



News Release

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Updated FARM Program Animal Care Manual Available to Dairy Producers Animal Care Practices Revised to Reflect Learnings from Previous Three Years



ARLINGTON, VA – The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) has released a newly-revised animal care reference manual, containing the guidelines that comprise the core of the National Dairy FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) Program. The new manual can be found online at www.nationaldairyfarm.com.

The FARM Program was created four years ago to establish a national, voluntary dairy animal care program to bring consistency and uniformity to the practices used on America's dairy farms. The original reference manual was used to guide animal care practices on farms that have enrolled in the program since 2009; this new manual will now be provided to those both currently enrolled, and those who will become part of the program going forward.

"This new manual reflects the continuous improvement process that is a hallmark of the FARM program," said Jim Mulhern, Chief Operating Officer of NMPF. "It contains important revisions from the first manual, and it reflects both evolving management practices on the farm, as well as expectations for animal care from the entire dairy value chain."

A variety of industry stakeholders provided input into the revision process, Mulhern said, and the end result includes findings from the third-party verification process that began in 2011. Among the improvements in the new manual is the overall checklist used to evaluate farms has been streamlined from 77 questions to 48, "simplifying the process for farmers, and more effectively capturing the pertinent information that animal care experts believe is relevant to proper dairy animal care," Mulhern said.

In addition to the streamlined on-farm evaluation process, key areas of change in the areas of medical procedures, animal observations and housing include:

Medical Procedures:

- A guideline on horn disbudding was added: ***Calves are disbudded at eight weeks of age or earlier and with appropriate use of analgesics and/or anesthetics.***

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- Language was added to identify some best practices for disbudding, castration and extra teat removal.
- Information is provided on proper branding techniques, as some states require this for animal ID.
- Language was added encouraging the elimination of routine tail docking by 2022.

Animal Observations:

- The hygiene guideline remains the same based on data collected by the FARM program. The locomotion guideline was changed to only score milking and dry cows. Two other guidelines were added to document practices in place to improve lameness.
- The body condition score guideline was reduced to 1 percent of all animals in all pens from 10 percent because the FARM data showed that almost 98 percent of the farms in the program met this guideline. A second guideline was added to document practices are in place to improve an animal with poor condition.
- The hock and knee lesion guideline was changed to score only the milking and dry cows. All experts agreed and the FARM data showed that this is the most high risk group on the farm for this type of injury.
- A body abrasion section was added to allow for the collection of data on other body abrasions, besides knees and hocks, looking at all the animals on the farm. The FARM program will review the data collected after three years and decide if a guideline for body abrasions needs to be developed. The scoring system will target animals with an obvious swelling, lacerations or severe lesions of the skin.

Housing:

- The housing section was streamlined to remove the separate section on housing types and creating guidelines that can be utilized for all systems by referring to lying areas.

Other areas such as feed and water have also been streamlined in this manner to make the evaluation more effective.

To order hard copies of the FARM Animal Care Reference Manual or the FARM Quick Reference User Guide, fill out the [order form](#) that can be found on the FARM website. The new guidelines will be implemented in the on-farm evaluation process later this summer.

The National Dairy FARM program currently has participant farms producing 70% of the nation's milk supply, through 52 cooperatives and proprietary processors. More than 8,000 on-farm evaluations have been completed.

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 30 cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of more than 32,000 dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. Visit www.nmpf.org for more information.