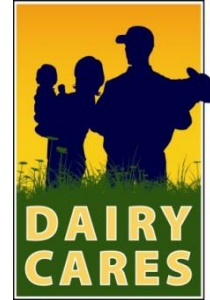


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Western States symposium demonstrates solid commitment to air quality progress

A decade ago, too much of the discussion about dairies and air quality was based on guesswork. Little was known about the air emissions of our nation's livestock facilities, and even less about what could be done about them.

Today, that situation has changed for the better, thanks to the efforts of dairy groups in California and across the United States to work with leading researchers and government agencies to increase scientific knowledge and identify practical strategies for improving our air. This exciting progress was evident at the Western Dairy Air Quality Symposium, a two-day conference held April 20-21 in Sacramento. Leading scientists from around the country joined air quality officials and dairy representatives from California, Nevada, New Mexico, Idaho, Utah, Oregon, Washington, Texas and Kansas to discuss the latest scientific research on dairy emissions.

The simple fact that such a conference even exists is a positive step forward –no such organized effort existed a decade ago. Today, the symposium has become a regular, biennial event. This year, the symposium featured preliminary results from the National Air Emissions Monitoring Study (NAEMS), a multi-year research effort involving livestock facilities and academic institutions in several states, including California. The NAEMS data is intended to inform national policy on air quality for livestock facilities and the data is currently undergoing review by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The conference also covered groundbreaking research efforts in several other states. Scientists are making discoveries across a wide array of areas:

- Improved knowledge of reactive gases from cattle feed,
- The impact of cattle digestive processes on greenhouse gas production,
- Efforts to reduce odor from lagoons, and
- Reducing particulate matter (dust) from corrals.

If there is a single “take-home” message from such a conference, where so much information is being shared, it might be this: Knowledge is power. Accurate information and good science helps us make good decisions, prevents us from chasing ghosts based on speculation, and helps us develop priorities and practical solutions.

We’ve already seen the results of good science in California, where research supported by dairy groups helped identify opportunities to reduce emissions and common-sense management practices to get the job done. As a result, dairies have reduced their emissions by more than 25 percent in the San Joaquin Valley, with further improvements expected. All of this is contributing to steadily cleaner air in the valley, with a focus on practices that are cost-effective for dairy producers.

Dairy organizations in California and across the West deserve credit for continuing to invest in efforts to support the pursuit of scientific knowledge, develop practical, cost-effective methods for reducing emissions, and sharing this information with our partners in government and with dairy producers. By taking a leadership role, dairy groups can ensure that solutions meet the equally important goals of being economically sustainable and effective for cleaning the air.

Dairy Cares is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability and responsible animal care. Our members include Bar 20 Dairy Farms, California Cattlemen’s Association, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, California Dairy Research Foundation, California Farm Bureau Federation, Dairy Farmers of America-Western Area Council, Dairy Institute of California, GHD, Inc., Hilmar Cheese Co., Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O’Lakes, Merck Animal Health, Milk Producers Council, Ruan Transport Corp., Western United Dairymen, Yosemite Farm Credit and others. For information, visit DairyCares.com or call 916-441-3318.