



Dairy CARES Report

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‘First wave’ nearly past, but more to come

It has been a busy season for dairy producers in California’s Central Valley. Besides the usual rush of harvest-related activity, producers are coming to grips with the most significant change in dairy environmental regulations in the state’s history. Among the “firsts”:

- November 3 was the first deadline for collecting and submitting water samples from domestic and irrigation supply wells for testing under the new “General Order Waste Discharge Requirements” (WDRs).
- For the first time, dairies must submit an Existing Conditions Report and Preliminary Dairy Facility Assessment as part of the new regulations **by December 31, 2007**.
- The California Dairy Quality Assurance Program has just completed its most extensive outreach effort ever, conducting 21 producer workshops in 10 counties between October 4 and November 15, with nearly 1,100 dairy producers and 250 dairy consultants attending to learn about the regulations and receive helpful information and tools.

California dairy producers are rising to the challenge, setting a new standard for the most environmentally sustainable dairy practices anywhere. New regulations require much more thorough and precise attention to dairy environmental management. California dairies are moving rapidly into a future where manure nutrients are tracked carefully through the system of manure collection and storage, application to crops, and harvest, to ensure that a balance is maintained and groundwater resources are protected. The system includes ongoing monitoring to keep track of water quality trends in and around the dairy. Finally, careful documentation of water storage needs and water use management will now be a part of every dairy operation in the Central Valley.

Various CARES coalition members have worked diligently in cooperation with the CDQAP to offer help to dairy producers in meeting the initial deadlines (November 3, 2007 for sampling and December 31, 2007 for PDFAs and Existing Conditions Report). Yet, even after these first deadlines are met, immediate action will be needed to prepare for the “next wave.” The first set of annual reports is due by July 1, 2008, and they will require more detailed information about land application areas, sampling and analysis plans, and even remediation schedules for some types of interim facility modifications necessary to prevent backflows or improve storage capacity or nutrient balance. There is a lot of work to be done, but dairy industry groups and individual producers deserve kudos for what they’ve done so far to keep California’s dairy industry the most environmentally sustainable anywhere.

CARES is a statewide coalition supporting economic and environmental sustainability for California’s dairy industry. CARES members include the Alliance of Western Milk Producers, Bank of the West, California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Campaign, Crystal Cream & Butter, Dairy Farmers of America-California, Dairy Institute of California, Hilmar Cheese Co., Joseph Gallo Farms, Land O’ Lakes, Milk Producers Council, Saputo Cheese, Turlock Dairy & Refrigeration, Western United Dairywomen, and others. For information about CARES, visit our web site at www.dairycares.com, write dairycares@aol.com or call 916-441-3318.