



2101 Wilson Blvd., Suite 400, Arlington, VA 22201
703-243-6111 • www.nmpf.org

"Connecting Cows, Cooperatives, Capitol Hill, and Consumers"

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Contact: Christopher Galen
(703) 243-6111 ext. 356
Email: CGalen@nmpf.org

New FARM Program Report Quantifies High Level of Animal Care on U.S. Dairy Farms

PHOENIX, AZ – Dairy farmers participating in the industry's program to quantify animal care practices are continuing to improve the manner in which they adhere to the program's standards, according to a [new summary year in review report](#) issued today by the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF).

Available to all dairy farmers in the United States, Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) is a voluntary, national set of guidelines designed to demonstrate farmers' commitment to outstanding animal care and a quality milk supply. Cooperatives, proprietary milk processors, and individual producers are using the program to assure consumers that the dairy foods they purchase are produced with integrity. Since enrollment began in September 2010, the FARM Animal Care Program has been implemented by suppliers accounting for 70% of the nation's milk supply.

At this week's NMPF annual meeting in Phoenix, a newly-released annual assessment derived from 8,000 second-party evaluations, found universal adoption of many of the best practices from the program. For example, 94% farms enrolled in the program train their employees to properly move animals that cannot walk, and 98% train employees to handle calves with a minimum of stress. Other findings included:

- 99% of farms observe animals daily to identify health issues for early treatment;
- 93% have protocols developed with veterinarians for dealing with common; diseases, calving and animals with special needs.
- 92% train workers to recognize the need for animals to be euthanized.

On the other hand, the report found some areas still in need of improvement. For example, the report indicated less than 82% of farms in the program have a valid veterinarian-client relationship, and just 67% of farm operators apply antiseptic to the navels of calves after birth as a preventative health measure.

Participants are given training materials and are evaluated by a veterinarian or another trained professional. Evaluators provide a status report and, if necessary, recommend areas for improvement.

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Each year, a nationwide sample of dairy farms in the program is randomly selected for visits from third-party “verifiers” to assure (to a 95% confidence interval) that the observations recorded during the second-party evaluations are valid. Validus Certification Services, an Iowa-based certified auditing company, is used to conduct the third-party verification process.

“The thousands of data points this program collects on an ongoing basis show that dairy farmers aren’t just talking the talk about animal care – they’re performing dozens of practices on a daily basis to provide for animal well-being and produce high-quality milk,” said Jamie Jonker, NMPF’s vice president of scientific and regulatory affairs. “Still, we’re not yet where we want to be. The journey is continuing.”

The second annual third-party verification of the FARM program was begun in 2012 with on-farm evaluations, and completed in 2013 with statistical analysis of results. This analysis confirmed that effective implementation of the FARM program is occurring through producer education and on-farm evaluation. The third-party verification for 2013 is currently underway, Jonker said.

Also today, NMPF released its 2014 safe use manual for antibiotics and other animal drugs. The [Milk and Dairy Beef Drug Residue Prevention Manual](#) permits producers to quickly review those antibiotics approved for use with dairy animals. It can also be used to educate farm managers in how to avoid drug residues in milk and meat.

New in the 2014 edition is a section on multiple drug screening tests, as well as an updated drug and test kit list. The 2014 manual also includes a certificate that can be signed by both a producer and veterinarian to demonstrate commitment to proper antibiotic use.

“With each year, the use of antibiotics and other drugs in livestock is more intently scrutinized,” said Jonker. “To maintain consumer confidence, we must show we are using these medicines properly. This manual shows dairy farmers’ commitment to using antibiotics responsibly.”

The residue prevention manual was sponsored by Charm Sciences, Elanco Animal Health, IDEXX, and Zoetis. No government funds were used in its development. For more information on the FARM program, contact Betsy Flores at (703) 243-6111 or visit www.nationaldairyfarm.com.

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The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF), 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 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.