



Issue 9 : December 2009

Merry Christmas and a prosperous New year!

There's been plenty to keep us at Dairy UK on our toes in what has been an extremely challenging year across the whole dairy supply chain. But we believe firmly in facing the future, and that is what we're doing at Dairy UK.

We have laid plans to help us deal with pressure on the environment and over nutrition in 2010. We're working hard to ensure that MPs and government understand the true value of dairy in the diet and of our industry's environmental commitment. As you can see from this newsletter, we are focusing strongly on issues which are of direct and immediate importance to dairy farmers.

And we are doing all we can to promote the image of the dairy industry, through support for major campaigns like Make Mine Milk and Milk in Action, both appearing in the spring. But also through consistent, targeted communication with journalists and stakeholders.

In the year ahead there are more challenges, but there are also huge opportunities as the world picks itself up and dusts itself off after the recession. Increasingly the UK is being recognised as one of the most innovative producers of dairy foods, and among the best climates for dairying. In this climate we remain dedicated to promoting the dairy interest together as a whole supply chain. There is no question that that is when we are most successful.

Jim Begg, Director General
Roger Evans, Farmers Forum Chairman

Dairy UK focuses on UK Johne's strategy

The UK dairy industry has taken the first step towards a national programme to tackle Johne's disease, after a special conference organised by Dairy UK. Experts from the UK and abroad gave examples of successful control and prevention strategies which will feed into a new UK programme. Dairy UK has now invited a broad cross section of the dairy industry to form the Johne's Action Group to develop the national initiative in coming months.



Among a host of excellent speakers at the conference earlier this month, Denmark's Soren Nielsen stood out. He talked through a voluntary system of Johne's control based on milk testing to identify problem herds and at-risk cows. By dividing the herd into non-infectious, potentially infectious and highly infectious, a risk-based cow management strategy could be adopted. At the heart of this lay the principle that calves must not come into contact with infectious cows, their milk or manure after birth. Quick results had been seen on the 29% of farms involved in the scheme.

Other speakers, including BCVA President Keith Cutler and NMR's Hannah Pease, also spelt out farmers' cost of testing – about £8 per cow per year, compared with potential losses of around £2600 per 100 cows per year. Seriously affected farms saw much bigger losses. Alasdair Cook of the Veterinary Laboratories Agency presented the findings of a Defra survey into herd incidence, showing 34.7% of herds were infected. This figure came in at the lower end of expectations, but underlined the need for concerted industry action.

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Wigan roundsman named Milkman of the Year 2009



Milkman Ian Kay triumphed over stiff competition last week to win the coveted title of Milkman of the Year 2009. After receiving hundreds of nominations from happy customers, the Wigan based roundsman shone in an hour-long interview in London with judges from Dairy UK and event sponsor Highland Spring. Ian's mixture of commitment to the community, outstanding effort faced with everything from house fires to break-ins and his entrepreneurial touch secured the title.

Edmund Proffitt, Processing Manager for Dairy UK and the awards organiser added:

"Ian is what the milk industry is all about. He relishes the community spirit and has lots of passion and enthusiasm for the job. The country's milkmen deliver much more than just milk - from groceries to gifts and hampers – and they provide a service that many rely on."

About Dairy UK:

Dairy UK is a lobbying organisation that represents the interests of the whole dairy industry, from milkmen and farmers to processors and co-ops.. This newsletter picks out issues of interest for milk producers, but Dairy UK is active for farmers in many other areas.

Set up in 2004, Dairy UK has established itself as an influential organisation. By effectively representing the interests of farmers, processors and milkmen, we can speak with a single voice on behalf of the whole dairy sector. Dairy UK compliments but does not duplicate the activities of the established farmer organisations.

Our activities are governed by a Board of representatives from all sectors of the industry, including two dairy farmers nominated by the Farmers' Forum: Roger Evans and Rex Ward. Dairy UK's chairman is Mark Allen.

If you would like to find out more, just give us a call!

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Milk in Action campaign gets EU go-ahead

The Dairy Council is to spearhead a major three-year campaign in England and Wales to promote the consumption of milk among young people involved in sport. A funding package in excess of €2.2m is to be approved by the European Commission, which will allow the campaign to run in England, Wales, Ireland and Northern Ireland. The campaign was approved by the EU management committee last week in Brussels.

"Milk in Action" will begin in April 2010 and aims through linkage with sport to increase milk consumption by young people in the run up to the Olympics. Sandy Wilkie, Chairman of The Dairy Council, said: "We are delighted to have secured this substantial funding from the EU for what we believe will be a campaign that will resonate with many young people in the UK, especially those involved in sport."

Dr Judith Bryans, Director of The Dairy Council, added: "Milk is at the heart of a number of EU and member state initiatives because of the sheer number of nutrients it provides. We are delighted that the Commission's funding will allow us to deliver a high impact campaign that focuses firmly on the nutritional benefits it provides – as well as being a drink that young people can consider 'cool'."

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Carbon footprinting guide for dairy nears completion

Months of work on a carbon footprinting guide for the dairy sector should come to an end early next year, when Dairy UK and the Carbon Trust finalise the document. The guide's publication will allow anyone in the dairy sector to reliably calculate a product's carbon footprint, looking at everything from bought-in feed to retail refrigeration.

As well as pinpointing areas where environmental improvements and efficiencies can be made, the guide will also explain the process to observers, creating confidence in the system. Questions that farmers might face as part of the process include the origin of any soy used in feed or the amount of fertiliser spread per acre of pasture. The system will be used more to identify improvements in the chain than for carbon labelling purposes.

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Talking dairy to climate negotiators in Copenhagen



Dairy UK headed to world climate talks in Copenhagen last week to raise the profile of environmental work in the dairy sector. Environment Manager Fergus McReynolds met delegations from different countries to tell them about the Milk Roadmap and the many other initiatives under way in the UK.

"The aim is to show that we are not sitting back waiting for tougher regulation – we are already playing our part," said McReynolds. "The figures speak for themselves – methane emissions from cows in the UK are down 17% since 1990 and milk processors have saved 130,000 tonnes of carbon in the past decade. We are also committed to further action until 2020 and from what I saw, the UK is one of the leaders in this area."

Ministers and officials from 192 countries were at the summit to agree a successor to the Kyoto Protocol. Despite the presence of top statesman including Gordon Brown and Barack Obama, negotiators came away with a weaker agreement than anticipated. The key event for agriculture was on 12 December, when the day was given over to discussing farming's role in climate change. The consensus was that soil management and cropping offered enormous potential for absorbing carbon, and that emissions cuts should not jeopardise the ability to feed the population.

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Researchers to see if novel cattle feeds can cut saturates in milk



Researchers are hoping to launch a major study to see whether a change to animal feed can produce milk with less saturated fat. Reading University wants funding to try to reproduce the laboratory benefits of feeding crushed rapeseed in commercial dairy herds. Studies to date have indicated that a number of natural feedstuffs can lower the saturated fat in milk by 10%, with a knock-on benefit of lower methane emissions from the cow's digestive system.

There are various practical issues involved in using this feed and Reading scientists hope to determine how to adapt it to commercial scale dairying. They will also try to measure and quantify the reduction in saturated fat, and whether the resultant dairy fat will in fact be healthier than currently.

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Dairy UK lobbies for recognition that dairy is good for you

Dairy products are a good source of protein, calcium and micronutrients, but new EU legislation may prevent manufacturers from telling consumers this. The Nutrition and Health Claims Regulation restricts the information which can be given about foodstuffs if the food is not considered to be 'healthy enough'. The thinking here is that the benefits of the food should not be promoted without alerting consumers to possible downsides. Dairy products such as cheese often contain saturated fat and salt and may fall foul of the new rules.

EU officials and MEPs are still struggling to define what is meant by a 'healthy food'. Dairy UK continues to lobby the Food Standards Agency and the European Commission pointing out the nutritional benefits of all dairy products including cheese, and asking that cheese be accepted as a healthy food. All the same, a series of opinions from EU food safety experts in the New Year are expected to make it harder for companies to make health and nutrition claims about dairy products.

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Project Eden gets off to a flying start



The first students to join a brand new dairy training course called Project Eden have completed their first term at Reaseheath College. The 27 students are now back in the industrial workplace putting their skills into practice, prior to returning for their second term in April next year.

The students are the first of many that will embark on the new 3-year Foundation Degree in Dairy Technology that has been developed by the industry, with Reaseheath College, Dairy UK and the National skills Academy for Food and Drink to address skills gaps in the dairy processing and manufacturing sector. They will soon enjoy the benefits of a multi-million pound state-of-the art training dairy being built at the college, making this one of the best dairy processing training facilities available anywhere in the world.

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