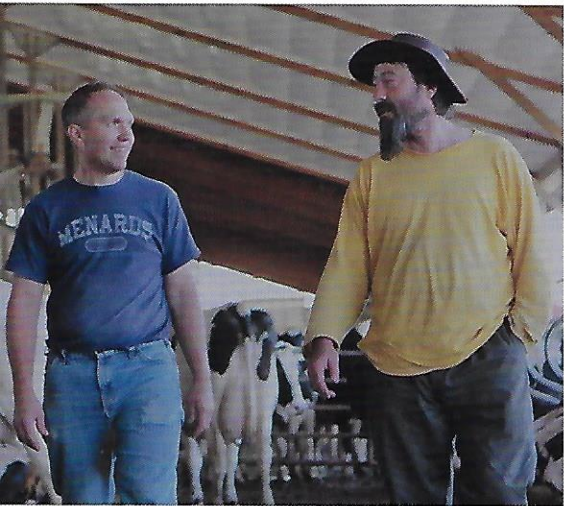
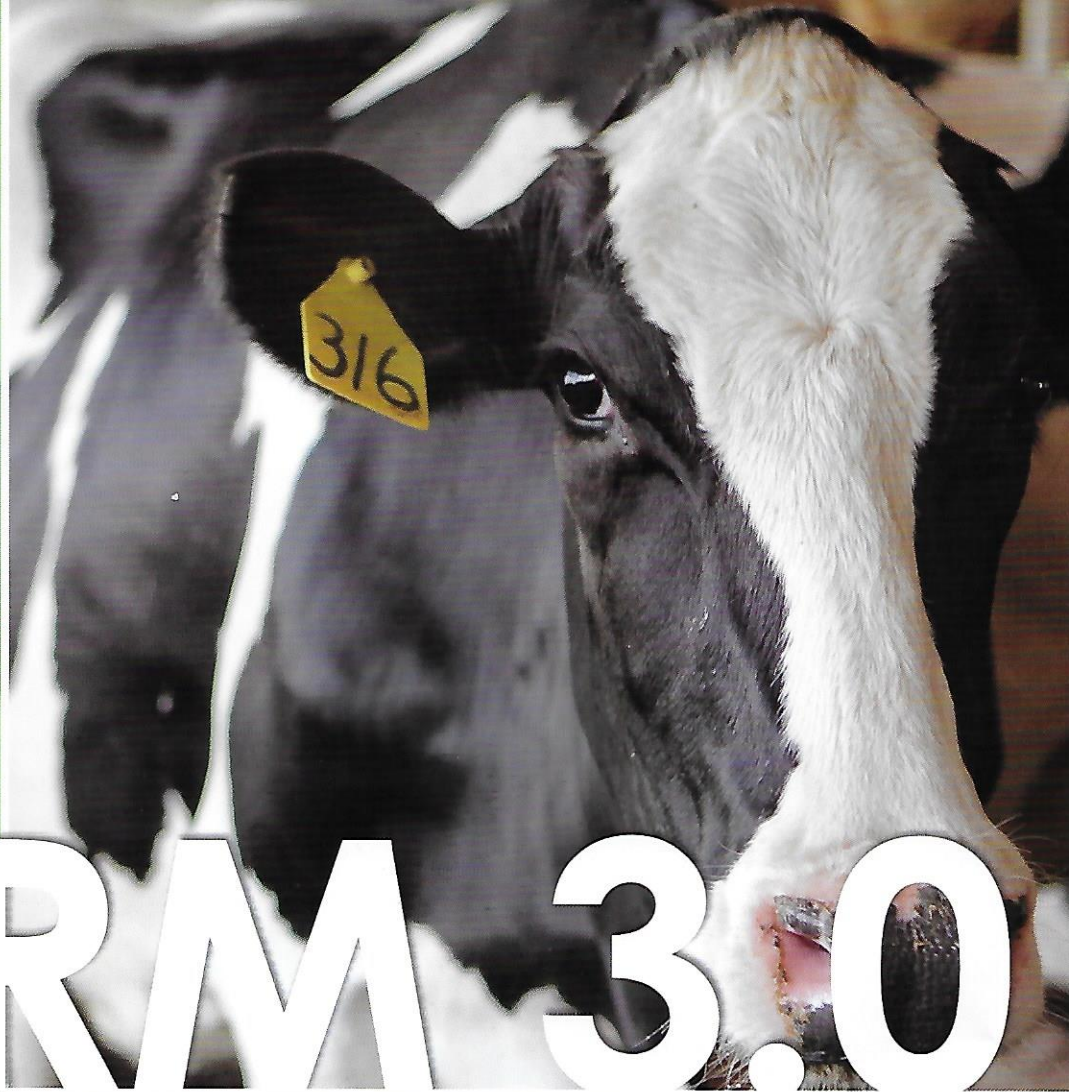


AMPI members strive for continuous improvement with updated animal care standards

Looking at

FARM 3.0



Like a physician completing his hospital rounds, AMPI member Don Honadel, Augusta, Wis., assesses his animals' health and environment every day. He knows this regular ritual is an important part of his responsibilities as a professional dairy farmer.

"Animal care has always been important to us," Honadel says. "Providing the best care possible for the animals results in the most profitability for the farm."

That's a belief reflected in the National Dairy FARM Program — Farmers Assuring Responsible Management. The program serves as a way to demonstrate dairy farmers'

commitment to animal care for consumers who aren't able to travel to a dairy farm to see it for themselves.

Updated every three years, the FARM program's new version 3.0 includes greater emphasis on employee training, the phasing out of tail docking, and, most notably, increased focus on the veterinarian-client-patient relationship.

The doctor is in

Taking care of cows is a team effort at Bears Grass Dairy, home to a milking herd of 350 cows. Honadel owns the farm with his wife, Nicole; uncle and aunt, Don and Tammy Schroeder;

AMPI member Don Honadel of Bears Grass Dairy, Augusta, Wis., left, visits with Stanley Bourdon, DVM, as part of the farm's bi-weekly herd health check. An established and documented veterinarian-client-patient relationship is a priority for the upcoming version 3.0 of the National Dairy FARM Program.

and uncle Gary Schroeder. He also works closely with his herd veterinarian Stanley Bourdon, who currently tends to six herds in the area — about 6,000 cows.

“Consumers are far removed from production agriculture and aren’t completely aware of what’s going on,” Bourdon said. “Letting them see what’s going on is crucial.”

Veterinarians are regarded as third-party experts, and consumers trust that they are playing a role in animal care decisions on the farm.

Although FARM 3.0 places increased emphasis on the veterinarian-client-patient relationship, many dairy farmers already value their veterinarian’s expertise and incorporate it into their everyday routines.

“We spend four hours together, every two weeks,” Honadel said. “This works well for us and allows us time to pick each other’s brains and learn from one another.”

“Providing the proper care for each animal is essential,” Bourdon added. “As a dairy industry, we simply don’t have the animal health problems we used to because of progress made in animal health and care.”

FARM 3.0 also includes a dairy cattle care ethics and training agreement. This document must be signed by employees with animal care responsibilities and ensures abuse is prevented or reported immediately to farm management.

Tail docking is out

FARM 3.0 marks the transition away from the routine practice of tail docking, encouraging switch trimming as the best management practice.

“Tail docking was initially employed because it was thought it would be better for the cow,” Bourdon explained. “Less mess around the udder would lead to decreased incidence of mastitis, less treatment. But, time and studies have shown that’s not the case.”

Making a good thing better

After undergoing a 10-month revision process that included input from farmers, veterinarians, academics, cooperative staff and public comments, FARM 3.0 evaluations will begin in January 2017.

Farm practices are reviewed at least once every three years by a second-party evaluator, resulting in feedback on how they compare with the standards. Data from a statistically significant percentage of farms is verified each year to ensure the integrity of the FARM program.

The overarching goal is to foster a culture of continuous improvement that raises the expectations for the entire dairy industry.

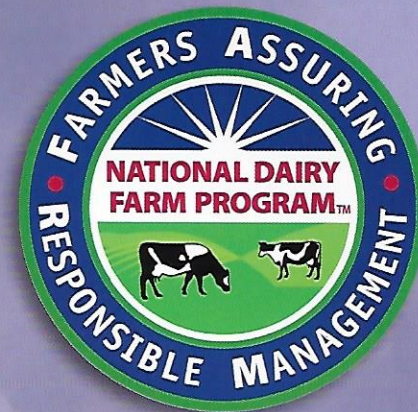
It’s a philosophy that has already been integrated into the core values of Bears Grass Dairy.

“I’ve always liked the former Lexus slogan: ‘Lexus — The relentless pursuit of perfection.’ That’s what we’re doing here,” Honadel said. “Every day we are working hard on the farm, caring for our animals and striving for perfection.”

The dairy industry is always making improvements in animal healthcare and facilities, whether it involves nutrition, housing, hygiene or a herd health plan. “We genuinely believe these things are making the cows’ lives better,” Honadel said.

A variety of tools can be accessed online at www.nationaldairyfarm.com to help guide members through the new requirements. Templates are available to create cattle care ethics and training agreements or veterinarian-client-patient relationship forms. Other documents contain information for on-farm calf care management, ambulatory care, mortality standard operating procedures, and sample herd health plans. **DD**

{ *Contributing writer*
Sarah Olson }



FARM 3.0 Priorities:

- Validate veterinarian-client-patient relationship
- Sign dairy cattle care ethics and training agreement by all employees
- Phase out of tail docking
- Document herd health plan protocols
- Observe animals for lameness, body condition and hock/knee lesions

More information and resources are available for download in English and Spanish at:
www.ampi.com
www.nationaldairyfarm.com

“Providing the proper care for each animal is essential.”

Stanley Bourdon, DVM