



Reflections and Future Directions

Understanding Organics: Livestock Management and Health were conceived to be the first step in a continuous cycle of education and extension for agriservice professionals in the organic livestock industry. We are pleased with the success of this first conference and hope that excitement generated in Alfred, NY and Durham, NH will have ripple effects that will last much longer than the three days participants were together. Before the meetings were adjourned, we asked participants to join us for a final working lunch to reflect on the past three days and to help us generate ideas for the future. Below are summaries of both the reflections and the directions for future learning.

Comments for future conferences:

- a. Consider two day conference with a multi-track system (one for extension, one for veterinarians) but include general sessions to build and utilize the group dynamic.
- b. Consider theme days (Soil day, nutrition day, vet/health day) so that participants can enroll for a single day or the whole conference depending on their interests.
- c. CE time for veterinarians is precious and the number of organic clients serviced is low compared to conventional. Consider regional day long rather than 3 day conference.
- d. Need to have fewer speakers but more time allotted per speaker so they can really have the opportunity to share their knowledge and expertise.
- e. Increasing depth of knowledge across days (start basic and move to more advanced)
- f. Work to keep conference research oriented
- g. Consider having conference proximate to organic dairies and use farm tours as a breakout option.
- h. Collaborative venue (with group appropriate tracks) for veterinarians, farmers, agriservice
- i. Incentive to bring farmer to bring their vet (decreased registration fee for farmer if they bring their vet?)
- j. Organic/Local foods served at conference
- k. Potential locations:
 - i. Syracuse
 - ii. Vermont
 - iii. Bethel Inn, ME
 - iv. Bar Harbor
 - v. Cornell or other vet school
 - vi. Berkshires, MA (Jim Pitt)
 - vii. Albany
 - viii. Culinary Institute of America

Subjects for future conferences:

- a. Soils
- b. Additional homeopathy
- c. Calf raising

- d. Alternative types of feeds
- e. Animal behavior (Temple Grandin)
- f. Grazing nutrition (Tom Weaver)
- g. More animal welfare
- h. More scientific data (important for extension and vets)
- i. Data comparing organic and conventional systems
- j. Include other species: Beef, dairy, small ruminant, poultry, swine
- k. Plant science and its impact on animal health
- l. Farm business planning/economic for organic dairies
- m. Pharmacologist, apothecary, herbalist
- n. More NRCS involvement
- o. Animal health and diet selection for continued health (Fred Provenza at USU)

Attendance:

- a. Work to bring in more vet students
 - i. Cornell
 - ii. Penn
 - iii. Tufts
 - iv. Guelph
 - v. St. Hyacinthe
 - vi. Montreal
- b. Veterinary Medical Associations
 - i. Consider combining with one of their meetings
 - ii. Consider pre-conference seminar at AABP or session at ADSA
- c. Coordination between Canada and US groups
- d. Coordination between UNH/Alfred University/College d'Alfred
- e. Include researchers active in organic research
- f. Agricultural educators (FFA, 4H, high school ag teachers)

Sponsorship:

- a. Organic Valley check-off dollars for research, advocacy, education
- b. NESARE speaker grants
- c. Retailers: Wegmans, Whole Foods
- d. Pharmaceutical industry support
- e. Government support

Website Content:

- a. Using it at a clearinghouse for research reports
- b. Resource database for veterinarians and agriservice professionals
- c. Minnesota Organic Farmer Information Exchange for farmer mentoring

Research priorities:

- a. Calf hood diseases and treatment: scours
- b. Mastitis treatments
- c. Parasite management
- d. Lameness
- e. Reproductive health management
- f. Characteristics of end-product quality: what is the difference between organically and conventionally produced milk?
- g. Breeding/ Genetics: looking for characteristics beyond just milk production
- h. Can DHIA include a checkbox for organic status so that we can pull out some of that data?