predicts 30 percent of the nation's corn will be used for ethanol production, which will account for 8 percent of total gas consumption, according to the Texas Comptroller's office. Because of federal ethanol mandates, the search for the next-generation of feedstocks is ongoing as that corn-based ethanol cannot meet the demand.

In Texas, lawmakers heard that demand for corn from livestock (600 million bushels) far outpaces production (300 million bushels), and that also not enough soybeans are produced to fulfill the capacity of the Texas biodiesel industry, according to the Texas Department of Agriculture.

(Continued, "Capitol," page 2)

“Capitol,” continued from page 1

Dr. Joe Outlaw of Texas Agrilife Extension at Texas A&M University testified there is “very little proof” that increases in ethanol, petroleum or labor caused increases in food prices. He said that higher costs of corn have not yet translated to higher costs of beef, but soon will.

The Senate subcommittee's next meeting will be Aug. 19.

On the other side of the Capitol, members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Livestock heard similar testimony about the biofuel issue, but also listened to testimony on their charge to evaluate preparedness of relevant agriculture-related agencies to respond effectively to animal and plant disease threats.

Animal disease threats have become more potentially dangerous because of the globalization of commerce and the consolidation of agriculture, according to Dr. Tammy Beckham, director of the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory. ▪

Legislative body studies whether to consolidate TAHC functions into TDA

The Texas Legislative Budget Board, a permanent joint committee of the Texas Legislature that develops budget and policy recommendations, has issued a study that states transferring some functions of the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) to the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) could save the State of Texas \$1.9 million annually.

The study was ordered last year by lawmakers as part of the 2008-2009 state budget.

The report states that any savings would come from the consolidation of indirect administrative operations; no savings from programmatic consolidation would be realized because of the unique nature of the agencies' operations and their lack of overlap.

TAD is one of the organizations that have been asked to submit comments on the report. The report, which will be submitted to lawmakers, could be used by to formulate legislation in 2009. ▪

Updated employment forms available

Dairymen should be advised that the U.S. Citizens and Immigrations Services (USCIS) has updated Form I-9 and other materials that must be used to verify employment eligibility of new employees.

To comply with the law, employers must verify the identity and employment eligibility of anyone hired, and complete and retain a Form I-9.

The new form and information has been posted on TAD's Web site www.milk4texas.org under “Labor Resources.” They also can be found at Texas Cooperative Extension's Web site, <http://texasdairymatters.org>.

This material is for educational purposes and should not be considered as legal advice. If you have any questions about employment requirements or regulations, TAD advises you to consult with an attorney regarding your specific situation. ▪

Conference to address dairy needs in Southern Great Plains of Texas, New Mexico

Dairy producers interested in helping to shape the future of the rapidly expanding dairy industry in the Southern Great Plains are invited to attend the Southern Great Plains Dairy Consortium workshop on Aug. 14 at Texas Tech University in Lubbock.

The Texas Association of Dairymen (TAD) will be among those at the table working to develop specific three-year action plans that directly address producer-identified priority issues, including dairy production, dairy products/quality, economics/marketing, energy resources, environmental quality human resource development, resources for industry and water usage.

The Consortium is a multi-university interagency organization established to meet the region's industry needs and provide a framework for coordinating research, education, extension and diagnostic service programs.

Participants include organizations from both Texas and New Mexico.

For more information, or a conference agenda, contact John Cowan at TAD. ▪



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