FACT ACTS

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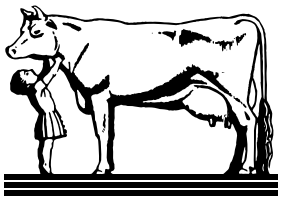
FACT Improves the Lives of Dairy Cows

An Update on the Humane and Sustainable Dairy Project

WHAT'S INSIDE



FACT Mission

FACT seeks to improve the welfare of farm animals; increase the safety of meat, milk, and eggs; broaden opportunities for family farmers; and reduce environmental pollution.

FACT is committed to making farms healthier and more humane places to raise animals. In 2006, with generous funding from the Eugene V. & Clare E. Thaw Charitable Trust, FACT launched the Humane and Sustainable Dairy Project, a long-term on-farm research program designed to test achievable steps dairy producers can take to improve the welfare of their cows.

The consolidation of the dairy industry and its emphasis on increased milk output are factors that increase cow suffering and mortality. That's why FACT's Humane and Sustainable Dairy Project is so important. We believe this project is critical to improving the lives of the over 9 million dairy cows raised on U.S. dairies.

The project's initial focus is on improving the welfare of cows in the Southwest, the region where the dairy industry is growing the fastest. During the past year the project established a working relationship with two dairies, set-up a research relationship with Texas A & M University, and determined what kind of tests would be conducted. Now the research is underway. To date, we've encountered some encouraging results!

The Need to Reduce Heat Stress

Heat stress was identified as a major calf and cow welfare issue on Southwest dairies by FACT's 2005 review of the scientific literature. This finding was confirmed by our visits with dairies producers and their consultants.

Dairy cows respond to heat stress by reducing their feed and water intake. Heat stress increases their evaporated water loss, respiration rate and body temperature and overall makes cows more prone to disease and metabolic collapse.

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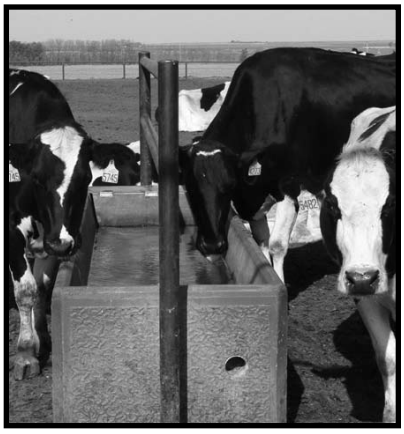

A Look Inside

Dairy industry changes impact cow welfare. Read about how fewer cows are being pushed to produce more milk.

FACT introduces its new CALF (Consumers Against Litter in Feed) campaign and seeks stronger Mad Cow protections.

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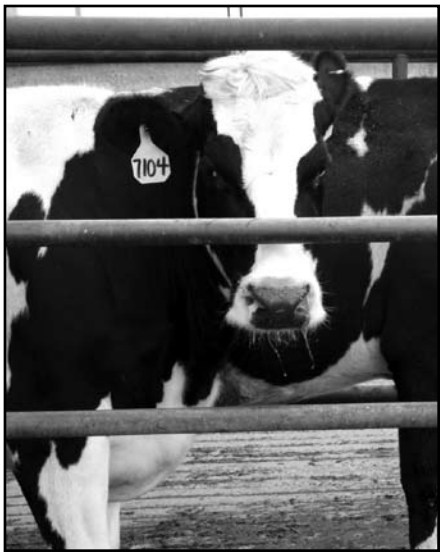
Dairy Cows cont...



Reproduction is also reduced by heat stress, increasing the likelihood that the cow will be culled from the herd, shortening her life. Heat stress also affects the quality of colostrum or "first milk" from mother cows. This can impact the health of the calves and reduce their probability of surviving.

FACT's literature review determined there is a need for this research. Most heat stress studies are concerned with increasing milk production, not cow welfare. Furthermore, most of the studies are conducted on dairies in wetter and cooler climates of the county, not in the hot and arid Southwest. The average number of hours per year that dairy cows in the U.S. are exposed to heat is 1,218. On dairies in the Southwest, this rate is 1,756 hours/year, a dramatic 45 percent difference!

The Research – Achievable Steps to Reduce Heat Stress in Cows

The project is currently studying ways to reduce the heat stress experienced by young calves before they are taken off milk, heifers before their first pregnancy, and adult cows. We are conducting the research on two cooperating dairies in the Texas Panhandle within geographic proximity of each other. It is highly unusual for a welfare group like FACT to be allowed onto conventional dairies. Being able to do this on-farm research is testimony to FACT's credibility and to the dairy operators' concern about the welfare of their cows. FACT has also established a working relationship with Dr. Ted Friend, Professor of Animal Behavior, and Dr. Michael Tomaszewski, Professor of Dairy Science at Texas A&M University, who along with their graduate students are conducting the research.

Two different studies are now underway during the summer months. First we are measuring the impact of shade on reducing heat stress for calves and heifers by providing shade in their living areas. Providing shade may seem like a "no brainer" in hot climates, but the margin of profit is so slim for dairies that the benefits of even obvious changes needs to be demonstrated. Initial results show that shade does indeed reduce calf temperatures. The calf manager on one dairy was pleased with the immediate changes she observed in the calves. "They just looked so much more comfortable," she stated. This summer researchers are also recording ammonia levels in calf living areas. Ammonia can weaken lung tissue leading to pneumonia, a common occurrence on Southwest dairies.

The second study is examining how best to cool adult cows. Last year the project studied where cows are prone to heat up on Southwest dairies and found this is likely to happen in holding pens where cows wait to enter the milking parlor. This spring researchers constructed sprinklers over this pen to see if misting the cows will cool them. Sprinklers have also been placed where the cows are fed. A secondary study on these farms focuses on the impact of these improvements on the occurrence of foodborne pathogens. This work is funded by the Gustavus and Louise Pfeiffer Research Foundation and is studying whether or not improvements in cow welfare are not only good for the cows but also good for the safety of the milk they produce.

FACT sees this research as laying the groundwork for future studies on "green" dairies where calves and cows are raised in natural settings. There we plan to study what impact grass-based systems have on both cow welfare and farm income. With your support, these important next steps will be possible.

Dairy Industry Changes Impact Cow Welfare

More cows are being raised on fewer dairies

In 1991 there were 180,640 dairy farms in the US. By 2001 that number had dropped to 97,560, a decrease of 46 percent. Almost one out of every two dairies had shut their doors. At the same time the number of dairies with more than 200 cows increased significantly.

The growth of large dairies is apparent in the West and Southwest where the number of dairy cows has increased dramatically. For example in New Mexico there were 1300 dairy operations in 1991. By 2001, that number had dropped to only 500, though the number of cows per farm increased by 268 percent to an average herd size of 750 cows! In 2002, Idaho had 212 percent more dairy cows than it did in 1992. Arizona, California, Colorado, and Utah, have also seen big increases in the number of cows producing milk. Smaller, family-run dairy farms are disappearing from the rural landscape and larger, more industrial-style dairy operations are proliferating.

Fewer cows are being pushed to produce more milk

With this dramatic growth of dairies, what is happening to dairy cows? Between 1991 and 2001 the number of cows in the U.S. decreased only slightly, from 9.8 million to 9.1 million, a 7 percent decline. But those 9 million cows produced more milk than ever before. Through aggressive breeding, high energy diets, and artificial enhancers, an average U.S. dairy cow now produces around 8 gallons of milk each day, a 20 percent increase over ten years. While this level of production may lead to lower prices for milk at the supermarket it also puts a huge strain on dairy cows. The metabolic stress of high milk production is compounded on many large dairies by housing facilities that fail to meet basic needs such as adequate lying areas, access to pasture, or shade protection from the hot sun, a particular concern on Southwest dairies.

Cow suffering and death is the consequence

ln order to meet the high energy demands of massive milk production, dairy cows are fed diets high in energy, instead of the high fiber diets which their multiple stomachs are designed to digest. This unnatural diet leads to a wide variety of problems such as metabolic disorders, lameness, and reduced fertility. Lameness affects close to 25 percent of all U.S. dairy cattle. Diet-related lameness problems can be made worse by poor floor and stall design and failure to provide access to pasture.

The pressures of high milk production make cows vulnerable to any type of external stress. One of the major stressors is the change from gestation (pregnancy) to calving (giving birth) and milk production. This is a crucial time for dairy cows and metabolic problems occurring around the time of calving can critically damage a cow, leaving her vulnerable to other health problems when she is producing milk. Today one out of four dairy cows is not healthy enough to survive until their second calving. Less than half of all dairy cattle survive until their third calving.

Heat Stress is a contributing factor

Because dairy cows are already pushed to their physical limits by the demands of milk production, any additional stressor, such as hot weather, can be catastrophic. This occurred in California in 2006 when tens of thousands of dairy cows and calves died during a heat wave. The dairy industry is growing the fastest in the hottest regions of the nation.

Mad Cow Update

U.S. fails to protect cattle

In May 2003, the first case of Mad Cow disease in a North American cow was detected in Canada. Since then twelve additional North American cases have been found. This includes two cases in U.S. born cattle and six Canadian cattle that contracted the disease after feed bans were put in place to prohibit the feeding of most animal protein to ruminant animals.

These cases indicate that Mad Cow disease is circulating among North American cattle and that current feed bans have not sufficiently controlled the problem. The large number of infected cattle, including the cases of Canadian cattle infected after the feed ban was established, is particularly troubling. The U.S. and Canadian feed bans are almost identical except that the Canadian ban is stricter as it does not allow the feeding of poultry litter to cattle.

The Canadian government has responded to the repeated detection of Mad Cow disease by introducing greater restrictions on livestock feed. As of July 12, 2007, it is no longer legal to include materials known to be of the greatest risk for spreading Mad Cow disease (Specified Risk Material or SRMs) in Canadian animal feeds.

While Canada is moving forward the U.S. has failed to take any action to address this problem. In 2004, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced it was strengthening the ban by prohibiting poultry litter and plate waste in cattle feed, but these rules were never implemented. Instead the FDA used an expert report calling for even tighter controls as an excuse to delay implementing the announced changes. Following this, in October 2005 FDA published a proposed rule that would put restrictions on animal feeding similar to those currently being implemented in Canada, but no action has been taken.

FACT opposes the use of poultry litter in cattle feed. Poultry litter is a mixture of manure, wood shavings, and spilled feed. Cow brains are included in poultry feed as a protein source. When poultry litter with this spilled feed and undigested cattle protein is fed to cattle, it creates a risk of spreading Mad Cow disease. Even tiny amounts of cow brains can cause Mad Cow disease in cattle.

Meanwhile in response to the North American cases, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) did prohibit the slaughter of downed cattle, animals too sick to stand and walk on their own. The agency also required that SRMs be removed from human food and increased the testing of cattle for the disease.

FACT supports the downer ban and SRM removal requirements. However, USDA's increased testing for Mad Cow disease did not go far enough. USDA's Inspector General repeatedly criticized the testing program, but it was never adequately expanded and was consistently plagued by errors. At the same time USDA took legal action to prevent private companies from testing their own cattle. After USDA's inadequate testing program found only a few cases, the agency quietly scaled back testing in the fall of 2006. FACT continues to push for increased testing and for strengthening the feed ban.

Be a Consumer Against Litter in Feed!

Did you know that in areas of the country where large numbers of both cattle and poultry are raised, chicken waste is routinely fed to cows? In California alone an estimated 80,000 tons of poultry litter (manure and spilled feed) is fed to cows each year. FACT believes this inhumane, unhealthy and disgusting practice needs to stop—and soon. Using animal waste as animal feed is a risk not only to human health but also to animal health and welfare. It can spread human and animal diseases such as Mad Cow; it can also spread antibiotic resistant bacteria which can cause serious foodborne illnesses.

To end the practice of feeding chicken manure to cows, FACT will soon launch the CALF (Consumers Against Litter in Feed) campaign, an effort designed to effect policy change at the federal level. FACT staff are currently researching regulatory and legal options as well as the science surrounding the processing of poultry waste.

As we gather more information, we will identify additional steps we can all take to end the use of poultry manure as cow feed. Visit our new website to learn more!

FACT Welcomes New Staff

In early July, Lisa Isenhart joined FACT as the Coordinator of the Keep Antibiotics Working coaltion (KAW). She will also serve FACT as a staff assistant. Lisa is a recent graduate of Washington University in St. Louis, where she earned a Master's degree in Anthropology. While completing her coursework, she conducted independent field research in Andean Argentina on the cultural, economic, and environmental impacts of gold mining on local communities. As KAW's Coordinator Lisa will help the coalition end the routine use of medically important antibiotics with healthy farm animals. She looks forward to bringing her talents and enthusiasm to FACT's staff team. Lisa follows Larissa McKenna who is now FACT's Associate Director. Welcome Lisa!

FACT Meets Standards of BBB Wise Giving Alliance

The Better Business Bureau (BBB) Wise Giving Alliance, America's most experienced charity evaluator, has found that Food Animal Concerns Trust meets their extensive standards. Meeting these standards carries a lot of meaning for both donors and foundations.

For donors, the appearance of the seal in mailings and on websites indicates the organization meets the Alliance's Standards for Charity Accountability. The seal is the culmination of a demanding process. Before national organizations can even apply to use the seal, they must undergo evaluation by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance. And the evaluation process is anything but superficial. It involves rigorous scrutiny of an organization's governance, effectiveness, finances and solicitations and informational materials. Only organizations that come through this review with a "meets standards" conclusion are eligible to participate in the seal program. We at FACT are delighted in this accomplishment and will display the BBB seal with pride. To learn more about the BBB's Wise Giving standards, visit www.give.org.

Charge Your Gifts

Your donation makes it possible for us to do more for farm animals. If you would like to contribute to FACT with a credit card, complete this authorization form and mail it back in the enclosed reply envelope.

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Contributions to FACT are tax-deductible. A minimum gift of $10 is required for credit card donations. Thank you for your support.

Coming Soon

This summer FACT will be launching a new website! You will soon be able to access it at www.foodanimalconcerns.org. The site has been redesigned to better fit the needs of FACT's supporters, the media and the general public. It will include features such as:

- A **Latest News** section where FACT supporters can read about up-to-date news and notes.
- An **Action Alert** page giving individuals the opportunity to take action on pressing issues.
- An interactive **Donate** page to make it easier to support FACT.

If you have any questions about FACT's new website, please contact Jacki Rossi at jrossi@foodanimalconcerns.org

FACT Programs

Humane Farming

FACT promotes welfare friendly husbandry practices that produce safe food for consumers.

Food Safety

FACT conducts research in the scientific literature on food safety problems with beef, chicken, milk and eggs, focusing on farm management, and then seeks policy changes.

Public Education

FACT seeks to educate and involve the public and supporters on problems FACT addresses.

FACT Sheets

If you would like receive email updates on FACT's work and information on how you can help, subscribe to FACT Sheets. FACT Sheets are sent four times a year, between our regular mailings.

To subscribe, please email Jacki Rossi, Public Education Coordinator, at jrossi@foodanimalconcerns.org or call (773) 525-4952.

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Farmers' markets continue to grow in popularity and are an excellent venue for humane farmers to sell their products. They provide the critical connection between consumers and the farmers who grow and raise their food, something not found in grocery stores.

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