

Texas dairies: Feeding the planet while saving its water

What liquid do dairy farmers perhaps love more than the milk they produce? The water that – in so many ways – makes it possible to produce that milk.

In recognition of June as National Dairy Month, TAD is working to educate the public about the steps our dairy farmers take to responsibly use water while continuing to feed a growing population.

As we know too well, our state is in the grip of an epic drought, one that the state climatologist said is among the five worst in the past 500 years. Some of the driest areas are also home to many of your dairy farms.

Over the years, dairy farmers harnessing ingenuity, innovation and technology have learned to produce more milk with less environmental impact.

Between 1944 and 2007, dairy farmers increased milk yield four fold using 65 percent less water and 90 percent less cropland, according to the 2013 Sustainability Report from

the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy.

In fact, dairies in the Texas Panhandle – a rapidly growing dairy region – actually use less water than the area’s commonly grown crops of cotton, wheat and corn, according to a study of the Ogallala Aquifer by Texas and New Mexico dairy extension specialists that examined water use on an inches-per-acre-per-year basis.

Well before the current drought, Texas dairy farmers have been dedicated to responsible water usage and improving water quality. As you well know, water reuse, recycling and conservation are long established practices on the farm.

Our industry must continue to look for new ways to use less water, both to save money and to conserve a precious natural resource. Dairies – and the rest of agriculture – have to continue to do more with less, as the world’s population is projected to grow by 2 billion (almost 30 percent) by 2050. **(Continued, “Water,” Page 2)**

Director’s Update Darren Turley

Welcome to Austin! Nearly one-third of Texas Senate will be new in 2015

By Shayne Woodard, J Pete Laney and Lauren Wied, TAD lobbyists

After the 2012 general election, the 31-member Texas Senate included 19 Republicans and 12 Democrats. Six were freshmen. The Senate body of 2012 went on to debate public policy and pass numerous bills in a cordial manner, much like the decorum many have come to expect from the Texas Senate.

Fast-forward to the primary runoff elections that wrapped up May 27.

Due to retirements, statewide runs and several surprise election results, the Texas Senate is likely to have at least eight – and maybe nine – new faces during the 2015 legislative session. The body is also likely to embrace a markedly more right-leaning ideology.

In addition, the 31 members will be led by the first new lieutenant governor since 2003, with the Republican primary defeat of incumbent David Dewhurst by Sen. Dan Patrick. Should Patrick win the general election over fellow Sen. Leticia Van de Putte, the Senate leader will be more right-leaning than his predecessor.

How does the rest of the Texas Senate play out?

Senate District 2: Robert “Bob” Deuell (defeated)

Republican Bob Hall of Canton upset Deuell in the May 27 primary runoff. He faces Libertarian Don Bates in the general election. Hall is a Tea Party-favored and garnered support from prominent Tea Party organizations around the state.

SD 4: Tommy Williams (resigned)

Republican State Reps. Brandon Creighton and Steve Toth will compete in an Aug. 5 runoff ballot to immediately replace Williams. No other candidates are running for the seat. With Creighton and Toth still competing for the Senate seat, two House seats opened up. Creighton’s seat likely will be claimed by Republican Will Metcalf, who faces Democrat Michael Hayles, Sr. and Libertarian Bob Townsend in the November general election. Toth’s seat will be filled by Republican Mark Keough, who has no opposition in the general election.

SD 7: Dan Patrick (statewide office run)

Republican Paul Bettencourt, former Harris County tax assessor-collector, is likely to defeat Democrat Jim Davis and **(Continued, “Senate,” Page 2)**

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Libertarian Whitney Bilyeu to replace Patrick, who is running as a Republican for lieutenant governor against Democrat and fellow Sen. Leticia Van de Putte.

SD 8: Ken Paxton (statewide office run)

Republican State Rep. Van Taylor of Plano is all but assured to replace Paxton, running as Republican for Texas Attorney General. Taylor ran unchallenged in the primary and is expected to handily defeat general election Libertarian opponent Scott Jameson.

SD 10: Wendy Davis (statewide office run)

Republican Konni Burton won the primary runoff election and now will challenge Democrat Libby Willis, Libertarian Gene Ward and Green Party candidate John Tunmire. Democrat incumbent Davis chose to run for governor instead of the Senate seat. This Fort Worth based seat could be up for grabs, as Democrats and Republicans are evenly matched.

SD 16: John Carona (defeated)

Republican Don Huffines upset veteran Carona in the March 4 primary. Huffines should have no problem in November with Libertarian Mike Dooling. A developer and Tea Party-favored candidate, Huffines has family political connections but was elected as an outsider.

SD 28: Robert Duncan (resigned)

Duncan resigned to become chancellor of the Texas Tech University System. State Rep. Charles Perry has expressed interest in the seat, and others could get into the race. Perry has strong Tea Party support and would be the front-runner in a special election to fill the position.

Two senators may or may not return, depending on if they win election in November to statewide office:

SD 18: Glenn Hegar

Republican Hegar is running for Texas Comptroller but, if he loses in the general election, keeps his unexpired term in the Senate. Hegar is favored to prevail in the Comptroller race over challengers Democrat Mike Collier, Green Party candidate Deb Shafto and Libertarian Ben Sanders. Should Hegar win and resign his Senate seat, there is a lot of speculation over who would fill it in a special election.

SD 26: Leticia Van de Putte

SD 26 will continue to be represented by Van de Putte unless she beats Senator and Republican nominee Dan Patrick for lieutenant governor in the general election. Should Van de Putte win, her Senate seat would be filled by a special election. ▪

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One of agriculture’s greatest challenges will be to feed this growing world with nutritious, affordable food.

During this National Dairy Month, the Texas dairy industry must renew its commitment to both protecting and feeding our planet. ▪

New TAHC rules to impact dairy industry

Effective immediately, the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) has adopted a number of new rules and amendments to Texas animal health regulations associated with dairy cattle exposed to tuberculosis (TB).

In addition, TAHC adopted a number of proposed rules and is accepting public comments regarding trichomoniasis testing and herd certification for cattle. The trichomoniasis proposals were drafted by a working group that includes TAD Executive Director Darren Turley.

The TB rules are designed to further protect Texas cattle herds by registering calf ranch or growers in the state to improve their trace back capabilities in the case of a tuberculosis outbreak.

The new rules also will allow TB affected dairies to maximize the value of replacement heifers that can be raised in a controlled biosecure environment that allows them to meet the requirements for quarantine release by the time they are ready to calve for the first time, and will allow steer calves to be fed to “finish,” also maximizing their value.

To view details of all the rules adopted, visit www.tahc.state.tx.us/regs/code.html.

The proposed trichomoniasis rules would increase testing requirements on bulls that have strayed into or from a trichomoniasis herd to be tested and quarantined as well as notification of landowners of the exposure to the disease.

Proposal details are available on the TAHC website at www.tahc.state.tx.us/regs/proposals.html. The TAHC is accepting public comments through 5 p.m., July 7. ▪

Mark your calendar for Southwest Dairy Day

After a year hiatus, Southwest Dairy Day is back for 2014 and set for Oct. 8 at Del Rio Dairy in Friona. The dairy is owned and operated by TAD Board Member Rocky Gingg. The event is organized by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

Details have not been finalized – watch for information in a future TAD newsletter, on TAD’s Facebook page or on the Extension website at www.texasdairymatters.org. As in the past, Dairy Day events will include exhibits, educational activities for DOPA credits and lunch. ▪

TAD In Action

Some recent activities by the Texas Association of Dairymen on behalf of its members include:

- Monitored a possible manure spill at a Sulphur Springs dairy farm under investigation by the TCEQ.
- Arranging a Texas visit and tour for Washington, D.C., representatives of the EPA.
- Participated in TAHC meetings regarding, the El Paso dairy study, trichomoniasis and the animal response portion of the State’s emergency management plan.
- Attended a hearing of the Texas Senate Committee on Agriculture, Rural Affairs & Homeland Security.
- Set the next TAD Board meeting date for Aug. 6-7 at a location to be determined. ▪



Capitol Report

Meet Dr. Ellen Jordan: Making a great dairy industry even better

Even if you've never met Dr. Ellen Jordan – and it's hard to imagine there's a Texas producer who hasn't – your dairy's operation has been profoundly influenced by her work on the industry's behalf, whether on the farm or in the research lab. TAD recently asked her a few questions so our members could get to know this professor and dairy specialist for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

Tell us about your background – did you grow up in an agricultural environment?

I grew up in town, but spent weekends and all summer at my grandparent's farm as well as at other relatives. Grandpa had horses, Hereford cattle and pigs and raised corn, soybeans and hay on a 360-acre farm in Southern Illinois. Other family members had a dairy herd, dairy heifer operation and sheep. As a result I had a real mixed farm background.

How did you become interested in working with the dairy industry, versus other areas of agriculture?

Animals were always my passion instead of tractors, so I went to Iowa State University and took all of the animal science classes in addition to nutrition and reproduction. While there, I decided I wanted to combine nutrition and reproduction research using dairy cattle as my model because reproduction was more of a challenge in dairy than in beef.

How did you end up in Texas?

I was very fortunate that Dr. Chris Woelfel and Dr. Mike Tomaszewski both recruited me to apply for my current position when I was in West Virginia.

How have you seen the dairy industry change over your career, and how has your job changed as a result?

I have been blessed to work with great producers from one end of this country to the other. While in Oregon, the producers supported my research, and then, when I moved to West Virginia, I really learned the ins and outs of the business. I worked with many herds with less than 100 cows, but they were expanding and wanting to adopt new technology.

When I moved to Texas, it was a real pleasure to work with such a diverse group of producers and be a part of the expansion in West Texas. My job has never been dull and has changed a lot. I've had the opportunity to work on everything from nutrition-reproduction interactions to nutrient management plans to water use and conservation to animal welfare. I've always been willing to tackle the newest challenge to producers, so we generated relevant information.

When I started, I was the first female dairy specialist in the country. I never saw it as an obstacle with producers, and now women are in every role.

Although the industry has changed, dairies are still family farms and everyone continues to work together and respect the skills of every family member.



Ellen Jordan, Ph.D.

Professor and Extension Dairy Specialist
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
The Texas A&M University System

Dr. Ellen Jordan oversees all aspects of dairy management educational programs for dairy producers in Texas, including nutrition, cow comfort and well-being, herd health and reproduction. She has worked with dairy producers throughout the country troubleshooting herd productivity issues and environmental concerns and has participated in dairy seminars or workshops throughout the United States as well as in Canada, Mexico and the Kyrgyz Republic.

Jordan has authored or coauthored 15 refereed journal articles, over 300 popular press articles and over 1,600 radio programs. In addition, she has edited the proceedings for over 30 technical conferences in reproduction, nutrition and environmental management.

She has been recognized as the Outstanding Dairy Industry Educator/Researcher of the Year, World Ag Expo, 2010 and with the DeLaval Dairy Extension Award, American Dairy Science Association, 2007. In addition she has served in various offices for the American Dairy Science Association, American College of Animal Nutrition, American Registry of Professional Animal Scientists, Dairy Cattle Reproduction Council and the Texas Animal Nutrition Council. ■

What do you find most rewarding about working with the Texas dairy industry?

I like the fact that our producers are so progressive and always challenging me to find new solutions to their problems, whether they affect a single farm or the industry. It's very
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satisfying to know that I’ve helped producers stay in business and thrive while producing high quality dairy products to feed our nation and the world.

What is the biggest challenge facing the Texas dairy industry?

Our industry is being challenged regarding its social license to produce milk. We have a “Culture of Caring” for our natural resources (land, air and water) as well as for the animals and employees on our farms, but we must continuously adopt improved methods whenever available and then be transparent in our procedures so consumers might better understand our industry as well as all of agriculture.

You dedicate so much time and energy to helping Texas dairy producers – what do you like to do on your “off” time?

My husband and I enjoyed being basketball parents for our son until he graduated from high school.

In addition, we have a small place where we raise a few Quarter Horses. I took time off from showing while our son was growing up, but we did have a couple of the foals we bred and sold go on to be World and Reserve World Champions. Now that our son has graduated from college, I hope to get back to showing some of the foals we raised. ▪

TAD seats new Board member

Mark Ahlem has joined TAD’s Board of Directors representing Hilmar Cheese Co. Ahlem is a second generation partner in Hilmar (his father was one of the founders), and he splits his time between California and Dalhart, where he dairies as a partner in G2 Producers. ▪

Are you prepared if a hurricane hits?

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) is advising livestock owners to prepare now for possible storms during hurricane season, which continues through Nov. 30. Although the season started June 1, Texas typically does not see activity before late August.

Animals are particularly vulnerable to the severe weather associated with tropical storms and hurricanes. Any tropical storm system can wreak havoc on the livelihood of farmers and ranchers. Proper planning for disasters, evacuations, or emergency situations is imperative.

“Tropical storm systems present one of the most severe threats to animals and not just those along the coast,” said Jeff Turner, TAHC emergency management director. “As these systems move inland, they bring high winds, torrential rains and tornados. Planning for your animals is just as important as planning for your families and your businesses.”

For more information on how to protect your livestock when a disaster occurs, read the TAHC’s “Protecting Livestock When Disaster Strikes” brochure at <http://bit.ly/1mNZfSO>. ▪