



News Release

National Milk Producers Federation • 2101 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22201 • 703-243-6111 FAX 703-841-9328

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Contact: Christopher Galen
(703) 243-6111 ext. 356
E-Mail: Cgalen@nmpf.org

NMPF REPRESENTATIVE EXPLAINS THAT ANIMAL WELFARE, FARMERS' ECONOMIC SUCCESS ARE RELATED

House Agriculture Committee Holds Hearing on Legislating Animal Welfare Standards

WASHINGTON, DC – A dairy farmer and veterinarian from North Carolina told the House of Representatives Tuesday that “what’s good for cows is good for our business,” and urged Agriculture Committee members not to include specific animal welfare regulations in the upcoming 2007 Farm Bill.

Dr. Karen Jordan of Siler City, North Carolina, who is vice chairperson of the NMPF Animal Health committee, told the House panel today that dairy farmers’ care of their herds is not just a moral imperative, but also pays dividends, since healthy, comfortable cows perform more effectively. Jordan, who milks cows on a farm with her husband and also owns a veterinary practice, said that “dairy farmers recognize that proper animal care practices lead to production of high quality milk.”

“Too often, people not familiar with, or those with an ideological bias against livestock production, assume that farmers can afford to be cavalier about the health of their herds,” Jordan said. “To the contrary, today we understand more than ever how interconnected animal well-being and economic well-being are, for farmers and their cows.”

Jordan said that in 2002, NMPF published a comprehensive technical reference guide called *Caring for Dairy Animals*, which address all the key elements of dairy cattle care based on current scientific research. The guidelines, which also feature a checklist by which a farm can be audited, have been recognized by food marketing organizations that have often asked farms and ranches to adopt quantifiable animal care practices.

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Those guidelines have been widely disseminated within the dairy industry to farmers, veterinarians, animal nutritionists, dairy cooperative staff, and others who interact regularly with farmers, Jordan said.

She said that the dairy industry also supports new research into animal well-being. Jordan pointed out that numerous advances have been made in the past decade into cow comfort, such as improved climate control systems, animal housing, rubber flooring, and clean bedding. Routine herd health programs are also part of all dairy farmers' management practices, and farmers routinely use the services of veterinary and nutrition experts to keep their herds healthy.

Jordan asked the Agriculture Committee members to avoid being swayed by emotionally-driven but factually-suspect pleas for specific animal welfare regulations in the next Farm Bill, stating that in most cases, such laws would be redundant to current practices, or not based on scientific research.

“Every day all dairy farmers, regardless of the size of their operation, invest a great deal of time and resources to ensure their cows are provided the best health care, housing conditions, and proper nutrition,” Jordan said.

A full copy of Dr. Jordan's testimony can be found in the Animal Health section of www.nmpf.org.

The National Milk Producers Federation, based in Arlington, VA, develops and carries out policies that advance the well being of dairy producers and the cooperatives they own. The members of NMPF's 32 cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of nearly 50,000 dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies.

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