The North Carolina Dairy Producers Association completed its 11th year at its annual meeting on Feb 28th with NCDA & CS Commissioner Steve Troxler as the key note speaker. Commissioner Troxler spoke on initiatives that NCDA has undertaken on behalf of dairy farmers to try to enhance the dairy industry, efforts that are underway to help preserve farmland, and the need for dairy farmers to become involved in determining our industry’s future.

The major activities that NCDPA were involved in this past year were highlighted at the meeting. Those discussed included the following. The NC Dairy Security Committee (NCDPA is represented on this comm.) has been working on writing a foreign animal disease response plan that focuses on business continuity. With this plan, emphasis would be placed on identifying herds that were negative for foot and mouth disease (the major foreign disease addressed in the plan), implementing a farm biosecurity protocol, and continuing to test those herds to see that they remained negative so they could continue to market milk. The plan will help keep negative herds in business and supply North Carolina produced milk and dairy products to the consumer. Efforts are underway to take the business continuity concept to a regional and national level.

During 2006 the NC General Assembly passed the NC Dairy Stabilization and Growth Act. NCDA initiated the effort to obtain funding for a Dairy Industry Strategic Plan and received partial funding from the Golden Leaf Foundation. Additional funds were obtained from the NC Dairy and Ag Foundations, as well as the NCDPA. A survey of producers is underway, dairy related economic development programs will be identified, and leaders from all segments of the NC dairy industry will be involved in the strategic planning process. Once the strategic plan is developed (target date for completion is mid 2008), the implementation process will begin. The industry will be informed of the ongoing activities through this quarterly newsletter.

NCDPA is involved with several other southeastern producer associations as the Southeastern Producers Steering Committee. This committee met with Dana Coale, USDA
deputy administrator for dairy programs, and asked that her staff do an in-depth study to determine whether declining southeast production, declining Class I utilization, and declining mailbox prices were the result of natural economic forces at work or an unintended consequence of Federal Order Reform. Only USDA’s Dairy Programs division has the complete data to provide a credible answer. Discussions failed to bring about the requested study, so the steering committee submitted similar proposals for FMMO 5 and 7 that would tighten the “touch base” rules and reduce the amount of milk that can be pooled in the order, but actually be sold outside the order. Those changes are under the discretionary authority of the market administrator and could be quickly implemented. No action on these proposals has been announced to date.

Meanwhile, NCDPA will continue its partnership with the other members of the Southeastern Producers Steering Committee, and will continue to seek involvement with other organizations in order to improve North Carolina’s dairy industry. Please show your support by being a member of the NCDPA.

**State Officials Address NCDPA Annual Meeting and NC Dairy Conference**

At the 12th annual meeting of the North Carolina Dairy Producers Association held on February 28, NCDA & CS Commissioner Steve Troxler spoke about initiatives concerning the future of the NC dairy industry that the department has been addressing with the assistance from several other groups, including the NCDPA, NCFB and NCSU. Mr. Troxler also answered many questions from the audience, including ones about land preservation efforts throughout the state.

At the luncheon of the annual NC Dairy Conference held on March 1, Mrs. Elaine Marshall, NC Secretary of State, encouraged the audience to strive to do the best each person could at communicating to the public and elected officials about the importance of the dairy industry and all of agriculture to our state. She indicated that without communications from the industry, it will continue to lose support from the general populace and our elected officials.
Dr. Geoff Benson Receives NCDPA 2007 Distinguished Service Award

by Norman Jordan, Jr., NCDPA President

The North Carolina Dairy Producers Association is pleased to present its 2007 Distinguished Service Award to Dr. Geoffrey A. Benson, Extension Economist from NCSU.

Dr. Geoffrey A. Benson was hired as an Assistant Professor and Extension Economist at NCSU during the summer of 1978. Prior to coming to the USA to obtain his graduate education at Penn State University, he worked for six years as an extension advisory officer in Northern Ireland during the late 1960s. Adapting to life in North Carolina, and learning to include some “southern way of talkin” into his British/Irish accent was a challenge for Geoff during those first years.

Just as the dairy and cattle industries in North Carolina have changed considerably since the time Geoff was hired, so have his primary job responsibilities. Geoff initially worked with dairy farm management and marketing. Over the years, first beef cattle and then forage crop economics were added to his responsibilities. His program focus is still working with farmers to improve their farm management, marketing, and business skills. Other areas include dairy policy and outlook work, business planning, and evaluation of value added livestock opportunities such as organic milk production. Geoff’s dairy education programs have emphasized risk management strategies, price impacts associated with reform of the federal milk orders, the dairy buyout program in the 1980s, and how to use and analyze dairy farm financial data (which provides benchmarks comparative dairy farm financial information).

In 1999, Geoff initiated a pilot program to collect NC dairy farm financial data that was included in a national dairy database effort coordinated by faculty at Cornell University. Geoff organized and collected the NC data using funds provided in part by the NC Dairy Foundation. Although external funding for this project stopped in 2003, Geoff recognized the importance of this financial information, and he continued to collect and analyze the data. Since 1999 Geoff has collected important financial data from up to 15 North Carolina dairy farms each year. Selected items of financial information gleaned from this survey are disseminated to all dairy farmers in the state via extension talks, and it is available on his NCSU web page.

In 2000, in cooperation with colleagues at other universities, Geoff initiated an innovative dairy risk
management program, developed eight risk management fact sheets, and organized area in-service training programs on dairy futures and options for dairy agents. These activities expanded his risk management educational program, and he was recognized by the American Agricultural Economics Association (AAEA) for his efforts when it designated Geoff and others to receive the 2000 AAEA Extension Group Award. This was the second such award Geoff has received.

Geoff has written numerous articles over the last several years for the Dairy Extension Newsletter and other publications, and made countless presentations on a variety of topics ranging from the dairy situation and outlook to how to successfully add value to your farm products. During the past 20 years as the dairy industry underwent significant changes, Dr. Gloom and Doom, as Geoff was known, didn’t sugar coat his outlook projections, and we all had to make changes to survive during increasing difficult times. During the 11 years of NCDPA’s existence, Geoff has provided much needed economic expertise during our efforts to establish a Southern Dairy Compact, then later going with us to House and Senate Ag Committee meetings of the NC General Assembly to help insure passage of the NC Dairy Stabilization and Growth Fund Act. Geoff has always been there when needed to provide credibility to the economic data being presented.

In the last nine months Geoff has provided much needed advice, guidance and information as a part of the SE Producers Steering Committee, especially in helping prepare analyses of the financial impact of various changes in the FMMO that NC is in, and providing the data necessary to request changes in our FMMO. He is also playing a key role in the Association’s upcoming efforts to develop a strategic plan for the North Carolina Dairy Industry. Because of his extensive support of our industry, we are pleased to present him with our 2007 Distinguished Service Award.

“Don Wesen” Quality Milk Producer Award Recipients Recognized

At the 2007 NC Dairy Conference the recipients of the Don Wesen Quality Milk Producer Award program were presented with certificates recognizing their accomplishments. The North Carolina Dairy Producers Association initiated this program twelve years ago to recognize producers who consistently produce high quality milk with low somatic cell and bacteria counts. All of the recipients had yearly SCC averages under 175,000 and SPC averages under 3,500 for 2006. The awardees were: for herds under 100 cows, Wayne Stout from Stony Point, Randy Lewis from Snow Camp, and Scott Davis from Mooresville; for herds with 100-250 cows, Steve Ross of Triple R Dairy from Waynesville, Ladd Dairy form Harmony, and John Shumaker from Blanch; for herds over 250 cows, Dean Ross from Waynesville, Myers Farms (Barry Myers) from Union Grove, and Arnold and Nathan Souther from Union Grove. Congratulations to each of these outstanding dairy producers.

Premise ID required for 2007 State Fair

A premise ID number will be required for exhibitors to participate in the 2007 State Fair. Premise ID is essential for tracking animals during a disease outbreak. There can be as many as 3000 animals to enter the fairgrounds in the 10 day period, and it is essential to know where these animals have been and where they will go. NCDA&CS and fair officials feel there will be more buyers present for the youth shows by ensuring the origin of the livestock.

The location where the animal is housed will be the premise ID required on the entry forms. Therefore, if a youth exhibitor is caring for their animal that is located at a facility other than their home, the Premise ID number for the facility the animal is housed at is the number required.

Applications to obtain a Premise ID Form can be obtained on the internet at: http://www.ncfarmid.com or call NCDA&CS, Veterinary Division at 919-715-2951.
At the 56th annual Dairy Conference, the NCSU Department of Animal Science presented the 2007 Marvin E. Senger Distinguished Dairy Farmer Award to Vance Proctor, Jr. Fondly known as “Junior” by friends and family, he is a second generation dairy farmer and owner of Sunny-HillVue Farms in Catawba County. Junior’s father started the conventional dairy with approximately 40 Holstein cows in the early 1950’s. Growing up, Junior played an integral role on the farm and ultimately took over management of the farm his senior year of high school when his father passed away suddenly. Even though he had a business to run, Junior managed to attend North Carolina State University and get his two year associates degree in Animal Science. Upon graduation from college, Junior returned to his family farm to continue farming with his wife, Susan. Over the years, with the help of his wife and two children, Michelle and Vance, Junior has increased his registered Holstein herd to approximately 140 milking cows on close to 300 acres (rented and owned). There are also a few registered Brown Swiss and Jersey cows currently in the herd. His rolling herd average is close to 20,000 and he does his best to keep the somatic cell count below 200,000. Furthermore, Junior has one of the only Level 4 Johne’s Disease Control Certifications in the state, which means that his herd has a 99% probability of being uninfected with the disease.

Junior is an obvious leader on his farm, but he has also been a leader and a strong advocate for the dairy industry in North Carolina. He has served as past-president and director of the Holstein Association. He was a host tour site for the 2003 Holstein Convention. He was one of the founding members of the Dairy Youth Foundation, which was developed to provide financial support for dairy youth programs and activities in North Carolina. Junior has also been a strong supporter of the NCSU Dairy Judging Team, by inviting them to come and practice judging various Holstein classes on his farm. In addition, he and his children are avid supporters and participators of local, regional, and national shows, averaging about 5 shows a year. Junior has been the Premier Breeder and Exhibitor of registered Holsteins in 18 out of the last 20 years at the North Carolina State Fair.

Junior believes his key to success and the key to technology on the farm is his breeding program. He concentrates on breeding for longevity and correct type with good production in mind. The farm goal is to breed excellent cows, and not have to buy them. In fact, several of his cows are in their mid-teens and still producing and performing well today! Junior has also spent a great deal of time in the field of embryo transfer in previous years. He currently has three cows that he flushes on his farm and then markets the resulting embryos nationally. Through his dairy showing efforts, he feels he has improved the exposure of his farm and ultimately increased his ability to sell his genetically superior embryos and resulting cows.
Junior also strongly believes that diversity is the key to his farm's future. He often seeks out and welcomes the advice of farm economists and specialist and tries his best to implement their suggestions. And with his son, Van, graduating this spring from NC State University and returning to the family farm, they have high hopes of expanding into the poultry and/or beef cattle industries to help ensure the viability of the farm. Congratulations to Junior and his family for their outstanding contributions in livestock youth development, their leadership in production management and modern technology, and their leadership in the North Carolina dairy industry.

**Manage the Post-weaning Feeding Program to Keep Heifers Growing**

by Dr. Brinton A. Hopkins  
NCSU Extension Dairy Specialist

The post-weaning period is a critical time to make sure your feeding and management program is on target in order to keep heifers growing well. One main objective during the early post-weaning period is to prevent the growth slump that can occur when calves are moved from an individual to a group feeding situation.

When calves are moved from their individual hutch or pen following weaning, they should be placed in small groups where they have adequate access to feed and water. Make sure the heifer ration is properly formulated and balanced to provide enough protein and energy. The period from two to six months of age is also an ideal time to feed a cottonseed hull-based total mixed heifer ration.

See Table 1 for the ration crude protein percentages needed in the total ration dry matter to achieve good daily body weight gains and large frame size. Adequate dietary protein is also required for proper mammary development in growing heifers.

**Table 1. General Protein Feeding Guidelines for Dairy Heifers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heifer Body Weight (lb)</th>
<th>Crude Protein % in Total Ration Dry Matter</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>200 to 400</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 to 800</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800 to calving</td>
<td>12</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Forage quality will determine grain concentrate needs in the ration. Consider feeding by-product feeds to decrease feed costs or to stretch forage supplies.

Corn silage is high in moisture (about 35 % dry matter) and energy (about 68 % TDN); thus corn silage will need to be limit-fed to heifers to prevent them from getting fat. I also
recommend waiting until heifers are at least six months old before feeding corn silage as the major source of forage.

Properly managed pasture is an excellent feed for growing heifers. Adjust the grazing pressure to keep the grass in a high-quality vegetative state. Provide supplemental feed as needed to maintain desired heifer growth rates and plenty of clean water close to where the heifers are grazing. Consider using movable shades to reduce heat stress in the summer. De-worm the heifers at least twice per year.

**National Survey About Foot-and-Mouth Disease**

The Center for Animal Disease Modeling and Surveillance (CADMS) in the School of Veterinary Medicine at UC Davis, has launched a nationwide research study aimed at protecting the livestock industry from the devastating consequences of foot-and-mouth disease.

Livestock producers throughout the nation are asked to participate in an online survey to gather data on animal movements and husbandry practices that will be used in a simulation model to predict the duration and magnitude of a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak, as well as determine the best strategies for containment. This project is being conducted in collaboration with the National Center for Foreign Animal and Zoonotic Diseases (FAZD) and is supported by the USDA and the Department of Homeland Security.

Foot-and-mouth (FMD) is one of the most highly contagious diseases affecting cloven-hoofed animals such as cattle, swine, sheep, goats and deer. In 2001 an outbreak of FMD in the UK resulted in catastrophic economic losses exceeding $15 billion. As a result, at least 6 million animals were slaughtered. In the US, the economic impact of an outbreak is estimated to be as high as $13 billion and every segment of the livestock industry would be severely affected.

FMD is on the top of the Department of Homeland Security’s list for a bioterrorist attack on US agriculture. “Because it spreads so quickly and it is easily transmitted, the threat of FMD to the US is very serious and we need to be prepared,” said Dr. Tim Carpenter, director of the study. “Our model will provide decision-makers with a valuable tool for rapid response and will help determine the best strategies, including vaccination, to contain an outbreak and minimize impact to the livestock industry”.

With no recent cases of FMD in the US to use as an example (the last was in 1929) it is hard to predict how an outbreak might spread in today’s globalized environment. Information about the distribution of livestock nationwide, animal movements and husbandry practices in the US is not up to date. This lack of current information hampers the implementation of an effective response strategy.

According to Dr. Carpenter, “the online survey will allow us to develop a model based on real, up-to-date data for animal movements and current practices that could determine how the disease spreads. Only livestock producers can provide us with this information. This model would put the US at the forefront in preparedness for not only foot-and-mouth but also other foreign animal diseases”.

CADMS guarantees that all the information will be kept confidential and will only be used for modeling purposes. For more information please contact Pelayo Alvarez at: (530) 554-2988. The online survey can be found at: http://www.cadms.ucdavis.edu
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