



Texas Association of Dairymen

For Immediate Release

June 2005

Contact: Kirsten Voinis, (512) 922-7141

IT'S "FAMILY FARMS," NOT "FACTORY FARMS"

By John Cowan

Recently I have read many articles in which the author is critical of and adamant that dairy farmers are "factory farms." This conjures up images of impersonal operations where dairy cows are warehoused, pollution is rampant and the operators don't care about their neighbors.

In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

Yes, dairy farms are bigger than they were even 20 years ago, and, as time goes on, they will need to grow, just as any business needs to grow to keep up with inflation. Technology, better management practices and other advances allow a farmer to safely care for a larger number of animals while ensuring the milk they produce meets stringent health standards. The milk we drink today is safer than it was when our ancestors milked a few dozen cows by hand.

But one thing has not changed – the farm remains a family enterprise that requires long, hard hours by the farmer and his family or employees who are local residents with an interest in protecting their community. The farmer is personally involved in the management and operation of his dairy.

In Texas, every farm is a family farm, regardless of its size – even the largest farms, known as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, which have at least 700 mature dairy cows.

These farmers work and live on the land. They want to protect it so it remains sustainable as well as profitable.

They also care about their local community; some have lived there for generations. They want to make a positive contribution to their community, both socially and economically.

In addition to professional pride, a dairyman has a responsibility to his animals, his family and to his country to protect and manage his operation in an environmentally responsible way.

State and federal rules mandate how the animals are housed, fed, treated, medically evaluated, transported and even milked. In addition, farmers are required to operate their farms by strict rules. They must properly dispose of manure and animal waste and must manage fields where beneficial nutrients are used to grow crops.

Everything the farmer does and produces is inspected, monitored and tested. Dairymen are proud of their role in providing food and fiber for the citizens.

For consumers, it's the best of all worlds. They can feel secure that they are getting a product that is both safe and wholesome. And they can know it was produced with the personal touch of another Texas family, that of the dairy farmer.

--##--

John Cowan is the executive director of the Texas Association of Dairymen, Inc. (www.milk4texas.org).

--##--

Contact information (for verification only):

John Cowan
3500 William D. Tate Ave., Suite 100
Grapevine, TX 76051
(817) 410-4576
jcowan@dfamilk.com

or

Kirsten Voinis
K. Voinis Communications
P.O. Box 12722
Austin, TX 78711
(512) 922-7141
kvoinis@kvoinis.com