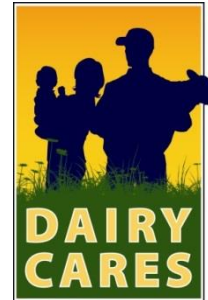


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## Dairy Cares Newsletter

April 2014

[DairyCares.com](http://DairyCares.com)

# Cow comfort, water efficiency remain top priorities for California dairies during persistent drought

The California drought has officially reached every inch of the Golden State, this according to the [latest report](#) from the U.S. Drought Monitor. For the first time in its 15-year history, the weekly produced map revealed that all parts of California are experiencing drought conditions ranging from “moderate” to “exceptional.”

An overwhelming majority of the state (77 percent) is afflicted with “extreme” or “exceptional” drought, the Monitor’s two most severe categories. By comparison, no areas of the state were in this category one year ago.

The hardest hit drought areas of California are also home to the vast majority of the state’s 1,496 family owned dairy farms. Like all farmers, dairy families have had to make [tough planning decisions](#) about which crops to grow and how many acres to plant based on expected water availability.

Consumers can already count dairy families as [water efficiency leaders](#), but what effect is the drought having on the animals?

Ask any California dairy farmer and they will tell you that the [cows come first](#). Rain or shine (or drought), the top priority on dairy farms is making sure a cow has her basic daily needs met, such as having access to fresh water, healthy food, and quality veterinary care.

Lack of precipitation, unseasonably warm temperatures and expected warm summer months also have dairy families thinking about the effects of heat stress on their cows. According to the California Dairy Quality Assurance Program (CDQAP), cows are [more sensitive to heat stress than humans](#), showing signs of mild heat stress when temperatures reach the low 80s with little or no humidity. Dairy families employ a variety of techniques to help keep their cows cool on the farm, such as making sure water and shade is available. Many dairies also have fans and water misters programmed to turn on automatically when it gets hot, providing additional relief during the warm summer months. Read more [here](#) about CDQAP’s programs to prevent heat stress in cows, including detection, mitigation and emergency responses.

With the close of what should have been California's rainy season, dairy families are now looking ahead to what will likely be a very dry summer. Fortunately for all Californians, dairy families have a long record of making water conservation a priority, already having reduced their water use by two-thirds (per glass of milk produced) since 1944. With this commitment to healthy animals and a healthy environment, millions of families can confidently enjoy the healthy, affordable and sustainable California dairy products they have relied on for generations.

*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 Dairywomen, Yosemite Farm Credit and others. For information, visit [DairyCares.com](http://DairyCares.com) or call 916-441-3318.*