



Dairy Cares Report

July 2013

www.DairyCares.com

Dairy farmers continue to make progress on National Dairy FARM Program implementation

The California State Fair just wrapped up its seventeen-day run at Cal Expo in Sacramento on July 28. As usual, the carnival atmosphere included rides, games, a deep-fried version of any food you can imagine, exhibition of livestock by 4-H and FFA members, live music and much more in the way of family entertainment.

This year's State Fair also saw a surprising first-time exhibitor: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals or PETA. With an "informational" booth situated in a long line of exhibitors selling such things as sunglasses, hats and T-shirts, PETA took direct aim at the dairy community with their messages and handouts. From a "Wheel of Torture" to someone in a cow costume holding a sign that read, "Cheese comes from unhappy cows," PETA's hyperbolic, offensive and outrageous efforts to grab media attention were in full force.

PETA's antics are not surprising. They exist to shock, presenting a misleading, dubiously edited and guilt-laden narrative about animal agriculture. Their goal? Limit consumers' choices when it comes to deciding how to best nourish their families.

Luckily for fairgoers (and truth's sake), a walk through the State Fair livestock pavilion provided an unfiltered, unedited counterbalance to PETA's presence. Here, visitors saw families caring for their livestock, making sure they were properly fed, watered and comfortable. A stroll through the dairy barn revealed cows and heifers contently chewing their cud, a scene not just unique to the fair, but common on every dairy across California.

What PETA and other animal rights groups continually and purposely fail to do is provide balance and accuracy. What you won't hear about from these groups is dairy farmers' serious, longstanding commitment to the proper care, treatment and well-being of their animals, and a recognition of the growing interest consumers have about these issues. And you won't hear about the real action dairy families take to back up this commitment.

Action and progress on animal well-being verification

Four years ago, California dairy families were among the first in the nation to adopt the National

Dairy FARM Program: *Farmers Assuring Responsible Management*. The comprehensive verification program is designed to substantiate the daily steps dairy farmers take to care for their animals.



Since adoption of the program, about 70 percent of the state's total dairy farms have been evaluated according to FARM's animal care guidelines. On-farm evaluations continue with the goal of evaluating all Dairy Cares coalition members.

Earlier this month, the National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) released a newly-revised animal care reference manual, which contains the guidelines that comprise the core of the FARM program. The original reference manual was used to guide animal care practices on farms that enrolled in the program since 2009; this new manual will now be part of the program going forward. Key changes in the updated manual include animal care best practices related to medical procedures, animal observations and housing conditions. The new manual is available online at www.NationalDairyFARM.com.

As FARM Program implementation continues (and despite the carnival sideshow that is PETA), California dairy families remain committed to their core values of responsible animal care, while continuing to produce affordable, safe and nutritious dairy products for millions of families to enjoy.

Dairy Cares is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability and responsible animal care. Our members include the Bank of the West, Bar 20 Dairy Farms, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, California Farm Bureau Federation, Conestoga-Rovers and Associates, Dairy Farmers of America-Western Area Council, Dairy Institute of California, Hilmar Cheese Co., HP Hood, Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O'Lakes, Milk Producers Council, Ruan Transport Corp., Western United Dairymen, California Cattlemen's Association and others. For information, visit our web site or call 916-441-3318.