



Stanislaus Ag Center May 10, 2010: More than 170 dairy producers and allied industry representatives attend a presentation introducing the national dairy FARM program

The National Dairy (Animal Care) FARM Program

How It Will Affect California Producers & How CDQAP Can Help

In a nutshell:

In an effort to document for consumers and corporate buyers of dairy products the animal care practices typically used on the State's dairy farms, the majority of California producers are being asked by their processors to participate in a national on-farm evaluation of animal care practices. For most California producers these initial evaluations (starting in June 2010) will be performed by a processor field staff or other processor representative. CDQAP has been asked to develop workshops and related outreach materials to assist producers with the efficient and successful completion of the evaluations.

Below are some brief answers to some frequently asked questions about how this national dairy animal care program is being implemented in California.

Questions and Answers about Implementation of the National Dairy FARM Program in California

I take excellent care of my livestock, why am I being asked to participate in the program?

While dairy producers have a longstanding commitment to animal well-being, no uniform system has existed nationally by which animal care practices could be documented for consumers and corporate buyers of dairy products. In order to fill that need, the nation's dairy industry is launching this year the [Farmers Assuring Responsible Management \(FARM\)](#) program. More information on the factors motivating development of a national program can be found in a FARM background and FAQ document

http://www.nationaldairyfarm.com/sites/default/files/FAQ%20Brochure_VIEW.pdf

Who developed the FARM program?

The national dairy FARM program was developed by the [National Milk Producers Federation \(NMPF\)](#) with initial grant funding from [Dairy Management Inc. \(DMI\)](#), part of the national dairy board.

Is the program voluntary or required?

Nationally the program is voluntary, but a number of processors in California believe the program is important enough for their own consumer confidence and sales efforts that they are asking all their shippers to participate. Some multi-state cooperatives are also requesting that all their shippers to participate, regardless of in which state they are located. Your field representative should be able to answer specific questions related to your processor's participation in the FARM program.

Who will perform the on-farm evaluation?

The initial on-farm evaluations are to be performed by specially trained processor staff or other representative designated by the processor.

What is involved in the on-farm evaluation?

The evaluation typically starts with a sit-down interview which uses a standard list of questions (the FARM "checklist"). The interview is followed by a walking tour of the dairy which serves both as a follow-up to the interview as well as an opportunity to perform some performance-based monitoring (scoring) on a random sample of animals. These animals will be scored for locomotion, body condition, hock injuries and animal hygiene.

Which animals and how many of them will be scored?

Animals from all parts of the dairy will be randomly selected including calves, heifers, lactating and dry cows. The number of animals to be scored will vary depending on the size of the dairy, but regardless of your farm's size the final number will range from 50 to about 100 animals.

I use a contract heifer raiser for my replacements. Will those animals be scored?

Only animals on the dairy will be scored. While the program may expand to include heifer raising operations in the future, there is currently no provision for their participation at this time.

When will my evaluation take place and how often will it be repeated?

In general, evaluations are starting in June of 2010 but your processor will work with you on scheduling when your particular farm will be visited. The FARM program currently envisions participating dairies being evaluated every three years.

How long will the evaluation take?

How long evaluation will take on your particular dairy will depend on several factors. These variables include how readily farm policy documentation is available (such as animal care protocols), how long it takes to complete the walking tour and when and how the randomly selected animals will be scored (in pens, in lockups coming or out of the parlor). In beta tests of the FARM checklist performed this year on California dairies, the evaluation took several hours to complete.

How will the results of the evaluation be reported back to me? Who will have access to the results?

Only you, your processor and FARM program managers will have access to the evaluation results. Your processor's representative will make arrangements for you to receive a copy of the evaluation results. Some representatives may choose to have a copy made on the dairy or to have one mailed to you. While individual evaluation results will not be publicly released, the FARM program may use the results to generate general program statistics. For instance, "X percent of dairies in the United States have a euthanasia protocol."

I've heard about a "third-party" evaluation being done on dairies. Is that different than the on-farm evaluation done by my processor this year?

While most California producers will be participating in the processor-based evaluation, the FARM program will be doing follow-up evaluations on a limited number of randomly selected dairies throughout the United States. These follow-up or "verification evaluations" will be performed a trained third party evaluator, a person having no relationship with the dairy. The FARM program recognizes that there will be day-to-day variation in some evaluation results, for instance hygiene scoring data may be different during different seasons. Thus, this limited number of follow-up evaluations should be thought of as quality control for the program's data collection. In order to provide program credibility FARM program managers want to know if *on average over the period of a year*, are the results of evaluations performed by processor representatives generally consistent with those of a third-party evaluator.

I've either received or am interested in CDQAP environmental certification. Do I now need to be evaluated for animal care in order to keep or receive my environmental certification?

The third-party environmental evaluation and certification (performed by CDQAP) and the FARM animal care evaluation (performed by your processor) are completely separate programs. Participation in one has nothing to do with the other.

I still have questions about this process. Who can answer my questions and perhaps help me prepare for the evaluation?

Questions related to your processor's participation in the national FARM program are best directed to your processor field staff or leadership.

Producers who have technical questions about the on-farm evaluation itself or how they can complete the evaluation most efficiently have several resources available to them.

- *CDQAP Workshops and Website Tools*: At the request of the state's dairy industry the CDQAP is delivering free workshops to introduce producers to the program and to help them complete the evaluation efficiently. Totalling 6 hours, the set of two classes focus on key animal care areas such as calf care, feet and leg health, euthanasia plans, emergency plans and more. Producers attending class receive a resource/herd health plan binder which includes useful protocol templates, employee training materials and other animal care resources. On this webpage you will find all of binder documents, which you can download and use or edit to fit your needs. Funded by the non-profit [California Dairy Research Foundation \(CDRF\)](#) the CDQAP workshops (and associated outreach materials) were collaboratively developed using the expertise of some of the top livestock veterinarians and animal care scientists in the UC system.
- *Dairy Service Organizations*: All of the dairy service organizations in California participated in the development of the CDQAP workshops and related materials and are available to assist you.
- *Processor Field Representatives*: As with the dairy service organizations many of processor field representatives participated in the development and testing of the workshop curriculum and outreach materials.
- *Your Herd Veterinarian*: If before or after your processor evaluation you have questions related to streamlining any preventative health practices, your herd veterinarian is an excellent source of information.