

DAIRY PIPELINE

**Dairy Promotions: Everyone's Business.** "Just let me produce." This mentality has long been the standard in American Agriculture, and with good reason. No agricultural producers in the world match the resourcefulness and efficiency of our nation's producers. Unfortunately, that mindset, combined with a disdain for marketing and selling our wares, has helped to create the monster that may consume us. We must all focus on the importance of selling not only our dairy products but also the overall image of the dairy industry to the consumer.

How many businesses do you shop at regularly that neglect you as a customer? We must think of every consumer as our customer or as a potential customer. A good place to start building our customer base is at the local school building. By federal mandate, no school lunch or breakfast can be reimbursed to the school system unless that meal is accompanied by an 8 ounce serving of milk. Also, initiatives across the nation direct schools to remove unhealthy snacks from school vending machines and replace them with healthy alternatives. Milk **must** be one of those alternatives.

According to Janet Grubb, Virginia's SUDIA Representative and a registered dietitian, a limited number of grants are available to help offset the costs of placing a milk vending machine in your local school. To be successful in placing a machine, you should identify three key persons or groups in your school.

First, it is recommended that you approach the principal with your idea and get their support for your project. Next, contact the Food Service Director for your school. They will be instrumental in helping you utilized resources already in place to make the machine more useable. Finally, you should visit with the milk provider for the school and get their support and help with supplying milk for the machine.

A consideration should be the rotation of stock in the machine so that there is always fresh milk in the machine. You may want to enlist the assistance of an FFA chapter, band or sports group to help check the machine and keep it up to date.

We must sell ourselves because we have counted too long on our products selling themselves. I urge you to

explore the possibility of a vending milk vending machine. Please contact Janet at (800) 845-6112 or contact me directly at (276) 223-2542.

-- Andy Overbay

Dairy Science Extension Agent,  
Southwest Virginia

(276) 223-6040 email: [aoverbay@vt.edu](mailto:aoverbay@vt.edu)

**Genetic change may be headed in a new direction.**

One of the most enduring "best management practices" that we advocate to dairy producers is to breed your cows to top AI bulls. AI bulls get better every year; their daughters give more milk and have better type. Plus, you don't have to feed them or live with their destructive and dangerous attitudes. The technology called AI has been around since the late 1930's, and yet many dairy cows and heifers are bred to natural service bulls. AI may be harder to sell today than it was 15-20 years ago because higher milk yields have suppressed estrus behavior, making cows hard to catch in heat. Saying that AI sired cows give more milk doesn't persuade many dairy farmers to use AI any more. They have to use better bulls just to keep pace with their industry, and see little benefit to their businesses for the effort. I sense a change in the wind, however, and would encourage producers to give this idea some thought. We have the tools for farmers to select for more fertile cows, cows that give birth more easily, and for cows that live longer. PTA's for these traits are recent developments and give producers a reason to use AI that didn't exist ten years ago. The benefits of more fertile cows and cows that live longer tend to stay on the farm, as they reduce costs of production, and increase profit margins. Higher milk yield on the other hand, is an income enhancer that may or may not increase margins. Consumers, or dairy food processors, like that extra yield because it creates a buyer's market. Consumers have been the real beneficiaries of better genetics for milk production in this country. The beneficiary of genetic change in fertility and survival of dairy cows is more likely to be the farmer, as production costs go down, allowing the producer to keep more of the milk check. Cows can be bred to be more fertile, and to live longer, and to be more productive, too, by using the Net Merit index

published by USDA. Net Merit is a truly balanced breeding program that improves the profitability of the cow to the dairy producer, rather than just keeping milk cheap in the grocery store. I don't want to give the impression that consumers don't matter. The dairy business needs happy customers. I'd just like for dairy farmers to be able to keep more of the benefits from their genetic improvement program. It would make AI easier to sell as a best management practice!

-- Bennet Cassell

Extension, Dairy Scientist  
Genetics and Management

(540) 231-4762 email: [bcassell@vt.edu](mailto:bcassell@vt.edu)

**\*\* Upcoming Activities\*\***

Dairy Science Recruiting Day Oct. 18

*Virginia Tech*

Area Dairy Conferences

**Marion** Dec. 9

*contact Andy Overbay*

(276)223-6040 or email: [aoverbay@vt.edu](mailto:aoverbay@vt.edu)

**Rocky Mount** Dec. 10

*contact Sue Puffenbarger*

(540) 483-5161 or email: [smp@vt.edu](mailto:smp@vt.edu)

**Harrisonburg** Dec. 11

*contact Alan Grove or Tina Horn*

(540) 564-3080 or (540) 245-5750

email: [agrove@vt.edu](mailto:agrove@vt.edu) or [tihorn@vt.edu](mailto:tihorn@vt.edu)

Raymond L. Nebel

Dairy Extension Coordinator

and Extension Dairy Scientist, Reproduction