



TAD News



December 2009 – Happy Holidays!

3500 William D. Tate Ave.
Suite 100
Grapevine, TX 76051
(817) 410-4576
(817) 410-4541 (fax)
www.milk4texas.org

John Cowan
Executive Director
Darren Turley
Assistant Manager

Board of Directors

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Next TAD Board Meeting:
1 p.m., Jan. 7
Grapevine, Texas

“Sustainable farming” – what does it mean?

We are hearing more and more about “sustainable dairy farming,” a concept that has been embraced by DMI and other approved dairy promotion groups, including the National Milk Producers Federation.

Manager’s Update

John Cowan

Dairy farmers in Texas and around the country are urged to get actively involved – these positive concepts should drive your management plan and not just be a document gathering dust in your office.

You don’t have to go very far or listen to many radio or TV programs to hear someone complain about “factory farms.” That collective term then becomes the norm for misinformed critics to use when they lay a blanket on you to further their cause. You know these groups by their national platforms riding high on untruths about the hazards of consuming animal protein as food, or environmental issues and animal rights.

The term “factory farm” really infuriates me particularly because it dehumanizes the family farm. Those who attack farmers with their inflammatory remarks and questionable statistics have no idea of the family network involved with your operation, and, worse yet, they don’t care to! Even though you have a very proactive promotional program, how do your neighbors view your dairy? Do they know how your livestock is housed, treated, fed, cared for and given the best medical care available?

In regard to animal rights issues, a November article by Terence J. Centner at the University of Georgia talks about the limitations of the confinement of food animals in the United States. His article states that seven states have established space and movement limitations for some farm animals. This trend can be expected to spread to other states, and I fully expect that TAD and other Texas livestock and poultry groups will battle this during the 2011 legislative session.

You should expect attempts to force change on you.

On the environmental stewardship front, a recent National Public Radio program blasted dairy farming in New Mexico, blaming them for groundwater contamination.

(Continued, “Update,” page 2)

Capitol Report

Lawmakers stirring at the Capitol

By Shayne Woodard

As candidates continue to file for Texas statewide, legislative and congressional offices through Jan. 4, some sitting lawmakers are hard at work on the 2011 legislative session.

One critical issue is the review of some 29 state agencies, including the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, by the Sunset Commission. Both Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and House Speaker Joe Straus have made Senate, House and public member appointments to the commission, which has held its organizational meeting.

TAD is closely watching the review of the TCEQ to monitor how the Sunset Commission’s recommendation could impact the dairy industry. The commission has scheduled public testimony on the TCEQ at its Dec. 15-16, 2010, meeting, with

(Continued, “Capitol,” page 2)



State Rep. Marc Veasey, D-Fort Worth, center, visited TAD’s December board meeting in Grapevine. Pictured with Rep. Veasey are TAD Interim Chairman Ken Miller (left) and TAD Assistant Manager Darren Turley.



Texas Association of Dairymen
3500 William D. Tate Ave., Suite 100
Grapevine, TX 76051-8734

“Update,” continued from page 1

In Texas, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has increased its dairy farm inspections under the guise of citizen complaints. In defense of the dairy industry, TAD is working with decision makers in Austin and the Texas congressional delegation to provide the truth about our industry.

I encourage each of you to get a copy of NMPF’s “Farm” program at www.nationaldairyfarm.com and make it the foundation of your sustainable farm management program. ▪

“Capitol,” continued from page 1

commission decisions to be voted on at its Jan. 12, 2011, meeting. To learn more about the Sunset process, visit www.sunset.state.tx.us.

In addition, Speaker Straus has issued interim charges for House committees to study that could become legislation in 2011. A number of committees will be looking into issues that could be of interest to the dairy industry. TAD will be closely monitoring committee hearings and actions associated with these charges. ▪

TAD Board Action

The TAD Board of Directors took the following action during its November meeting:

- Heard from guest speaker: State Rep. Marc Veasey, D-Fort Worth, who made remarks and asked questions about “organic” milk/food.
- Seated new Board Member Tom Hoff, a dairyman from Windthorst, representing DFA Southwest.
- Voted to discontinue monthly advertising in the Texas Dairy Review for one year.
- Heard a TAD operations report, including key meetings in the Panhandle on water issues; a meeting with the Texas Comptroller on ag exemptions; recent activities at the TCEQ; and activity in East Texas regarding the EPA. ▪

TAD working on EPA issue in East Texas

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to make spot inspections on dairies in Hopkins County in the Lake Fork Watershed. The targeted dairies are both large and small, confinement and grazing. Inspectors are walking the entire dairy and making a thorough evaluation of the facility.

TAD was instrumental in working with extension agent Mario Villarino to form a working group of dairymen, cooperative representatives and concerned industry leaders to form the Hopkins County Dairy Stakeholders Group. The group is establishing a plan of action to address this issue.

The group met with EPA Agricultural Advisor Van Kozak Dec. 8 to express its concern about the financial stresses on dairies and to communicate the industry’s economic impact on the community. The group will continue to work on this issue with local and state officials in the coming months. ▪

Water issues drawing major attention

All signs point to water being a major issue during the next legislative session, and TAD is watching developments closely.

In the Panhandle, TAD has been very involved with the High Plains Groundwater Conservation District’s efforts to establish a plan to reduce the future amount of water being withdrawn from the Ogallala Aquifer. These efforts will affect the rules and directions that the rest of the state will take.

TAD also is monitoring other ground water districts throughout the state. Local involvement is needed on these committees, so TAD encourages you to get involved and be part of the rules that affect your future. Contact Darren Turley at TAD if you need more information on these meetings.

At the state level, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has created a new Office of Water, which will have oversight over the agency’s existing water planning, supply and quality divisions. Leading the new department is L’Oreal Stepney, who TAD has worked with effectively during the past few years when she managed the TCEQ’s Confined Animal Feeding Operations wastewater permitting section. ▪