



20
YEARS OF
IMPACT

CALIFORNIA DAIRY

Quality Assurance
PROGRAM

CDQAP Quality Assurance Update - February 2020

New FARM Standards: Dehorning & Pain Management

The first of several articles on new standards for the National Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) Program

By Dr. Michael Payne, UC Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine and Director, CDQAP

Minimizing pain in livestock is one of the [FARM program's](#) most important goals. That's why new program standards, implemented this year, include that a written dehorning protocol collaboratively be developed with the herd veterinarian.

Removal of the horn buds before they have attached to the calf's skull minimizes both pain and likelihood of complications. The FARM program requires dehorning be completed before the calf is eight weeks old, and in fact, the American Association of Bovine Practitioners [recommends](#), "disbudding" as early as possible, even during the first two weeks of life. To assist producers, FARM offers a [template protocol](#) for pre-weaned calves, which includes a section on disbudding. Disbudding by either caustic paste or an electric/gas hot iron is acceptable. For producers choosing to use a cautery iron, CDQAP has developed an [example protocol](#). For producers choosing paste, Oregon State University offers an instructional [poster with pictures](#). However, OSU cautions that paste is best applied during the first two days of life to minimize procedure failure.



Another new FARM program standard is pain management for cautery or paste disbudding. Producers will have three years to fully implement a program, which might include sedation with xylazine, lidocaine nerve blocks, or anti-inflammatory medications such as topical flunixin pour-on or oral aspirin or meloxicam. While the producer and the herd vet will decide which technique is most appropriate for their operation, these procedures do not need to be performed by a veterinarian. Dairy employees can typically implement pain management at very low cost, between 10¢ and 20¢ per calf. The University of Wisconsin has produced a [video](#) describing some of the options available to producers. Because each of these strategies require the use of extra-label medications, any pain management program will have to be developed collaboratively with the herd veterinarian.

Lastly, organic producers should be reassured that USDA's National Organic Program [does allow the use](#) of lidocaine and some sedative and anti-inflammatory drugs. Dr. Meggan Hain from Organic Valley says that the cooperative has actually required pain medication for disbudding for the last three years. Dr. Hain does, however, recommend that a farm clear it proposed practices with their certifier first. For a complete review of dehorning, including information on economics, use of polled semen, and potential applications of gene editing, see CDQAP's webpage [Dehorning and Economics](#).

Got Thirsty Forage?

By Deanne Meyer, Ph.D., Livestock Waste Management Specialist Dept. of Animal Science, UC Davis and UC ANR

It's already February and the dreaded "drought" word is back in our conversations. For many, winter forage is four to 24 inches high. The lack of rain makes irrigating a necessity. No rain may cause your pond water to be more concentrated. After all, you've probably collected the same amount of manure in your pond as you did last year. There's just much less rainfall to blend in with it.

Be sure to work with your nutrient management consultant for your winter irrigations. You may need to blend pond water with well water before it is used for irrigation. This is important to target crop nutrient needs. It's also important to keep nitrogen application in check with your Nutrient Management Plan.

Remember to sample liquid manure quarterly for each quarter when it is applied to land to meet compliance needs. Record all field applications and keep records up to date. Regional Water Quality Control Board inspectors will ask to see these records when they inspect. Notices of Violation are being issued for fields where manure is applied beyond reasonable rates for the crop planted.

A few well timed rains between now and harvest will be appreciated!

[Make Plans to Attend:](#)

Golden State Dairy Management Conference- March 4, Modesto

The program features a general session on alternative meat (facts vs. fiction) and research updates on crop production, animal health, and animal nutrition. [Register today.](#)

California Dairy Sustainability Summit- March 25-26, Sacramento

Through engaging and interactive sessions, the Summit will help producers embrace opportunities and overcome the challenges ahead. [Register today.](#)