

2012: TAD quickly starts a new year working on tough issues

The Texas Association of Dairymen (TAD) quickly started the New Year addressing issues that will affect your operations.

First, water is developing into the top issue of concern for much of the state. The recent rains have covered most of the state and are a very welcome sign to dairy producers. Although the drought is far from over, at least there is relief for some. Yet water remains a concern for most Texans. The Austin area, for example, is still in a rainfall deficit, and most reservoirs are very low.

The Texas Legislature will address this issue next session, and agriculture will have to work hard to maintain its share. TAD also has been working with groundwater districts to address current rules and their implementation.

Experts say the supply of underground water will shrink by 10 percent by 2060 while demand will rise by 20 percent. Texans will need to make many extreme changes to how they consume and use groundwater. Agriculture will have to make reductions along with municipalities. TAD will continue to monitor and work on your behalf on this issue.

Also, the TAD Board has initiated an effort to recruit and

encourage producers to get involved with various leadership development programs in the state.

Director's Update Darren Turley

The dairy industry always has produced great leaders, and we at TAD think the programs provided by the Texas Farm Bureau and Texas A&M University/Texas AgriLife

Extension's TALL program are worthy of producer involvement. These programs give producers insights into various agricultural products and the issues that we all have in common.

This effort will help producers understand that agriculture may be a vast variety of products in Texas, but we all have the same issues facing our industries and we must work together to be successful. *(You can read more below on efforts to encourage young producers).*

The Texas Association of Dairymen and our industry are facing tough issues in 2012, just as we did last year. Drought conditions forced hay prices to staggering levels and milk prices are declining, but the tough, resilient milk producers of Texas will work through it as they always have.

We are proud to represent you and your family farms through these tough times. ▪

Spotlight: Ag industry taking steps to encourage young producers

Although new demographic information on U.S. farmers won't be available until later this year, there are signs that the number of young farmers is increasing, nationally and in Texas. This is welcome news as the average age of farmers continues to rise, as does demand for food as the U.S. and world populations grow.

The Texas Association of Dairymen (TAD) fully supports programs that encourage young Texans to take up dairy farming and become industry leaders, including several programs by the Texas Farm Bureau and Texas AgriLife Extension's Texas Agricultural Lifetime Leadership (TALL) program.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has called for 100,000 new farmers within the next few years, and Congress has responded with proposals that would provide young farmers with improved access to USDA support and loan

programs. Likewise, the Texas Department of Agriculture offers incentives for young farmers and ranchers.

This article includes a brief roundup of just some of the programs available. Please take advantage of them, or encourage a young dairy producer to do so.

For 24 years, the **TALL Program** has provided a foundation for future leaders in Texas agriculture. Established on the ideals of leadership, issue and policy awareness, and basic agricultural principles, the program strives to prepare men and women for the challenges faced by agriculture in the future.

The program also focuses on current issues facing agriculture and uses the business model of taking the classroom to the decision makers and key stakeholders.

Applications now are being taken for the 13th TALL **(Continued, "Young producer," Page 4)**

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Bosque permit renewals coming due

By Jim D. Bradbury, attorney, Fort Worth

If you are operating under an individual permit in the North Bosque River watershed, you need to be aware that these permits are coming up for renewal. Check the date on your permit, renewals occur after five years.

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is preparing to renew these permits, and hopefully it will be a much smoother process than the original permitting process. By rule, the applications must be received at least 180 days in advance of the renewal date. This is an important obligation. If the application deadline is missed, you may lose your operating authority resulting in unnecessary fines and expenses.

While the TCEQ executive director retains discretion over the terms of the individual permit renewals, we are anticipating the terms and conditions to remain the same in the watershed. The best management practices that were implemented with the individual permits, along with the North Bosque rules, have resulted in positive results on water quality.

Please check your permit date promptly and confirm with your consultant that an application for renewal will be timely filed. ▪

Symposium offers water education

By Joe Osterkamp, TAD Board chairman

Amarillo played host on Feb. 8 to the inaugural Texas Panhandle Water Conservation Symposium, attended by representatives of the Texas Association of Dairymen.

After one of the worst one-year droughts in Texas history, the symposium was designed to help educate the attendee on much of the newfound knowledge and techniques available to conserve water. More than 350 individuals from across Texas attended, representing agriculture, municipalities and elected officials.

Many of the topics discussed during the morning session covered a wide variety of water issues to help all in attendance understand the problems each group is facing. One of the most daunting subjects presented was the estimate of the Texas population doubling in the next 50 years and the stress this will put on the water currently available.

The afternoon portion was split into separate breakout sessions for agriculture, municipal and public groups. Each group session covered topics of importance to that specific group. The agriculture session provided information regarding irrigation efficiency, new crop hybrids and crop rotations.

Water is going to be a very important driving force now and in the years to come. More information on the symposium or Texas water issues can be found at www.texaswater.org. ▪

USDA to hold new CRP sign up

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will conduct a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general signup from March 12-April 6. CRP is a voluntary program available to agricultural producers to help them use environmentally sensitive land for conservation benefits. USDA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance.

For more information, visit a local FSA service center or www.fsa.usda.gov. ▪

Texas AgriLife Extension Service Save the Date – 2012

March 7-8 – High Plains Dairy Conference, The Ambassador Hotel, Amarillo, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. March 7, and 8 a.m.-Noon March 8. Registration is \$250.

Experts from across the country will address topics specific to the region, from adopting technology to understanding animal welfare issues and the world economy.

Online registration and other conference information is available at www.highplainsdairy.com or for more information and a brochure, visit <http://texasdairymatters.org>.

April 3 & 4 – Dairy Heat Stress Road Show

A series of seminars addressing dairy heat stress is being planned in numerous nationwide locations by Texas AgriLife Extension Service, a consortium of universities and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Each day-long seminar will cover cooling strategies, improving reproduction, nutritional considerations and economics related to heat stress.

For more information and a brochure, visit <http://texasdairymatters.org>.

Nearby “Road Show” stops are:

April 3 – Southwest Regional Dairy Center, Stephenville, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

April 4 – Clovis Civic Center, Clovis, NM, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

FDA begins residue survey project

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) milk residue survey project, initially proposed in 2010, is now underway.

The objective is to determine if farms with previous drug residue violations in market-bound meat from dairy cows have farm management practices that also may lead to drug residues in milk.

The survey involves the collection of nearly 2,000 universal milk samples at central milk testing laboratories: 900 milk samples from dairy producers with a cull dairy cow tissue residue violation, and another 900 random milk samples. The FDA will have the samples blinded (meaning they cannot be linked to a specific farm, co-op or plant) at central laboratories and then shipped to the Institute for Food Safety and Health at the Illinois Institute of Technology. They will be tested for about 30 different antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory residues.

The sampling and laboratory analysis is expected to take about one year to complete.

As a reminder, the National Milk Producers Federation’s Milk and Dairy Beef Drug Residue Prevention Manual is available on the National Dairy FARM Program website at www.nationaldairyfarm.com.

The dairy industry continues to work with FDA on concerns related to the testing methodology and the reporting of presumptive positive test results, which are likely to be confusing to consumers. NMPF is leaving to the discretion of its members the decision about whether to voluntarily provide samples to FDA. ▪



Capitol Report

Senate committee asked to study water issues of interest to dairies

By Shayne Woodard and J Pete Laney, TAD lobbyists

Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst in early February issued interim charges to the Senate Natural Resources Committee, asking it to consider several issues of interest to the dairy industry before the start of the next legislative session in January. House committees received their interim charges last fall.

Given our ongoing drought and growing state population, several of the committee's charges focus on water. Here are two of the water-related charges TAD will be monitoring as they are studied:

Study the impediments to implementation of the State Water Plan and make recommendations to ensure that Texas has access to sufficient water for future generations. Specifically consider the following:

- Review opportunities to fully fund the implementation of the State Water Plan by encouraging local project selection and financing;
- Review the loan application process administered by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) and prioritize the projects to ensure that the new bonding authority is targeted to the most pressing problems and those projects of highest value identified in the State Water Plan;
- Consider the impact and complexity of the water/energy/electricity connection;
- Review the progress made toward the designation of unique reservoir sites;
- Review current and proposed federal initiatives related to water resources;
- Review conservation measures across all sectors of the

economy, including education about the benefits of conserved water and the enforcement of those measures;

- Review all state and federal statutory barriers, including the ability to move water around the state and pipeline prohibitions;
- Consider groundwater regulation and determine whether there is a need for modification of our current regulatory structure;
- Evaluate the progress of the state's goal of promoting desalination projects across the state (brackish and seawater), including their future expansion to assist in meeting the state's water needs.

Study and make recommendations on the management of groundwater resources. Specifically consider the following:

- Consolidation of groundwater conservation districts along major aquifer lines in an effort to increase efficiency and enhance responsible groundwater management;
- Effectiveness of single county and non-contiguous groundwater conservation districts;
- Efficiency and effectiveness of varying groundwater regulations and permitting processes throughout the state, including the adequate planning for withdrawals and the development of desired future conditions, as compared to the regulation provided to surface water resources; and
- The relationship of local groundwater regulations to the State Water Plan and the regional planning process. ▪

Producer board holds first meeting

By John Cowan, TGPIB member

The Texas Grain Producer Indemnity Board (TGPIB) met for the first time on Jan. 18 in Austin.

The Board took care of a number of administrative measures, such as electing officers, drawing for terms and receiving training on open meetings and ethics.

Most of the board's discussion centered on the producer referendum. Early December 2012 was set as the target date for the referendum. If it passes, producer assessments would begin by February 2013.

Upcoming February and March meetings are expected to focus on developing program rules. It was noted that producer organizations and sponsoring organizations have said they would provide the initial funds to get the board up and running.

This first meeting provided a good opportunity for the board to get acquainted. I expect subsequent meetings to be full of work on issues and policy development. ▪

Former TAD director appointed to board

Former TAD executive director John Cowan has been appointed to the newly created Texas Grain Producer Indemnity Fund Board by Texas Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples (*see story on left*).

The Board was created in 2011 by the Texas Legislature following the failure or bankruptcy of 17 grain elevators in recent years. Farmers had no way to reclaim their losses other than legal action. The Board will manage an indemnity fund to compensate producers if a failed grain buyer is unable to pay the producer for the grain.

Cowan retired from TAD in June 2011 after serving the organization in several capacities, including eight years as TAD's executive director.

"As a long time advocate for the Texas dairy industry, John knows first hand how important it is to protect our state's agriculture producers from economic hardship," said Darren Turley, TAD executive director. "Texas' farmers and ranchers already are under enough economic stress." ▪



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class. For an application, or for more information, visit TALL’s website at <http://tall.tamu.edu/>.

The **Texas Farm Bureau** has long provided opportunities for leadership development and recognition.

For more than 50 years, the Farm Bureau has sought individuals who want to develop their leadership skills or to be recognized as one of the very best of the agriculture industry in our state. Each year the Farm Bureau sponsors a series of programs that do just that and offer a chance at travel and learning, as well as some very substantial awards of prizes and cash.

This summer, the Texas Farm Bureau will be accepting applications for its two adult leadership development programs, AgLead and FARMLEAD.

These programs are designed for full-time ag producers and involve personal and professional development sessions in conjunction with travel around the state, nation and even internationally.

Applications also are being accepted for three awards programs that recognize outstanding young people in agriculture: Outstanding Young Farmer and Rancher Contest, Excellence in Agriculture Contest and Discussion Meet Contest.

More information can be found on the TFB website at www.tfb.org or by contacting your local county farm bureau office.

The **Texas Department of Agriculture** offers grants to young agricultural producers who are starting or expanding agricultural businesses in Texas. The next round of applications will be accepted from April 2 to May 4.

TDA also runs a Young Farmer Interest Rate Reduction Program, which reduces the loan interest rate for young farmers or ranchers who are starting or expanding agricultural businesses in Texas.

More information on TDA programs can be found at <http://texasagriculture.gov/>.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) is expanding loan opportunities for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, while also establishing a new Land Contract Guarantee Program.

The program now includes every state and is designed to encourage farmers and ranchers to sell their property to beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers through the use of seller financing.

More information can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov.

The National Milk Producers Federation organized the National Young Cooperator (YC) Program in 1950 to educate and build leadership ability in young dairy farmers.

Program activities include a legislative issues briefing and lobbying Capitol Hill and a national YC Leadership and Development Program. To learn more, visit NMPF’s website at <http://www.nmpf.org>. ▪