Meet the New Dairy Farm Advisor of Tulare County

Hi, my name is Debora Costa Bacon and I’m the new dairy farm advisor of Tulare County. I am from Brazil and I grew up in Sao Paulo, the largest city of South America, with more than 10 million people (metropolitan area population exceeds 18 million!).

I got my veterinarian degree at Universidade Estadual Paulista – Botucatu, SP, Brazil in 2000 and my masters of dairy science at University of Wisconsin – Madison in 2003.

My decision to work with dairy cows happened when I was an undergraduate, and curiously, through extension work. I was an active member of a group of students interested in dairy science (CONAPEC Jr.) that used to meet weekly, under the supervision of a professor, to discuss several topics related to dairy production. We used to volunteer part of our weekends to visit some local dairy farms to find out what type of problems they were experiencing and how we could help producers troubleshoot these issues. It was a great experience and thanks to that I’m here today.

During my masters I had the opportunity to enhance my knowledge in dairy management, especially milk quality and mastitis. I arrived in California in January 2004 and my first job here was at the VMTRC (UC Veterinary Teaching and Research Center). In the fall of 2005 I started working at the UC Cooperative Extension in Kings County assisting the local dairy advisor, Carol Collar, in some extension activities.

As a dairy advisor, one of my responsibilities is to disseminate information to dairy producers through periodical newsletters, workshops and shortcourses. Another role I have is to conduct and participate in research projects that may provide useful information for local producers and University scientists.

I would like to encourage you to give me a call, send me an e-mail or stop by my office if you need assistance with any dairy matter. I’m very interested in talking to you and in coming out to visit some dairies. It’s important for me to know what your concerns with the dairy industry are. Also, let me know if you have any issues that could be addressed with research.

I’m really looking forward to work with dairy farmers, people from allied dairy industry, University specialists and fellow farm advisors to develop an outstanding dairy program for Tulare County.

I count on your help!
The UCCE Dairy Herdsman Shortcourse will be held at the VMTRC (UC Veterinary Medicine Teaching and Research Center) in Tulare. The purpose of the program is to provide an opportunity for current dairy employees to receive training in several aspects of dairy management. A brochure with registration information and more details is included with this newsletter. The registration fee includes the 3-day training, a notebook with handouts, lunches, and a shirt. If you prefer, you can sign up for the herdsman shortcourse and pay the fees electronically at: http://cefresno.ucdavis.edu/Dairy/

Join the nearly 300 people from throughout the state who have benefited from attending previous short courses. Pre-registration is required and space is limited to 40 participants, so if you would like to improve the skills of your dairy employees, register today!!

Tenth National Dairy Calf & Heifer Conference
March 21-24, 2006 in Visalia
Organized by the Professional Dairy Heifer Growers Association (PDHGA)
The Visalia Convention Center, Presidian Hotel (formerly Radisson)
300 S Court St, Visalia, CA

Pre-Conference – March 21, 2006
Conference – March 22-23, 2006
Farm Tours – March 24, 2006

This is a great opportunity to participate in an excellent educational program that will benefit growers, dairy producers, employees and allied industry. The program of this conference is attached. If you are interested, registration forms are available at our office, or call (559) 685-3303 and we can fax it to you. The registration form is also available by visiting the PDGA web-site at http://www.pdhga.org/2006conferenceinfo.htm.
STABLE FLIES AND MARCH RAINS
by Alec C. Gerry, Ph.D.
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April showers may bring May flowers, but March showers bring stable flies!

Recent research conducted by Brad Mullens, Veterinary Entomologist, UC Riverside and Nyles Peterson, Director and Dairy Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension, San Bernardino found that high springtime stable fly numbers on California dairies could be predicted by rainfall during the month of March. It was found that if significant rainfall (0.5 inch or more) occurred during the month of March, stable fly numbers would be higher from mid-May through mid-June (peak stable fly abundance period). For each 0.4 inches of March rain, biting stable fly numbers were raised by an average of about one fly per leg. Earlier winter rainfall did not have a statistical relationship with larger stable fly numbers in May and June.

What does this mean for California dairymen? High stable fly attack rates on cattle are known to reduce animal weight gain and may also have a negative affect on milk yield. Cattle react vigorously to the presence of excessive stable flies, and their protective behaviors (bunching, stamping, head throws) may impact feeding and resting, resulting in a shift of energy away from meat and milk production. The ability to predict a bad stable fly year will provide dairy operators with an opportunity to increase control measures for stable flies a month or more before stable fly numbers actually peak.

Significant March rains presumably increase stable fly numbers by wetting outside decaying manure and vegetation habitats that stable flies need for immature development. These development sites are typically widespread on a dairy and may require some effort for control. Common development sites include the old manure that accumulates within a dry pen (especially the manure beneath fence lines and watering stations), spilled feed, silage, and composting manure or green waste. The old, undisturbed manure under fence lines etc. is thought to be especially important as a stable fly habitat when wetted by late rains. In general, very dry winters overall are probably good news in terms of fewer stable flies, but the later rains are critical.

In the event of significant March (or probably late February) rains, efforts to reduce stable fly numbers should begin as soon as rains are no longer predicted (no later than mid-April). Efforts to control stable fly should include: 1) Check and repair all leaking watering stations and mister systems; 2) remove old manure that has accumulated beneath fence lines, watering stations, feeding areas, and other structures in or adjacent to cattle pens; 3) scrape pens to remove old manure; 4) old manure removed from pens and other structures may be composted (when seasonal rains have ended) or placed into a mound in the center of the pen to which the animals have access – disturbance by the animals will help to prevent fly development; 5) remove all vegetation from the perimeter of cattle pens, flush systems, and feed lanes; 6) thoroughly clean all feed lanes and flush lanes of feed, manure, and soil; 7) replace all animal bedding used in calf pens and free stalls (use only wood shavings in free stalls during spring and summer months to reduce fly production) - removed animal bedding should be composted or moved off site into a landfill; 8) check silage and haylage for runoff and weeping – remove wet silage from base of pile every other week and use for feed or compost; 9) check open Ag-bags for the presence of fly larvae – remove silage or haylage from open end of bag each week to prevent fly development in this material.

The sanitation efforts listed above are the best means to reduce stable fly numbers on an individual dairy. Once stable flies have completed immature development and have emerged as adult flies, control options are quite limited. Traps such as the Olsen biting fly trap: (http://www.olsonproducts.com/index2.html) may help reduce localized adult stable fly numbers, but the very large numbers on commercial dairies in late spring probably exceed the ability of such traps to control them on a farm-wide scale, especially in a wet year. Application of insecticides (principally pyrethroids such as permethrin) applied directly to an animal may provide some relief, but studies have not shown these insecticides to be particularly effective at reducing fly numbers on treated animals.

10th National Dairy Calf & Heifer Conference Program

Tuesday, March 21
2:00 p.m.  Registration in Foyer of Convention Center and Exhibit Set-Up


  Dr. Sandy Stokes Goff, Validus
  Dr. Jim Reynolds, University of California-Davis VMTRC
  Dr. Dale Moore, University of California-Davis VMTRC
  Lewis Anderson, Calf Source, LLC, TBA, University of California Western Institute for Food Safety

5:00  PDHGA Sustaining Member Reception (PDHGA Sustaining Members Only)

8:00  Hospitality Rooms at Radisson and Comfort Suites

Wednesday, March 22
6:45 a.m.  Registration in Foyer of the Convention Center. Exhibits Open.

7:00  Breakfast

8:00  Welcome


9:00  Can You Manage Your Employees Like Other Industries Do? - Dr. Tom Fuhrmann, DairyWorks

9:45  Break in the Exhibit Hall

10:30  Managing and Motivating Hispanic Employees – Connecting with Their Culture - Sheri Long, Amigos at Work and Jorge Estrada, Estrada, Simmonds and Associates

NOON  Sponsored Luncheon and Speaker: How to be Media Savvy

  Charlie Powell, Washington State University, College of Vet Med

1:30 p.m. Practical Management Tips for You and Your Employees - Dr. Tom Fuhrmann, DairyWorks

2:30  Current Status of Immigration Reform - Luawanna Hallstrom, Harry Singh and Sons

3:15  Break

3:45  Concurrent Breakout Sessions – 30 minute presentations

Business Management

Do it Right with a Heifer Raising Contract - Fred Silva, Damrell, Nelson, Schrimp, Pallios and Silva

Management Protocols for Hispanic Workers - Jorge Estrada, Estrada, Simmonds and Associates

Value of an Advanced Gender Selection System for Accelerated Herd Improvement - Roger Cady, Monsanto

New Technologies

Applying Reproductive and Genetic Technologies - John Metzger, Trans Ova Genetics

New Uses for Immune Proteins in Calf and Heifer Health - Dr. Jim Quigley, Diamond V Mills

Diagnosing Diseases of the Calf - Dr. Rob Moeller, University of California-Davis

6:00 p.m.  Welcome Reception

8:00  Exhibits close. Hospitality Rooms at Radisson and Comfort Suites
Thursday, March 23
6:45 a.m. Registration in Foyer of Convention Center. Exhibits Open.
7:00 Breakfast and Regional Caucuses
7:55 Welcome
8:00 Intensive Feeding, Calf Growth and Mammary Development - Dr. Mike Van Amburgh, Cornell University
8:45 Nutrition and Management of the Transition Calf - Dr. Jon Robison, California State University-Fresno
10:00 Break
10:30 Nutrition and Management Systems for Reducing Variance in Heifer Performance - Pat Hoffman, University of Wisconsin-Marshfield
11:15 Heifer Reproductive Management - Dr. Jose Santos, University of California-Davis
NOON PDHGA Luncheon, Business Meeting and Awards
1:30 p.m. Wet Calf Diagnostics Lab Sessions – repeated twice
   Calf Health Procedures and Management - Dr. Jim Reynolds, University of California-Davis
   Calf Necropsy Lab - Dr. Rob Moeller, University of California-Davis
3:00 Break
3:30 Concurrent Breakout Sessions – 30-minute presentations

Animal Health
Animal Health Protocols - Dr. Jim Reynolds, University of California-Davis
Mycoplasma Control - Dr. Ricardo Rosenbusch, Iowa State University
Observations on Large Calf Operations - Dr. Jon Robison, California State University-Fresno

Calf Management
Colostrum Management and Pasteurization - Dr. Sandra Godden, University of Minnesota
Colostrum Substitutes and Gut Modifiers - Dr. Jim Quigley, Diamond V Mills
On-Farm Pasteurizer Management for Waste Milk Quality Control - Dr. Bob James, Virginia Tech

5:30 p.m. California Fiesta
6:45 Panel Discussion for Hispanic Employees and Hispanic Farm Managers
6:45 Exhibits Close
8:00 Hospitality Rooms at Radisson and Comfort Suites

Friday, March 24
7:00 a.m. Breakfast and Overview of Tour - Carol Collar, University of California-Davis, Bob Vander Schaaf, Balchem Corporation
8:00 Depart for Morning Tours - 6 buses split into 2 routes of 3 buses
   Route 1: Local dairies (TBA); Three Sisters’ Farmstead Cheese and Hilarides Dairy
   Route 2: Atsma Cameron Dairy (Hanford); Calf/Heifer Ranches
Lunch and Dressage Show at DG Bar Ranch and a tour of the DeGroot Dairy
   Internationally acclaimed breeder of Dutch Warmblood horses
   Also featuring a new, state-of-the-art dairy opening in late 2005.
   Afternoon Tours – Second of two routes.
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