



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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# Dairies launch statewide animal care initiative

*Dairy FARM program promotes responsible practices of California dairy families*

SACRAMENTO – A coalition of dairy groups today announced the launch of a statewide program to promote and verify responsible animal care on the state’s 1,750 family dairy farms. Known as the National Dairy FARM Program: *Farmers Assuring Responsible Management™*, the new program is designed to assist farmers in demonstrating their ethical treatment of dairy livestock animals and create consistency of dairy animal care practices across the country.

“Responsible care and treatment of animals is a core value for our dairy families, and we know it’s important to dairy consumers,” said William C. Van Dam, chairman of the statewide Dairy Cares coalition. “This new program is a major step forward for our state, in that it provides a credible, verifiable way for dairy farmers to demonstrate to consumers that these core values are carried out in our daily management practices.”

Developed by the nation’s leading animal scientists, veterinarians and dairy industry experts, the National Dairy FARM Program contains a comprehensive set of animal care best management practices. As the nation’s leader in milk production, California dairy farmers are among the first in the nation to adopt the effort. Because California’s dairy products are marketed nationally and internationally, California dairy farmers recognize the importance of participating in a nationwide program to ensure national uniformity for customers and consumers.

“Actions, not words, are the only way to maintain and build trust with our consumers,” said Jamie Bledsoe, a dairy farmer from Riverdale and co-chair of the Dairy Cares Animal Well-Being Committee. “We’ve always cared for our animals, and now we have a program in place to validate that we care. And in those rare instances when animal care doesn’t measure up, we have a program to identify issues and address them.”

Dairy Cares will promote Dairy FARM throughout California using a five-point strategy, which includes:

- 1 – Adoption of the National Dairy FARM animal care best practice standards;

- 2 – Orientation of dairy farmers to National Dairy FARM standards through workshops and educational materials from the University of California and California Dairy Quality Assurance Program;
- 3 – On-farm evaluation of each dairy farm to assess compliance and provide a benchmark to measure improvement;
- 4 – Producer support and assistance to continuously improve animal care practices; and
- 5 – Independent third-party verification to demonstrate program integrity and credibility.

“Dairy farmers are passionate about the care they provide to their animals. The National Dairy FARM Program takes that passion and quantifies it to tell the story of dairy animal care,” said Jamie Jonker, vice president of scientific and regulatory affairs at National Milk Producers Federation. “FARM is a very thorough program, with credible animal care standards developed jointly by veterinarians, animal scientists and dairy farmers.”

With the new National Dairy FARM standards already in place, Dairy Cares coalition members are now moving forward with initial outreach and education classes. Workshops this spring will review critical issues in animal welfare and prepare dairy farmers for an upcoming on-farm evaluation, which are expected to begin later this year.

As the program matures, post-evaluation support and assistance will occur later this year with third-party verifications slated to begin in 2011. The program will continue into the future with follow-up evaluations on a routine basis.

“There’s more discussion today than ever before about how we raise and care for our animals,” said Ray Prock, Jr., a dairy farmer from Denair and co-chair of the Dairy Cares Animal Well-Being Committee. “We need to be part of that discussion, especially as our customers and consumers ask questions about how we care for our animals. This is our opportunity to assure them that we’re committed to doing what’s right.”

For more information on the Dairy Cares Five-Point Plan visit [www.DairyCares.com](http://www.DairyCares.com).

For more information on the National Dairy FARM Program visit [www.NationalDairyFARM.com](http://www.NationalDairyFARM.com).

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*Dairy Cares is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability and responsible animal care and treatment within the California dairy industry. Our members include the Alliance of Western Milk Producers, Bank of the West, Bar 20 Dairy Farms, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, California Farm Bureau Federation, Dairy Farmers of America-Western Area Council, Dairy Institute of California, Hilmar Cheese Co., HP Hood, Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O’Lakes, Milk Producers Council, Ruan Transport Corp., Western United Dairymen, and others. For information about Dairy Cares, visit our web site at [www.dairycares.com](http://www.dairycares.com), or call 916-441-3318.*

*The National Milk Producers Federation, based in Arlington, VA, develops and carries out policies that advance the well being of dairy producers and the cooperatives they own. The members of NMPF’s 30 cooperatives produce the majority of the U.S. milk supply, making NMPF the voice of more than 40,000 dairy producers on Capitol Hill and with government agencies. [www.nmpf.org](http://www.nmpf.org).*