



CDQAP Quality Assurance Update - September 2022

National Dairy FARM Program Update

The dairy industry's national animal care program is evolving to meet current and future needs.

By Dr. Michael Payne, UC Davis, School of Vet. Medicine; Director, CDQAP

Since its beginning in 2009, the national [Dairy FARM Animal Care Program](#) has served to coordinate efforts, education and messages used across the industry. Virtually all of California's producers participate in the program through their cooperative or processor. Beside fostering improvement in animal care, this partnership provides important assistance for processor marketing programs, providing documentation of care practices to corporate customers.



Recent Metrics – As of July of this year, 13,231 U.S. dairy facilities have had a second-party animal care evaluation conducted under [Version 4.0](#) animal care standards. These evaluations provide a wealth of information useful for producers, their processors and their customers. For instance, using [animal-based measures](#), 97% of farms are meeting industry lameness standards, 98% are demonstrating good body condition scores, and 99% of herds are meeting the knee injury score. Relative to calf care, 92% are disbudding calves prior to 8 weeks of age and 96% meet calve hygiene standards. Constant improvement is an important theme of the program, with 88% of herds providing continuing education annually to dairy employees. There is a rich selection of print and video training materials available for employees in both English and Spanish at the program's [Animal Care Training Resources webpage](#).

Open Comment Period for New Standards – Every three years, to reflect evolving practices and science, the FARM Animal Care Program is updated. Version 4 updates implemented in 2020, for instance, included recommendations on calf disbudding and annual employee training. [Version 5 standards](#) have been drafted and the program has launched its [open comment period](#).

All dairy industry stakeholders (farmers, allied industry, customers, etc.) are invited to provide comments, feedback and concerns related to the proposed revised standards until Oct. 28. [A table](#) comparing the proposed Version 5 standards with the current FARM standards has been created. [A survey site](#) has been created where industry

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Milking with Robots in Large Herds



Insights from producers who have implemented them

By Dr. Daniela Bruno, Dairy Advisor Fresno, Madera and Kings Counties, UC Cooperative Extension

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Winterizing Reminders

Its that time of year again! Summer is winding down and we are heading into California's "rainy season." Hopefully we will get some good rain this season as we certainly need it. When the rains come, it is important to be ready. Use this short winterizing checklist to ensure that manure collection and storage areas have been addressed.



Winterizing Checklist:

- Repair roofs, clean gutters, and downspouts.
- Pile, remove, and haul or cover solid manure from corrals.
- Fill potholes in corrals or areas where solid manure is stored.
- Assess past years' pond capacity. Dredge or bale ponds if needed. Use an impermeable surface (if available) to temporarily stack manure solids. Keep material away from sensitive areas (streams, creeks, wellheads). Place on well packed soil or concrete if available. Minimize repeated year-after-year stacking of pond dredgings in the same area.
- Review the dairy's Nutrient Budget to be sure it reflects what is actually occurring at field scale and needed manure storage windows are accounted for.
- Evaluate pond banks for slope failures, rodent holes, and structural integrity. Manage pond banks as needed (repair or implement a rodent control plan).
- Manage weeds (weed whack or mow) around ponds. Weed control is important for structural integrity. Decaying roots can create spaces that provide a path for manure water breaching.
- Conduct maintenance on pumps in settling basins, lagoons, and storage ponds.
- Check any spare pumps or parts that may be used in winter. Locate flexible hosing and appropriate clamps for connections.
- Input remaining nutrient management data from summer crop (irrigations and harvest data) while data is fresh.
- Remember to take monthly pond photos (in the valley) or annual pond photos (North Coast).

Milking with Robots in Large Herds

Insights from producers who have implemented them

By Dr. Daniela Bruno, Dairy Advisor Fresno, Madera and Kings Counties, UC Cooperative Extension

The interest in milking robots keeps increasing, especially in California. Although California did not see the first 14 robots until 2017, today it is estimated that there are about 180 units across California, which is more than 1,000% increase. Reasons for this increased interest include labor considerations, herd performance and animal welfare.

A survey of 55 large dairies (dairies with seven or more units) across the country that have implemented milking robots found that facilities included initial robot installation at varied percentages and although some experienced some minimal hiccups in the transition, almost all plan on have 100% of the herd under milking robots.

The majority of these producers thought there was some reduction in labor, and roughly 59% said that employees had no problem adapting to the new system. Reproductive performance with increased pregnancy rate was also noticed by most dairies. Finally, over 60% of the producers mentioned they saw an increase in cow comfort with 90% emphasizing cows are calmer.

Overall milking robots seem to have met dairy producers' expectations on improving animal production and welfare and labor reduction. However, current milking robot dairy owners emphasize that success depends on farm-specific factors, farmer expectations/mindset, and dealer proximity/relationship. Adopting this technology is certainly not an easy decision, and farmers should take their time to explore the options, talk to fellow farmers, and have a good plan before making the investment.

National Dairy FARM Program Update *continued*

representatives can make comments on some or all of the proposed changes.

Calf Care Collaboration – In order to streamline efforts related to calf care, the FARM program partnered with an [alliance of beef, dairy, heifer raising and veal organizations](#). The Calf Care & Quality Assurance (CCQA) program promotes science-based, common-sense practices resulting in better consumer confidence, health outcomes, and profitability. One of the primary advantages of the coalition is to harmonize standards and recommendations across the various commodities that raise calves. Dairy producers participating in the FARM program are using standards already consistent with those of CCQA. The program recently released its [calf care manual](#) and record keeping [templates](#), as well as a [self-assessment tool](#). A series of on-line interactive [training modules](#) can be completed to achieve program certification.

While the program's target audience is primarily heifer and bull calf raisers, there are potential uses of the program for dairy producers. Some dairy operations have expanded, creating their own calf raising facilities. In addition, the written and on-line CCQA training materials could be utilized by dairy employees thus fulfilling the dairy's FARM requirements for the continuing education for dairy calf feeders.

Program Receives National Certification – The Professional Animal Auditor Certification Organization (PAACO) has again [certified](#) the National Dairy FARM program as an approved animal welfare evaluation. PAACO was developed in 2004 in response to the growing use of animal welfare audits by the retail and food service sectors. This created the need for training, certification, and continuing education. Since its creation, PAACO's has been a trusted authority on animal welfare auditing, providing consistency and science-based training of auditors as well as rigorous, science-based audit standards.

Attend the Robotic Milking System Field Day

The University of California Cooperative Extension and the University of California Davis are hosting a field day for dairy farmers to learn about robotic milking.

Participants will learn from two large dairies that have implemented RMS systems:

Diamond H Dairy
October 12th

Fred Rau Dairy
October 11

Time: 10 am – 1 pm (Lunch provided)

There is NO registration cost, but space is limited.
[Learn more and register.](#)

