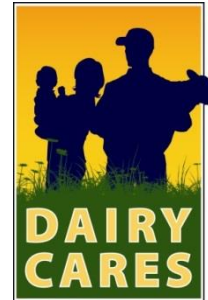


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## Dairy Cares Newsletter

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

# Dairy families building on pioneering efforts to protect, improve Central Valley water quality

Water has long been valued by farmers as a precious, finite resource to be utilized efficiently and responsibly. So it's no surprise that today's dairy farmers are dedicated to conserving, recycling and protecting the water we all share.

Smart, responsible water use is integral to the daily operation of dairies. Clean water is used to wash cows, sanitize milking areas and cool milk tanks. Later, that water is reused to flush manure from barn floors. Finally, the water is recycled to irrigate and fertilize crops used to feed livestock, such as corn and alfalfa.

While such conservation measures are an important part of routine farm management, dairy families have also stepped up efforts in recent years to protect water quality. May 2012 marks the five-year anniversary of the adoption of the nation's most comprehensive and stringent [water quality protection regulations](#) for dairies in the Central Valley. Designed to protect both surface and groundwater sources from contamination, these measures continue to be successfully implemented through the hard work of the dairy community.

As dairy farmers have moved to comply with these new, comprehensive water quality protection measures, their efforts have been supported by the award-winning [California Dairy Quality Assurance Program](#) (CDQAP), which offers ongoing education, assistance and tools to assist dairy farmers working to meet the requirements. CDQAP also offers a six-hour environmental stewardship water quality course, which more than 1,300 dairy farmers have completed.

Recently, there has been growing public attention to the need to improve drinking water quality in the Central Valley, especially in some hard-hit rural communities with aging wells and lack of resources. Minimizing the impacts of nitrates, nitrogen fertilizers and salts in the groundwater has become a topic of major concern for communities across the valley. Though cow manure is a natural, nutrient-rich fertilizer widely used by home gardeners and farmers, like other fertilizers, its use must be managed properly to prevent groundwater contamination. Dairy farmers today understand the importance of this issue and have begun to use sophisticated tools, including laboratory analysis of soil, manure, irrigation water and plant tissue to carry out "nutrient

budgeting.” This helps them strive for the proper balance of nutrients for optimal crop growth and environmental protection. In doing so, California dairies now lead the nation in developing the art and science of utilizing natural fertilizer to grow crops, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and synthetic fertilizers. Much progress has been made and more is expected as dairy farmers continue to monitor the success of their efforts and refine practices further.

To ensure that progress continues, Central Valley dairy farmers have also joined together in a first-of-its-kind effort known as the [Central Valley Dairy Representative Monitoring Program](#) (CVDRMP). The program’s goal is to measure the positive results and benefits of the improved management practices being adopted at dairies across the valley. In 2011, CVDRMP installed its initial network of monitoring wells in Merced and Stanislaus counties, and the program will expand further this year to monitor groundwater on dairies in seven other Central Valley counties. CVDRMP has already begun to measure the dairy community’s progress in improving water quality – and the program will use the information it gathers to identify opportunities for further advances in dairy sustainability.

Because they know it’s the right thing to do, dairy families have invested in efforts to protect the valuable water resources we all share. Living and working in California, dairy farmers are intimately aware of issues related to the quantity and quality of our future water supplies and what these mean for the health, well-being and prosperity of our communities. That’s why dairy families will continue their efforts to improve practices necessary to protect and conserve water resources, while remaining a sustainable source of safe and affordable dairy nutrition for millions of families to enjoy.

*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.*